

HEALTH**VACCINE DRIVE TO FIGHT CERVICAL CANCER**

- The Indian Government intends to initiate a three-phase vaccination drive against human papillomavirus (HPV) for girls aged 9- 14, aiming to mitigate the risk of cervical cancer.
- The vaccine also offers protection against the HPV strains that cause cancer of the anus, vagina and oropharynx. Additionally, it also protects against the HPV strains that are responsible for genital warts.
- The Serum Institute of India in 2023 launched an indigenous HPV vaccine known as CERVAVAC.

Cervical Cancer

- Cervical cancer develops in a woman's cervix.
- It is the 4th most common type of cancer among women, globally and 2nd most common among women in India.
- India contributes the largest share of the global cervical cancer burden; nearly 1 in every 4 deaths globally due to cervical cancer (as per The Lancet study).
- Almost all cervical cancer cases (99%) are linked to infection with high-risk Human Papillomavirus (HPV), an extremely common virus transmitted through sexual contact.
- Effective primary (HPV vaccination) and secondary prevention approaches (screening for and treating precancerous lesions) will prevent most cervical cancer cases.
- When diagnosed, cervical cancer is one of the most successfully treatable forms of cancer, as long as it is detected early and managed effectively.
- India accounts for about a fifth of the global burden for cervical cancer, recording about 1.25 lakh cases and about 75,000 deaths each year.

Types of Strain:

- Persistent infections with certain high-risk HPV strains lead to nearly 85% of all cervical cancers.
- At least 14 HPV types have been identified as oncogenic (potential to cause cancer).
- Among these, HPV types 16 and 18, considered to be the most oncogenic, have been found to be responsible for about 70% of all cervical cancer cases globally.

SOCIAL JUSTICE**INDIA'S DEATH PENALTY CRISIS**

- The number of prisoners on death row in India has been increasing but the Supreme Court has acquitted maximum of them.

Current state of death row in India

- India's death row population is at its highest since 2004, with 561 inmates by the end of 2023.
- The Death Penalty India Report (2016) found that only 4.9% of death sentences from 2000- 15 were confirmed at the appellate level.
- Trial courts imposed 86.96% of death sentences without mandated information.
- Data from Project 39A's report revealing a 15% decrease in High Court case disposal rate.

Issues exist in the sentencing process

- Sentencing Issues: Trial courts continue to impose death sentences without required information about the accused, as mandated in a 2022 case.
- High Acquittal Rate: The Supreme Court acquitted about 55% of death row prisoners in 2023, indicating potential errors in lower court judgments.
- Failed Reform Implementation: Despite the Supreme Court's sentencing reform directions in "Manoj vs The State Of Madhya Pradesh" (May 2022), these reforms have not been implemented by trial courts for two consecutive years.
- Systemic Legal Failures: Instances of fabricated evidence and questionable police procedures lead to wrongful convictions, emphasizing deep-rooted issues in the criminal justice system.

Conditions for death row prisoners

- Constant Distress: Death row inmates live in fear of execution, causing ongoing psychological stress. This persists even after acquittal or commutation.
- Violence and Humiliation: Prisoners on death row often face violence and ridicule within the prison system.
- Isolation from Activities: They are segregated from work, education, and leisure activities, worsening their mental state.
- Increase in Death Row Population: Despite these conditions, the death row population continues to grow due to excessive sentencing by trial courts.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN INDIA'S PALESTINE POLICY**

- Initially opposing Israel's creation, India now balances supporting Palestine with strong ties to Israel.

The evolution of India's Palestine policy

- From 1947 to 1992:
 - India opposed the 1947 UN partition plan of Palestine and voted against creating Israel.
 - Prime Minister Nehru compared Zionist settlers to the Muslim League in undivided India.

- In 1950, India recognized Israel but didn't establish full diplomatic relations.
- Throughout the Cold War, India was a strong advocate for Palestine, supporting a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.
- From 1992 to October 7, 2023:
 - India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992.
 - Despite growing ties with Israel, India continued supporting a two-state solution and a sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.
 - India's policy included backing international initiatives like the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road map.
- Post October 7, 2023:
 - After the October 7 Hamas attack, India's stance appeared to shift, showing solidarity with Israel.
 - However, India's voting at the UN still supported Palestinian rights and opposed Israeli settlements.
 - India balanced its historical support for Palestine with its strategic partnership with Israel.

Why is supporting Palestine important for India?

- Moral and Historical Commitment: India's historical stance against the partition of Palestine and support for a Palestinian state reflects its commitment to anti-colonial and anti-imperial principles.
- Humanitarian Concerns: The conflict in Gaza, resulting in over 30,000 deaths and displacing nearly 90% of Gaza's population, represents a major humanitarian crisis. India's support for Palestine reflects its concern for human rights and civilian lives.
- Alignment with Global South: India aims to be a leader in the Global South, where there is strong opposition to Israel's actions. Countries like South Africa and Brazil have taken significant stances against Israel, which India, aspiring for similar leadership, cannot ignore.
- Balancing International Diplomacy: India's criticism of Israel, as voiced by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, shows its effort to balance diplomatic relations, maintaining a principled stance while engaging with various global players.
- Strategic Interests: The conflict impacts India's strategic interests in the region, especially concerning the India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEC) and broader stability in West Asia.
- Preventing Regional Escalation: The ongoing conflict poses a risk of broader regional instability involving Iran, Israel, and America, all key partners for India. Supporting a peaceful resolution to the Palestine issue aligns with India's interest in maintaining regional stability.
- Act West Policy: An immediate end to the war and a permanent resolution to the Palestine question are integral to India's Act West policy, highlighting its commitment to peace and stability in West Asia.

PRELIM FACTS

1. Exercise Samudra Laksamana

- The Indian Navy and the Royal Malaysian Navy are participated in the bilateral exercise 'Samudra Laksamana'. It took place from February 28 to March 2, 2024, at or off Visakhapatnam.

About Exercise Samudra Laksamana :

- The exercise aimed to strengthen ties and improve coordination between the Indian and Royal Malaysian Navy.
- It is conducted under Visakhapatnam-based Eastern Naval Command.
- This is the 3rd Edition of this exercise which includes harbor professional interactions followed by the operational phase at sea.
- The exercise involved a harbor phase featuring professional interactions, Subject Matter Expert Exchange on topics of mutual interest, social events, interactions with locals, and various sports activities.
- During the sea phase, units collectively refined their skills while performing various sea operations.
- Indian Naval Ship Kiltan and Royal Malaysian Ship KD Lekir participated in the exercise.

2. Juice jacking

- Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued a warning to mobile phone users regarding the risk of juice jacking.

About Juice jacking

- The term "juice jacking" was first coined in 2011 by investigative journalist Brian Krebs.
- It is a form of cyber attack where hackers manipulate public USB charging ports to steal data from connected devices by infecting them with malware or altering hardware.
- Hackers utilize this attack to steal users' passwords, credit card details, addresses, and other sensitive data stored on the targeted device.
- This form of attack has become increasingly concerning, with reported incidents occurring in various public spaces including airports, hotels, and shopping centers.
- RBI stressed the need to safeguard personal and financial data when using mobile devices.
- Mobile phone users should utilize their personal chargers and refrain from connecting their devices to public USB ports.

3. Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS)

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted two flight tests of the Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) missile. The test was conducted from the Integrated Test Range off Odisha's Chandipur.

About Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS):

- Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) is a Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD) designed and developed indigenously by DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and Indian Industry Partners.
- VSHORADS missile incorporates many novel technologies including miniaturized Reaction Control System (RCS) and integrated avionics, which have been successfully proven during the tests.
- The missile, meant for neutralizing low-altitude aerial threats at short ranges, is propelled by a dual thrust solid motor.
- The design of the missile including launcher has been highly optimized to ensure easy portability.
- This new missile equipped with modern technologies will give further technological boost to the Armed Forces.

4. BioTRIG- New waste management technology

- A recent study has claimed that BioTRIG, a new waste management technology, could help rural Indians.

About BioTRIG:

- It is a new waste management technology which works on the pyrolysis system.
- Pyrolysis is a kind of chemical recycling that turns leftover organic materials into their component molecules.
- Waste is sealed inside an oxygen-free chamber. The sealed waste is then heated above 400 degrees Celsius. During this process, useful chemicals are produced.
- BioTRIG generates three valuable products: Bio-oil, Syngas and Biochar fertilizer.
- Significance:
 - The bio-oil is a clean-burning alternative to dirty cooking fuels in homes.
 - The syngas and bio-oil facilitates heating and powers the pyrolysis system, and surplus electricity is utilised to power supply to local homes and businesses,
 - Biochar improves soil fertility and helps store carbon.

5. Agaléga

- Prime Ministers of India and Mauritius have jointly inaugurated an airstrip and the St James Jetty on North Agaléga Island in the Indian Ocean.

About Alagea island:

- Agaléga are two outer islands of Mauritius located in the Indian Ocean, about 1,000 kilometers (about 621.37 mi) north of Mauritius island.

ANSWER WRITTING

Q. Discuss the various forms of regionalism that have emerged in India since independence.

Regionalism is a political ideology that encourages people's loyalties around their region or place of origin. It implies people's love for a particular region in preference to the country and in certain cases in preference to the state of which the region is part. In India, regionalism is rooted in diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, and religions. Furthermore, it is encouraged by the geographical concentration of these identity markers in particular regions, and fuelled by a sense of relative deprivation.

Various forms of regionalism in India

- Demand for autonomy:** Soon after independence there was demand in certain states or regions to secede from the Indian Union and become independent sovereign states. The most prominent were that of the Plebiscite Front in Kashmir, Mizo National Front (Lushai Hills of Assam), Nagaland Socialist Conference (Naga Hills District of Assam) etc.
- Supra-state regionalism:** It implies more than one state expresses their group identity, which is usually in relation to certain specific issues. However, it does not in any way imply the total and permanent merger of identity of the states into the identity of the group. These groups also witnessed rivalries, tensions and conflicts. For instance, there were agitations in some states, which were against the discontinuation of English as an official language in the 1960s.
- Inter-state regionalism:** It emerged because of dispute of state boundaries or overlapping of one or more identities, which threaten their regional interests. Issues such as inter-state river water disputes, in general, and others like the Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute has led to tensions between states.
- Intra-state regional politics or sub-regionalism:** It embodies the desire of a part of a state for identity and self-development and may also reflect a notion of deprivation or exploitation of a part of the state at the expense of another. The important examples of this kind of subregionalism are Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Saurashtra in Gujarat, Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, East U.P. in Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh.
- Sons of the soil theory:** It ties people to their place of birth and confers some benefits, rights, roles and responsibilities on them, which may not apply to others. It is accentuated by factors such as competition for

resources, jobs, economic disparities, etc. Examples include campaigns for safeguarding of interests of Maharashtrians, clashes among Bodos and Bengali speaking Muslims in Assam, among others.

Conclusion

Since independence, regionalism has led to many agitations and state specific demands. However, it does not always disrupt national solidarity. Instead, it has led to the development of regions and contributed to national integration. Moreover, the Indian Constitution through federalism has created means to accommodate these regional sentiments.

MCQs

- The Alagea islands recently in news, are located in:
 - Pacific Ocean
 - Caspian Sea
 - Indian Ocean**
 - Mediterranean sea
- Consider the following statements regarding El nino:
 - During the El Nino, warm water is pushed toward Asia through the Pacific Ocean.
 - La Nina usually results in good rainfall during the monsoon season in India.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- The 'Project 39A' sometimes appeared in the news, is related to:
 - Building Submarines in India
 - Equal Justice and Opportunity
 - Safeguarding Snow Leopards in India
 - Protecting Historical Monuments in India
- Consider the following statements with reference to 'National Urban Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation':
 - It is the umbrella organization for the Urban Cooperative Banks which will also operate as a Self-Regulatory organization for the sector.
 - It has received a Certificate of Registration from the Securities and Exchange Board of India to operate as a Non-Banking Finance Company.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement-I
 - Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
 - Statement-I is correct but statement II is incorrect**
 - Statement -I is incorrect but Statement -II is correct
- With reference to Press and Registration of Periodicals Act (PRP Act), 2023', consider the following statements:
 - It provides for an online system for facilitating the registration of newspapers and other periodicals in the country
 - The office of Press Registrar General of India (PRGI) shall be carrying out the purposes of the new Act
 - The PRP Act brings books and journals to the purview of registration which was exempted by the old PRB Act
- How many of the above statements are correct?
 - Only one
 - Only two**
 - All three
 - None
- With reference to Hangul, consider the following statements:
 - It is a subspecies of Central Asian red deer endemic to Kashmir and surrounding areas
 - It is classified as Critically Endangered by IUCN and comes under Appendix I of CITES agreement
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2**
- 'Nyoma Advanced Landing Ground' seen in news recently is located in:
 - Ladakh**
 - Mizoram
 - Arunachal Pradesh
 - Sikkim
- With reference to First Information Report, consider the following statements:
 - First Information Report (FIR) contains details of complaints, charges, arrests, confiscated property, witnesses examined and other events within the jurisdiction
 - General Diary includes details of the offence, complainant, accused, witnesses, and other relevant information.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2**
- Why is there a great concern about the 'microbeads' that are released into environment?
 - They are considered harmful to marine ecosystems.**
 - They are considered to cause skin cancer in children.
 - They are small enough to be absorbed by crop plants in irrigated fields.
 - They are often found to be used as food adulterants
- BioTrig, recently in news is a type of
 - Bio fertilizer
 - Bio weapon
 - Waste Management Technology**
 - Animal surveillance system in the wild