

01 March 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS 1 Related

B. GS 2 Related

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [U.S. strikes a deal with Taliban to end 18-year-long Afghan war](#)

HEALTH

1. [Presence of colistin-resistant bacteria of food origin in the gut is cause for worry](#)

C. GS 3 Related

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [‘Bringing back cheetahs will be a big challenge’](#)
2. [Madhya Pradesh HC directs State to ban single-use plastic](#)

ECONOMY

1. [‘India among most dollarized countries in terms of invoicing’](#)

D. GS 4 Related

E. Editorials

HEALTH

1. [Why is COVID-19 not a pandemic yet?](#)

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [NPR 2020 skids](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. [Habitable planet](#)
2. [J&K uses 2011 data for delimitation](#)

G. Tidbits

1. [Kerala’s LIFE scheme crosses a milestone](#)
2. [Two-day Araku Utsav off to a colourful start in Vizag](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. U.S. strikes a deal with Taliban to end 18-year-long Afghan war

Context:

The long-drawn negotiations between the U.S. and the Taliban and the signing of the peace deal.

Details:

- **The peace deal** was signed in the **Qatari capital Doha** by U.S. Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban political chief Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar.
- The key features of the agreement:
 - The deal lays the groundwork for **intra-Afghan talks**, negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban.
 - The deal could pave the way for a full **withdrawal of foreign soldiers from Afghanistan over the next 14 months** and represents a step towards ending the 18-year-war in the nation. In exchange, the Taliban has to guarantee that it will not allow militant groups like the al-Qaeda to operate within Afghanistan.
 - The U.S. under the deal is committed to reducing the number of its troops to 8,600 from the current 13,000 within 135 days of signing the deal.
 - The U.S. is also said to be working with allies to proportionally reduce the number of coalition forces in Afghanistan if the Taliban adheres to its peace commitments. However, under the deal, Western powers could continue to maintain military bases.
 - Under the **prisoner swap agreement**, the Taliban has agreed to release 1000 Afghan prisoners in exchange for the release of around 5000 Taliban fighters from the Afghan government.
- **The U.S. and the elected government of Afghanistan also announced a joint declaration** in parallel to the accord.

Conclusion:

- The signing of the agreement has spurred hopes that it could lead to an end to the almost **two decades of conflict** and bring long-lasting peace in Afghanistan. America has been cautious in its approach, by stating that the accord though a good step is just the beginning and the road ahead will not be easy.
- There are concerns that the **talks, scheduled to take place between the Afghan sides, would be much more complicated**. Achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan will require patience and compromise among all parties.

For more information on this topic refer:

[CNA dated 22 Feb 2020](#)

Category: HEALTH

1. Presence of colistin-resistant bacteria of food origin in the gut is cause for worry

Context:

A scientific study of the **gut bacteria in humans**.

Details:Colistin-resistant bacteria:

- A small study involving 65 stool samples taken from patients from a single hospital in Chennai found **51% of them harbouring colistin-resistant bacteria**. This reflects the presence of such bacteria in the gut as stool samples represent gut colonization.
- This is the first study from India which has found indirect evidence of **colistin-resistant bacteria in the gut**.

Origin of Colistin resistance:

- Of the 65 stool samples studied, 33 samples were found to have colistin-resistant bacteria. **Colistin-resistant bacteria can be of hospital origin or food origin**. Of the 33 samples that had bacteria resistant to colistin, **77% were found to be food-acquired** and the remaining 23% had an antibiotics resistance pattern suggestive of hospital origin.
 - Scientific studies have noted that colistin-resistant *Klebsiella* bacteria were widely present in poultry and raw vegetables. **The main cause of colistin resistance in food is due to the rampant use of colistin in poultry**. Since poultry litter is used as manure to grow vegetables, colistin-resistant bacteria are found in vegetables as well.
 - Most of the **colistin-resistant *Klebsiella* bacteria** in the gut is from food and not hospital-acquired.
- In clinical practice, it is the **mutation in the mgrB gene or other chromosomal genes** that confers colistin resistance to *Klebsiella* bacteria.

Concerns:

- Scientific studies have noted that colistin resistance due to mutation in food *Klebsiella* has the **potential to spread to human *Klebsiella* in the gut** and hence may contribute to **colistin-resistant infections in humans**. The finding that a large number of individuals carry colistin-resistant bacteria of food origin in the gut is therefore worrying.
- **Colistin is the last-resort antibiotic used to treat highly drug-resistant bacterial infections**.
- Colistin-resistant bacteria of hospital origin do not respond to any of the antibiotics, including **carbapenem** while colistin-resistant bacteria of food origin will respond to carbapenem.

Way forward:

- Given the fact that Colistin usage in poultry plays a bigger role than its usage in hospitals for the bacteria to develop widespread colistin resistance, efforts should focus on methods to **control the use of colistin in poultry**.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. 'Bringing back cheetahs will be a big challenge'

Background:

- Recently, the Supreme Court had lifted its stay on a proposal to introduce African cheetahs into the Indian habitat. It has given the **nod to the National Tiger Conservation Authority to re-introduce African cheetahs.**

Details:

The Laboratory for Conservation of Endangered Species (Lacones):

- The laboratory was set up in 1998. The Laboratory since its inception has had the goal of breeding cheetahs. Scientists have been trying to get germplasm of the Iranian cheetahs, considered closest related to the extinct Indian cheetah to carry on with the research, but without success.
- **One of the successful efforts of Lacones has been the reintroduction of mouse deer in the wild** with its captive breeding programme in collaboration with the Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad.
- The Lacones is **building up a national genetic wildlife bank**, which has the germplasm of 23 species, including red panda, pygmy hog, Asiatic lion and gharials.
- The Lacones **is one of the few frozen zoos in the world** where a repository of germplasm is stored for possible future use.

Extinction of species:

- Many species have undergone extinction even before the advent of human beings, though at far lower rates than at present.
- **Background** extinction rate, also known as the normal extinction rate, refers to the standard rate of extinction in earth's geological and biological history before humans became a primary contributor to extinctions.
- Worryingly, however current extinction rates are 100 to 1,000 times over the background extinction rates due to reasons like **hunting, destruction of habitat and human intervention.**
- Cheetahs became extinct mainly due to **sport hunting and recreation hunting and habitat destruction.**
- Cheetahs are mainly dependent on antelopes for their food. Antelopes are adapted mainly to **dry conditions of the grasslands which are predominantly, extensive flat areas.** With the **neglect of the grasslands and alteration of the grassland ecosystem by extensive plantation of tress** has severely affected the fauna adapted to the unique habitat of grasslands.

Cheetah reintroduction efforts:

- Scientists from **the Laboratory for Conservation of Endangered Species (Lacones)**, have stated that the re-introduction of Cheetahs into Indian habitat would be a challenge.

Way forward:

- India needs a **protocol for the reintroduction of wild animals.**
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature has a protocol. It also has reintroduction specialist groups and template guidelines for re-introduction, which **needs to be adapted to India's needs.**
- There is a need to create **provisions under the Wildlife Protection Act for a policy on the introduction of wild animals.**
- Given the **possible impact of the cheetah introduction on other native species**, there is a need to safeguard the interests of other species as well.

For more information on this issue refer:

CNA dated Jan 20, 2020

CNA dated Feb 10, 2020

2. Madhya Pradesh HC directs State to ban single-use plastic

Context:

The order issued by the **Madhya Pradesh High Court** on a Public Interest Litigation plea.

Details:

- The order of the HC directs the State government to **ban single-use plastic in the State** and asks the State government to issue directions to industries to immediately stop the production and use of single-use plastic.
 - **Single-use plastics are disposable plastics meant for use-and-throw.** These comprise polythene bags, plastic drinking bottles, plastic bottle caps, food wrappers, plastic sachets, plastic wrappers, straws, stirrers and Styrofoam cups or plates.
- Notably, the order asks the state to **curb the use of plastic altogether across educational institutions.**
- Furthermore, the Bench ordered the government to ensure the **availability of viable alternatives for plastics** in the form of bags and packets made of biodegradable material available at subsidised rates.
- The Bench also stated that **plastic waste shall be used at thermal power plants** to ensure the disposal of the already generated plastic waste.
- The Bench, in its order, has noted that given the increasing challenge posed by the single-use plastics to the environment and ecology, it was important to make citizens and stakeholders aware of their duties and liabilities.
 - According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), plastic is harmful to the environment as it is non-biodegradable, takes years to disintegrate. Single-use plastics slowly and gradually break down into smaller pieces of plastic known as
 - Research points to the adverse impact of plastics on plants, animals and Human beings.
- To ensure compliance, the court has directed all **stakeholders to submit progress reports every three months.**

Additional information:

- **India has stated the goal of phasing out single-use plastics by 2022.**
- India generates 9.46 million tonnes of plastic waste every year, **around 43% of which comprises single-use plastic.** It poses a mammoth problem for India since **40% of plastic waste remains uncollected.**

Category: ECONOMY

1. 'India among most dollarized countries in terms of invoicing'

Context:

Lecture on '**financial globalization and international financial markets**' as part of the Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of India's 35th Commencement Day celebrations.

Details:

- Professor Hélène Rey, Professor of Economics at London Business School delivered the lecture.
- **By the measures of internationalization, the dollar is largely ahead of other currencies** with the euro as a distant second.
 - **International reserves** are held in dollars and dollar is an important **vehicle currency on the foreign exchange market**.
 - According to a survey by the European Central Bank, the dollar constituted 62.2% international debt, 56.3% international loan and 62.7% global exchange reserves, whereas the euro had acquired much less global market.
- **India is one of the most dollarized countries in the world**, following Brazil, Pakistan and Indonesia, in the share of imports and exports invoiced in dollars.

The role of the dollar in international markets:

- Notably, the value of the U.S.'s external dollar liabilities such as Treasury bills and U.S. government bonds held by the rest of the world tend to appreciate in bad times, pointing to **the indirect role of the U.S. as an insurer**.
- Given the dominance of the U.S. dollars, the **U.S. gets seigniorage** as people from different countries use dollars.
 - **Seigniorage is the difference between the value of currency/money and the cost of producing it.** It is essentially the profit earned by the government by printing currency.

Concerns:

- **The dollar is becoming more unstable over time** as the relative size of the U.S. shrinks in the world economy while the stock of dollar liabilities in the rest of the world has grown rapidly.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: HEALTH

1. Why is COVID-19 not a pandemic yet?

Context:

The global spread of the **novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)**.

Background:

- A pandemic is defined as the worldwide spread of a new disease.
- **The last pandemic reported was in 2009 with the H1N1 flu**, which killed hundreds of thousands globally. Unless it is influenza, WHO generally avoids declaring diseases as pandemics.
- According to the 2017 pandemic influenza risk management guidelines, WHO uses four pandemic influenza phases, namely the 'interpandemic', 'alert', 'pandemic' and 'transition' phases, to reflect the **risk assessment** regarding each influenza virus.

Details:

The global spread of the novel coronavirus:

- The COVID-19 outbreak began in China on December 8, 2019, and China remained the most affected in terms of the number of infections and fatalities.
- For the last few days, the number of confirmed cases reported daily from mainland China has come down even as the spread of the virus has seen a sudden increase outside the country. Recently, the number of novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) cases reported in a single day was more outside mainland China than within the country.
- **Outside China, South Korea has the most number of confirmed novel coronavirus infections.** Italy (889), Iran (593) and Japan (241) are the other countries with the most number of cases.
- As on February 29, 5,233 confirmed cases have been **reported from 60 countries**. Except for Antarctica, the novel coronavirus cases have been reported from all continents.
 - At 28, Europe has the most number of countries that have reported at least one case.
 - Thirteen countries of the WHO West Pacific region including mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines and New Zealand have reported at least one case.
 - 10 countries in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region including Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, and Bahrain, have reported novel coronavirus infections.
 - Only five countries in the WHO South-East Asia region have reported SARS-CoV-2 infections. These being Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Taiwan.
 - In the Americas, cases have been reported from Canada, the U.S., Brazil, and Mexico.

The World Health Organization's stand:

- On February 26, WHO Director-General made it clear that **WHO will not declare COVID-19 a pandemic, for the time being**, arguing that the usage of the word pandemic carelessly had no tangible benefit, but would, on the contrary, have significant risks associated with it, in terms of **amplifying unnecessary and unjustified fear and stigma and paralyzing systems**.
- The WHO though believes that the novel coronavirus has pandemic potential, argues that with the right approach the spread of the virus could be stopped.
- In the backdrop of the global spread of the virus, on February 28, WHO upgraded COVID-19's global threat level to 'very high'.

Positives:

- **Fourteen countries have managed to contain the spread of the virus** and no new case has been reported for more than a week.
 - Hong Kong and Singapore appear to have largely contained the spread.
 - Nine countries, including India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, have not reported any additional cases in the last two weeks.'
- The above facts, highlight that the virus can be stopped in its tracks if countries take appropriate and timely actions.

Way forward:

- The priority should be to **detect cases early and isolate people** who test positive for the virus.

- Countries that have reported even one case should primarily focus on containing the spread of the virus.
 - Once a case is detected, the focus should be to trace the previous contacts of the infected person and treat them if found to be infected.
 - Efforts should also be centred on **preventing outbreaks in hospitals and spread in the community**. One way to stop the spread in the community is to avoid mass gathering in enclosed spaces.
- It is advisable to **avoid all non-essential travel** to countries where community spread of the virus has been reported.
- Since the current molecular test is not highly sensitive and can return false negatives, people need to be attentive to the fact that they can still be infected and should seek immediate medical care once symptoms show up.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. NPR 2020 skids

Context:

The **Bihar assembly resolution** stating that the National Population Register (NPR) would be done according to the 2010 format.

Details:

- The **NPR 2020 enumeration exercise will be undertaken during April–September 2020**.

National Population Register (NPR):

- **The NPR is a database of usual residents** in the country who have stayed in a local area for the past six months or more and who intend to remain in the same place for the next six months or more.
- Unlike the Census which provides information on the status of the residents of India and population swings, **the NPR is individual and identity specific**.
- The NPR data collection is done under the aegis of the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India.
- The NPR is undertaken under the provisions of The Citizenship Act, 1955 and The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
- The NPR database was first created in 2010. The NPR was last updated, except in Assam and Meghalaya, in 2015-16.

NPR format of 2010:

- **Fifteen identity particulars** of the individual members of the household are sought in the 2010 format.
- These include name, relationship to the head of the household, sex, date of birth, marital status, educational qualification, occupation/activity, names of parents, place of birth (of everybody staying in the household at the time), nationality, present address of usual residence, duration of stay at the present address and permanent residential address.

Concerns:

Updated format of 2020:

- - Apart from the information sought as per the 2010 format, **certain new information** will be collected under the updated format, such as Aadhaar, mobile, voter ID, passport and driving licence, if available with the residents on a voluntary basis.
 - The new format for NPR 2020 requires residents to disclose their **mother tongue and the places and dates of birth of their parents** even if they are not living in the same household at the time or not alive. Individuals have to disclose the districts and States of their parents' birth.
- Given the poverty levels in India and the inability of the underprivileged to formalize their birth due to lack of access to health care, the task of disclosing the exact birth and place of birth, especially of the aged parents and orphans, would prove to be a challenging task.

The link between NPR and the National Register of Citizens:

- **The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003** mandates that particulars of families and individuals in the NPR would be used for verification in the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process.
- The Local Registrar is empowered, during verification, to mark out the particulars of individuals whose citizenship is doubtful, for further enquiry.
- **The onus to prove he or she is a citizen is entirely on the individual concerned.** Thus, the data collected through NPR becomes the crux for determining the citizenship of a person.
- There are concerns that the proposed NPR is a signal of the upcoming nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC) to identify illegal migrants.
- Some State governments are apprehensive that the NPR data would be used to target citizens on the basis of their identity and **deprive them of their citizenship.**
- **The widespread doubts** about the intentions behind the NPR may affect the smooth conduct of the Census.

The Assam experience:

- The **NRC exercise in Assam** had led to the exclusion of over 19 lakh people from the citizens' list in the State. There have been reports of many eligible citizens being excluded due to their lack of ability to provide suitable documents.

Differences between states and the centre:

- Besides Bihar, several State governments such as Kerala, West Bengal, Punjab have objected to the implementation of NPR 2020.
- **The workforce for the updation of NPR 2020 has to be provided by the State governments.** With many States objecting to the new format and its contentious clauses, the exercise may reach a deadlock.

For more information on this issue refer:

[CNA: 25TH DEC – Union Cabinet clears NPR update, census](#)

[CNA: 25TH DEC – What connects the NPR, NRIC and Census?](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. Habitable planet

- The exoplanet **K2-18b**, 124 light-years away from the earth, as research points out, **may be habitable**.
- The exoplanet is 2.6 times the radius and 8.6 times the mass of Earth and **orbits its star within the habitable zone, where temperatures could allow liquid water to exist**.

2. J&K uses 2011 data for delimitation

- The latest readjustment of boundaries of constituencies in the States and other Union Territories has been done **on the basis of the 2001 census and in future, it will be carried out based on the 2031 census**.
- **The new Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) will be the only place in the country to undergo a delimitation exercise based on the population figures recorded in the 2011 census.**
- The unique provision for J&K was enabled through an amendment introduced in the **J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019**.
- Delimitation was last done in J&K in 1995.

G. Tidbits

1. Kerala's LIFE scheme crosses a milestone

- Around two lakh families in the State of Kerala have been allotted houses under the **Kerala government's 'Livelihood, Inclusion, Financial Empowerment' (LIFE) housing scheme**.

2. Two-day Araku Utsav off to a colourful start in Vizag

- The two-day **Araku Utsav 2020** has begun at **Araku Valley in Visakhapatnam district**.
- The primary aim of organizing such festivals was to **spread the tribal tradition and culture to other regions**.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

1. Which of the following statements are correct?
 1. The Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES), is a facility of the CSIR's Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology.
 2. LaCONES is associated with the establishment of Genetic Resource Bank for Indian wildlife.

Options:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer:

Option c

Explanation:

- The Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES), a dedicated facility of CSIR's Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad uses modern biotechnologies for conservation of endangered wildlife.
 - CCMB-LaCONES is the only laboratory in India that has developed methods for collection and cryopreservation of semen and oocytes from wildlife and successfully reproducing endangered blackbuck, spotted deer and Nicobar pigeons.
 - Through this work, it has established Genetic Resource Bank for Indian wildlife. So far, genetic resources from 23 species of Indian wild animals have been collected and preserved. This facility would increase the collection of genetic resources from wildlife through collaboration with zoos in India. It would also facilitate exchange of genetic material between the Indian zoos for maintaining genetic diversity and conservation management made accessible to scientists and wildlife managers for implementing conservation programs.
2. Which of the following statements are correct with respect to The Indian Spotted Chevrotain, often referred to as the Mouse Deer?
1. Mouse deer is predominantly nocturnal in nature.
 2. Its range is limited to only the deciduous forests of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
 3. It is listed in schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and declared as Least Concern species by IUCN (2017).

Options:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1,2 and 3

Answer:

Option b

Explanation:

- The Indian Spotted Chevrotain (*Moschiola meminna*) is often referred to as the Mouse Deer.
 - The animal is nocturnal in habit.
 - The species is distributed across India, in the Deccan peninsula including Eastern and Western Ghats, Central India, Gangetic plains except West Bengal and the Terai region bordering India and Nepal.
 - As per a recently published paper, the species belongs to an ancient group of primitive ruminants, and is listed in schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and declared as Least Concern species by IUCN (2017).
3. Which of the following correctly define the term 'seigniorage'?
- a) It denotes simultaneous buying and selling of currency in different markets to take advantage of differing prices for the same asset.
 - b) It denotes an import tax imposed on certain goods in order to prevent dumping or counter export subsidies.
 - c) It denotes an export tax imposed on certain goods in order to ensure its sufficient availability in the domestic markets.
 - d) It denotes difference between the face value of coins/currency and their production costs.

Answer:

Option d

Explanation:

- Seigniorage is the difference between the value of currency/money and the cost of producing it. It is essentially the profit earned by the government by printing currency.
- Arbitrage involves the simultaneous buying and selling of securities, currency, or commodities in different markets or in derivative forms in order to take advantage of differing prices for the same asset.
- Countervailing duties denotes an import tax imposed on certain goods in order to prevent dumping or counter export subsidies.

4. Which of the following correctly denotes 'K2-18b'?

- a) An exo planet lying in the hospitable zone of a star.
- b) The asteroid passing closest to the earth's orbit.
- c) The nearest neutron star to the universe.
- d) The newly discovered dwarf planet.

Answer:

Option a

Explanation:

- The exoplanet K2-18b, 124 light-years away from the earth, as research points out may be habitable.
- The exoplanet is 2.6 times the radius and 8.6 times the mass of Earth and orbits its star within the habitable zone, where temperatures could allow liquid water to exist.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In the backdrop of the global spread of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), discuss both short term as well as long term policy measures and actions to limit the damage caused by such epidemics. (15 marks, 250 words)
2. The signing of the peace deal between the U.S. and Taliban though marks a significant step forward it also brings new challenges to India's interests in the region. Comment. Discuss what should be India's efforts to maintain its interests in the region. (10 marks, 150 words)