

23 May 2022: PIB Summary for UPSC

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1. PM expresses happiness about ASHA workers getting WHO Award

Syllabus:

GS 1: Role of women and women's organization.

Prelims: WHO Director General's Global Health Leaders' Award, ASHA Workers.

Mains: Role of ASHA scheme in uplifting the status of women.

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his happiness on the occasion of entire ASHA workers getting awarded the WHO Director General's Global Health Leaders' Award.

Background:

- The [World Health Organization](#) tweeted that more than 1 million ASHA workers have been honoured with the WHO Director General's Global Health Leaders' Award for their tremendous work in linking the community with the health system.
- In response to the tweet, PM Modi congratulated all the ASHA workers for their achievements.
- He appreciated the female volunteers and said that they are the frontline warriors in ensuring the nation's health.
- With the help of ASHA workers, rural people can access primary healthcare facilities. Their dedication and determination are admirable.

ASHA workers:

- The Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers are volunteers from within the community who are trained to provide information and aid people in accessing the benefits of various healthcare schemes of the government.
 - They act as a bridge connecting marginalized communities with facilities such as primary health centres, sub-centres, and district hospitals.
 - The role of these community health volunteers under the [National Rural Health Mission](#) (NRHM) was first established in 2005.
 - ASHAs are primarily married, widowed, or divorced women between the ages of 25 and 45 years from within the community.
 - They must have good communication and leadership skills; should be literate with formal education up to Class 8, as per the program guidelines.
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2. ONGC first Indian Exploration & Production company to trade domestic gas on Indian Gas Exchange

Syllabus: GS 3: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways, etc.

Prelims: IGX, gas exchange

Mains: Significance of gas exchange for India.

Context:

ONGC has become the first gas producer to trade domestic gas on the Indian Gas Exchange.

Background:

- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) started trading on the Indian Gas Exchange. With this, ONGC has become the first Exploration and Production (E&P) company in India to trade domestic gas on the Indian Gas Exchange.
- The first online trade was made on 23 May 2022 by ONGC Director (Onshore) In-charge Marketing Anurag Sharma on India's first automated national level Gas Exchange, IGX.
- ONGC is ready to realize higher value for every molecule of gas available for sale and the quantity sold through the Gas Exchange will be enhanced slowly.

What is IGX?

- Indian Gas Exchange Ltd. (IGX) is India's first automated national level Gas Exchange to promote and sustain an efficient and robust gas market and foster gas trading in the country.
- The IGX started operations in June 2020 as a Gas Trading Platform and has been operating as the Gas Exchange since December 2020.
- The Exchange operates under the regulatory framework of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB).

Features of Gas Exchange:

- The exchange features multiple buyers and sellers to trade in spot and forward contracts at designated physical hubs.
- It is a neutral and transparent marketplace where both buyers and sellers trade Gas as the underlying commodity.
- The contracts traded at the Exchange are for compulsory specific physical delivery and settlement of the trade is subject to the condition that such contracts are non-transferable in nature and without any netting-off thereby.

3. Renewed MoUs articulate new strategic direction for Indo-Canada S&T cooperation

Syllabus: GS 2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Prelims: Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation

Mains: India's bilateral relationship with Canada, the significance of agreements between India and Canada.

Context:

Renewal of MoUs signed between India and Canada.

Background:

- The Ministry of Science and Technology under the Indo-Canada (2005) agreement, signed MoUs with the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and National Research Council Canada (NRC), respectively.
- In the 7th India-Canada Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee (JSTCC) meeting in Ottawa, the MoUs were renewed.

Objective:

- The objective of the renewal of MoUs is to set priorities for the coming period in a variety of innovative fields.

Focus Areas of the MoUs:

The secretary of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has highlighted the focus areas of collaboration:

- National Missions
- Quantum Computing
- Artificial Intelligence
- Cyber-Physical Systems, etc.

The Joint Cooperation Committee:

- The meeting of the committee is held every two years to set the priorities for the upcoming period and also review the progress of the ongoing collaboration.
- Innovative fields that are being focused on:
 - Agriculture and food security
 - Health sciences and related technologies
 - Clean technologies and environmental research
 - Marine and polar research, quantum and artificial intelligence, and
 - Human capacity development and researcher mobility.
- In the recent meeting, both the countries agreed upon reviewing and monitoring the progress of the priorities on bilateral Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) collaboration for 2022-2024.

Significance of the collaboration:

- Science, Technology, and Innovation act as the key pillars of strengthening the [bilateral relationship between India and Canada](#). It provides benefits to both countries.
- The meeting provided an opportunity to articulate a renewed strategic direction for the implementation of the 2005 Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of Canada.

4. Prime Minister participates in an event to launch the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity

Syllabus: GS 2, Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Prelims: IPEF

Mains: IPEX as the engine of global economic growth, the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region for India.

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined US President Joe Biden in the launch of a US-initiated trade framework aimed at deeper cooperation among like-minded countries in areas like clean energy, supply-chain resilience, and digital trade.

What is IPEF?

- Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) is a declaration of a collective desire to make the Indo-Pacific region an engine of global economic growth.
- The framework was launched in May 2022 and there are 11 other nations, apart from India and the United States, in the Framework (IPEF).
- Other members in the partnership are Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The region represents 40 percent of the world's GDP.

Why this IPEF?

- The Indo-Pacific is projected to be the largest contributor to global growth over the next 30 years with 60 percent of the world's population.
- The region represents 40 percent of the world's GDP. The partnership will enable the US and its allies to decide on the rules of the road and will deepen economic engagement among partners that is crucial for continued growth, peace, and prosperity.

The objective of the IPEF:

- It has a stated objective of strengthening economic linkages among participating nations.
- However, its underlying purpose would be to counter China's growing economic influence in the region.

- The IPEF seeks to strengthen economic partnership amongst participating countries with the objective of enhancing resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness in the Indo-Pacific region.

Key takeaways of the PM's participation:

- PM Modi said that IPEF will help in making the Indo-Pacific region an engine of global economic growth.
- India has been the central hub for trade flows having the oldest commercial port in the world in Lothal, Gujarat.
- PM Modi also underlined that the foundation of resilient supply chains must be the 3T's - Trust, Transparency, and Timeliness.
- He said that India is committed to a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region and believes that deepening economic engagement among partners is crucial for continued growth, peace, and prosperity.

5. Investment Incentive Agreement between the Government of India and the Government of the United States of America

Syllabus: GS2, Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Prelims: Investment Incentive Agreement

Mains: India's bilateral relationship with the USA.

Context:

India and the US ink Investment Incentive Agreement for more fiscal support.

Background:

- An Investment Incentive Agreement (IIA) has been signed between the government of India and the government of the United States of America in Tokyo, Japan.
- The IIA was signed by the Indian Foreign Secretary and the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) CEO.
- The agreement supersedes another similar pact signed between the governments of India and the US in 1997.

- There have been significant developments since the signing of the earlier agreement, including the creation of the DFC, which acts as the US government's development finance agency and is a successor to the erstwhile Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC).

Significance of IIA:

- The IIA has been signed to keep pace with the additional investment support programs offered by the DFC, such as debt, equity investment, investment guarantee, investment insurance or reinsurance, feasibility studies for potential projects, and grants.
- The IIA agreement would lead to enhanced investment support provided by DFC in India, which in turn would lead to India's development.

Role of DFC:

- DFC invests in development projects primarily in lower- and middle-income countries.
- It is a successor agency of the former Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) after the enactment of the recent legislation in the USA, the BUILD Act 2018.
- It is worth mentioning here that DFC or their predecessor agencies, since 1974, have provided investment support worth \$5.8 billion of which \$2.9 billion till now.
- DFC has offered investment support in India in sectors that are crucial for development like Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing, healthcare financing, renewable energy, SME financing, financial inclusion, infrastructure, etc.

6. Union Health Minister addresses 75th session of World Health Assembly WHO HQ

Syllabus: Important International institutions, agencies, and fora- their structure, and mandate.

Prelims: World Health Assembly

Mains: Critically analyze the role of the WHO in ensuring universal health and well-being.

Context:

The Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare addressed the 75th session of the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

Key points:

- The minister stressed the need to build a resilient Global Supply Chain to enable equitable access to vaccines and medicines.
- He also called for streamlining WHO's approval process for vaccines and therapeutics and strengthening WHO to build a more resilient global health security architecture.
- He said that the theme of the year that is linking peace with health is timely and pertinent because sustainable development and universal health and well-being cannot be achieved without peace.
- India has a firm belief in the role of WHO in achieving the goal of “health for all”. The member states including India should collectively ensure that the WHO is fit for the goal, keeping the current realities in mind.

Dismay and Concerns:

- India raised dismay and concern over the World Health Organization's (WHO) recent exercise on all-cause excess mortality at the Assembly.
- India reiterated that country-specific authentic data published by the statutory authority has not been taken into account.
- The union health minister conveyed the collective disappointment of the Central Council of Health and Family Welfare, a representative body of Health Ministers from all States of India, as they passed a unanimous resolution regarding the approach and methodology of WHO on excess mortality reports.

What is the issue?

- On 6th May 2022, the WHO stated in its report on excess deaths due to Covid, that approx. 4.7 million deaths have happened in India, directly or indirectly attributable to COVID-19 in India in 2020 and 2021.
- However, then India strongly objected to the use of mathematical models for projecting excess mortality estimates in view of the availability of authentic data.

Key recommendations:

- The minister acknowledged the key role played by WHO to mitigate the global health crisis and said there was a need to ensure the centrality of WHO in global architecture and also increase contribution to the organization by members.
 - The steps would have to be linked to an accountability framework, a value for money approach, and genuine engagement with members.
 - Besides equitable access to medical countermeasures including aspects related to intellectual property, the need for cost-effective research, technology transfer, and regional manufacturing capacities must also remain an important focus area of WHO.
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