

11/04/2024

TOPICS COVERED

1. Jobs, inflation key issues in LS polls, finds survey 11 April (GS Paper III: Employment)
2. SC quashes ₹7,687-crore award against DMRC as 'patently illegal' (11 April) (GS Paper II: Curative Petition/Power)
3. Katchatheevu demands thinking outside the box (11 April) (GS Paper II: IR)
4. Pandora's box: On the electoral bonds scheme, emerging details (11 April) (GS Paper II: Election)
5. The advent of a holistic approach to 'one health' (11 April) (GS Paper II: Health Sector)

Jobs, inflation key issues in LS polls, finds survey 11 April (GS Paper III: Employment)

Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis are most concerned about these issues; nearly two-thirds of those surveyed (62%) across localities expressed that getting work has become increasingly difficult

- A pre-poll survey conducted by CSDS-Lokniti before the 2024 general elections highlighted unemployment and price rise as major concerns among nearly half of the electorate.
- Around 62% of those surveyed expressed that getting jobs had become more difficult, with the highest concern observed in cities (65%).
- The difficulty in finding jobs was notable across localities, with 62% in villages and 59% in towns sharing the sentiment.
- Among men, 65% felt that getting jobs had become harder, compared to 59% of women. Only 12% believed that finding jobs had become easier.
- The concern about job scarcity was particularly high among Muslims (67%), followed by Hindus from Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes (63% each), and Scheduled Tribes (59%).
- Conversely, 17% of Hindu upper castes felt that jobs were easier to obtain, while 57% disagreed.
- Regarding price rise, 71% of respondents believed that prices had increased, with the percentage rising to 76% among the poor, Muslims, and Scheduled Castes.
- Many voters attributed shrinking job opportunities to both State governments (17%) and the Centre (21%).
- Similarly, for the issue of price rise, 26% held the Centre responsible, 12% blamed State governments, and 56% attributed it to both.

Quality of life

- In the last five years, about 48% of respondents felt that their quality of life had improved to some extent, while 14% reported no change, and 35% indicated a decline.
- Only 22% of respondents stated that they could meet their needs and save money from their household income. Others faced various financial challenges: 36% couldn't save but could fulfill their needs, 23% faced difficulties, and 12% couldn't fulfill their needs at all.
- A significant majority (55%) believed that corruption had increased, marking a rise from the 2019 survey where 40% shared this view. Only 19% believed that corruption had decreased, down from 37% in 2019. Among those who perceived an increase, 25% blamed the Centre, 16% blamed the States, and 56% blamed both.
- Despite these concerns, nearly half of the respondents acknowledged that development in the past five years had been inclusive.

EC cracks down on anonymous hoardings (11 April)

- The Election Commission (EC) has taken action to address anonymous political hoardings.
- The EC has requested the disclosure of the names of publishers and printers of these hoardings.
- This disclosure is deemed necessary for regulating campaign financing and holding individuals accountable.
- Clear identification of printers and publishers on printed poll-related materials, including hoardings, is mandated.
- The directive was issued following complaints about anonymous hoardings in spaces controlled by municipal authorities.
- The goal is to ensure traceability and accountability, particularly concerning content that violates the Model Code of Conduct or statutory provisions.

SC declines apology by Ramdev, Patanjali (11 April)

- The Supreme Court rejected a second round of apologies from Baba Ramdev, Patanjali Ayurved Limited, and its managing director Acharya Balkrishna in a contempt case.
- The court expressed concern about fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies potentially misleading the public about their products' health benefits.
- Justice Hima Kohli emphasized that consumers often suffer harm to their health despite paying for products advertised with promising claims.
- The court criticized objectionable and misleading advertisements by Patanjali Ayurved.
- Contempt proceedings were initiated against Patanjali Ayurved and Mr. Balkrishna on February 27 for violating an undertaking given to the court in November 2023.
- The undertaking stated that they would refrain from advertising "cures" in violation of the 1954 Act.

- Justice Kohli questioned the sincerity of the apologies, suggesting they might not be taken seriously considering the breach of the previous undertaking.

Ire on State

- During the hearing, the Supreme Court criticized the Uttarakhand State Licensing Authority for ignoring misleading advertisements.
- Justice Kohli chastised a senior official from the authority for their inaction, accusing them of negligence.
- The court expressed dissatisfaction with the authority's failure to address the issue, suggesting they were indifferent or inactive.
- The contempt case against Patanjali Ayurved and Mr. Balkrishna was scheduled for April 16.

SC quashes ₹7,687-crore award against DMRC as 'patently illegal' (11 April) (GS Paper II: Curative Petition/Power)

- The Supreme Court overturned an arbitral tribunal award that required the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) to pay ₹7,687 crore to Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Limited.
- This award was challenged by DMRC through a curative petition.

The concept of a curative petition is not explicitly mentioned in any specific article of the Indian Constitution. Instead, it has been established by the Indian judiciary through judicial pronouncements, particularly by the Supreme Court of India.

The Supreme Court recognized the concept of a curative petition in the landmark case of **Rupa Ashok Hurra vs. Ashok Hurra & Anr (2002)**.

It is an extraordinary legal remedy available to correct gross miscarriages of justice or to address the fundamental principle of natural justice.

The legal basis for the curative petition primarily lies in the Supreme Court's inherent powers under **Article 142** of the Indian Constitution, which empowers the court to pass such orders as may be necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.

- Chief Justice Chandrachud, leading the three-judge Bench, stated that DMRC faced a "grave miscarriage of justice" from the 2017 arbitral award.
- The Supreme Court also reversed its own 2021 judgment, which upheld the arbitral award, disagreeing with a Division Bench of the Delhi High Court.
- Chief Justice Chandrachud criticized the court's interference in 2021, stating that it reinstated an illegal award burdening a public utility with excessive liability.
- DMRC's argument highlighted that the tribunal disregarded crucial evidence from the Commissioner Metro Rail Safety (CMRS) certification while assessing the termination of the agreement.
- The Bench agreed with DMRC's stance, noting the misinterpretation of the CMRS certificate's relevance in previous judgments.

- Consequently, the Supreme Court ordered the halt of execution proceedings for enforcing the arbitral award and mandated the refund of any amount deposited by DMRC following the 2021 judgment.

Karnataka HC quashes Centre's circular banning 23 breeds of 'dangerous' dogs (11 April)

- The High Court of Karnataka invalidated a circular issued by the Centre on March 12, which banned 23 breeds of "ferocious and dangerous" dogs.
- The court ruled that the Centre lacked the authority to impose a blanket ban on dog breeds through a circular, as it wasn't empowered by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 or the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules.
- Justice M. Nagaprasanna delivered the verdict in response to a petition filed by King Solomon David and Mardona Jones, residents of Bengaluru.
- The circular was issued without consultation with stakeholders, despite an affidavit submitted by the Centre to the Delhi High Court promising to consider a PIL petitioner's representation for banning certain dog breeds after consulting all stakeholders.
- Although the court annulled the circular, it emphasized that the Centre could still amend the rules to impose the ban but must conduct consultations with stakeholders, including organizations certifying dog breeds and animal rights groups like People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).
- The court also emphasized the responsibility of pet owners to ensure accountability for any injuries caused by their dogs, including covering the costs of treatment for victims.
- Some of the banned dog breeds include Pitbull Terrier, Tosa Inu, American Staffordshire Terrier, Fila Brasileiro, American Bulldog, Rottweiler, and dogs commonly known as Ban Dog or Bandog.

Katchatheevu demands thinking outside the box (11 April) (GS Paper II: IR)

It would be unwise to attempt to create a Berlin Wall in the Palk Strait; instead, the Palk Bay must be thought of as the common heritage of India and Sri Lanka



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi assigned the task of addressing the Indian fishermen's issue with Sri Lanka to Pon Radhakrishnan during his first term.
- Radhakrishnan invited 200 fishermen from Rameshwaram, along with the writer, to discuss the matter in New Delhi.
- During a public meeting at the BJP headquarters, fishermen spoke about Katchatheevu's ceding and the Sri Lankan Navy shooting Indian fishermen.

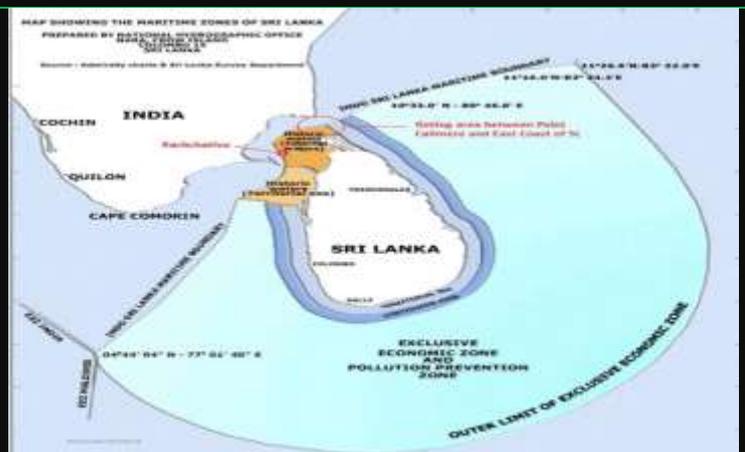
- The writer highlighted that none of the fishermen addressed the core problem: the **rights of Sri Lankan Tamil fishermen to fish in their waters.**
- The root cause of the issue from Tamil Nadu's perspective is a conflict of interests between the governments unwilling to reopen the Katchatheevu matter and Indian fishermen reluctant to give up their livelihood.
- Unilaterally scrapping bilateral agreements can strain India-Sri Lanka relations and relations with other neighboring countries, as such agreements hold significance and cannot be arbitrarily nullified.
- The Centre should prioritize ensuring **the livelihoods of fishermen on both sides of the Palk Strait instead of creating barriers**, as India and Sri Lanka's well-being are intertwined.

The quest for a peaceful solution

- The writer began researching the issue of Katchatheevu in the early 1990s with the aim of finding a peaceful solution to protect fishermen's livelihoods.
- Primary sources related to Katchatheevu were inaccessible as they were taken away by New Delhi, and there was no Right to Information Act at the time.
- **In 1974, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, then in the Opposition, likened the gifting of Katchatheevu to a form of land donation (Shoodan) during a Lok Sabha debate.**
- BJP leader Jana Krishnamurthy attempted to file a case in the Madras High Court seeking judicial remedy but failed due to lack of evidence proving Katchatheevu's ownership by the Raja of Ramnad.

The writer proposed two solutions:

- **Obtain Katchatheevu on lease in perpetuity, allowing India to use it for fishing while upholding Sri Lanka's sovereignty.**
- **Allow Indian fishermen to fish in Sri Lankan waters up to five nautical miles, similar to agreements allowing Sri Lankan fishermen to fish near the Wadge Bank.**



- Both the AIADMK and DMK governments in Tamil Nadu supported the writer's suggestions, but New Delhi's refusal to reopen the issue posed the greatest obstacle.

Introduction of trawling

- In the 1960s and 1970s, India faced a financial crisis, and Indira Gandhi incentivized ventures earning foreign exchange, leading to the introduction of **bottom trawlers in the Palk Bay for prawn fishing.**
- Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka allowed Indian fishermen to venture deep into Sri Lankan waters, facilitated by Tamil fishermen from Sri Lanka employed as refugees.
- **Bottom trawlers caused significant damage to the sea bed, depleting fish availability on the Indian side of the Palk Bay and forcing Indian fishermen into Sri Lankan waters.**

Bottom Trawling

- Bottom trawling is a fishing method where a large, weighted net (trawl) is dragged along the ocean floor to catch fish and other marine life.
- There are two main types:
- **Benthic trawling:** Drags the net at the very bottom of the ocean.
- **Demersal trawling:** Drags the net just above the ocean floor targeting species living closer to the bottom (like cod or squid).



Components of a Bottom Trawler

- **Fishing Vessel:** A specialized vessel powerful enough to tow the heavy gear.
- **Winches:** Powerful winches to reel in and deploy the trawl net.
- **Trawl Net:** A large, cone-shaped net with a closed end (codend) to hold the catch.
- **Otter Boards (Trawl Doors):** Heavy doors attached to the net to keep it open horizontally and on the seafloor.
- **Ground Gear (Bottom Tending Gear):** Rollers, chains, or bobbins at the bottom of the net, sometimes designed to intentionally disturb the seafloor.
- **Concerns About Bottom Trawling**
- **Habitat Destruction:** Bottom trawling can damage fragile seabed ecosystems like coral reefs and seagrass beds, leading to long-term impacts on marine biodiversity.
- **Bycatch:** The practice catches large amounts of non-target species, including juveniles and endangered species, which are often discarded.
- **Overfishing:** Unsustainable levels of bottom trawling can lead to fish stock depletion.

Management and Regulation

- **Fishing Zones:** Many countries have designated areas where bottom trawling is restricted or banned to protect sensitive habitats.
- **Gear Modifications:** Research is focused on trawl modifications to reduce bycatch and minimize seabed disturbance.
- **Quotas and Catch Limits:** Regulating the total allowable catch helps prevent overfishing of specific species.

- Despite bottom trawlers being banned in Sri Lanka, Indian trawlers continued to operate there, leading to complaints from Sri Lankan fishermen about sea bed destruction.
- India's Sri Lanka policy focused on maintaining good relations with the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, leading to the ceding of Katchatheevu in 1974, despite objections from some officials.
- M. Karunanidhi's response to the ceding was questioned, as he did not take legal action like B.C. Roy did in a similar situation regarding Berubari.
- Even if India were to regain control of Katchatheevu, the issues faced by Indian fishermen would persist, including venturing into Sri Lankan waters and the use of banned bottom trawlers.
- If Sri Lanka were to file a case against India at the International Court of Justice, India's reputation could suffer, similar to China's case with the Philippines, which resulted in a negative judgment against China.
- Tamil Nadu politicians raising concerns about Katchatheevu should recognize that the problems faced by Indian fishermen stem from their activities and the use of bottom trawlers, rather than solely the issue of territorial control.

The need for bold decisions

- The challenges in the Palk Bay region present opportunities for innovative solutions.
- Instead of viewing the Palk Bay as a barrier, it should be seen as a bridge between India and Sri Lanka.
- Proposal to convert the Palk Bay into a common heritage area, allowing equitable access to marine resources for both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen.
- Government of India should ban fishing equipment banned in Sri Lanka to promote fair fishing practices.
- Proposed formula: Sri Lankan fishermen fish for three days, Indian fishermen for three days, with one day as a holiday.
- Encouragement of Tamil fishermen from both countries to form cooperative societies and engage in deep-sea fishing ventures together.
- Modification of trawlers into vessels to assist a mother ship, fostering joint ventures and repairing damage to the livelihoods of Tamil fishermen caused by Indian counterparts.
- Emphasis on bold initiatives for a win-win outcome in the region.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION: GS PAPER II: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Question: Discuss the historical background and current challenges surrounding the Katchatheevu issue and its impact on India-Sri Lanka relations. Analyze the role of political leaders, both at the national and state levels, in addressing the Katchatheevu issue and protecting the livelihoods of fishermen in the Palk Bay region. (250 Words/15 Marks)

ANSWER APPROACH:

- Introduce the answer with a brief historical background and current challenges surrounding the Katchatheevu issue.
- Then mention its strain on India-Sri Lanka relations and the sensitivity for local communities.

- Further mention role of Political Leaders at national and state level in addressing the Katchatheevu issue.
- Then bring the Way Forward.
- In the last conclude with emphasize on the need for continuous dialogue and a long-term solution addressing the concerns of fishermen on both sides and ensuring regional stability.

ANSWER:

The Katchatheevu issue, stemming from the ceding of the island to Sri Lanka in 1974, has been a longstanding challenge affecting India-Sri Lanka relations and the livelihoods of fishermen in the Palk Bay region. This territorial dispute has led to strained diplomatic ties and escalated tensions between the two countries. Despite efforts by political leaders at both the national and state levels to address the issue, finding a sustainable solution remains elusive.

Role of Political Leaders at national and state level in addressing the Katchatheevu issue

- Historically, the gifting of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka was met with opposition within India, with leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee likening it to a form of land donation during a parliamentary debate.
- However, subsequent attempts to seek judicial remedies, such as filing cases in the Madras High Court, were unsuccessful due to the lack of evidence proving ownership by the Raja of Ramnad.
- The failure to address the core issue of territorial control has perpetuated the challenges faced by Indian fishermen.
- Political leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and state-level authorities like Pon Radhakrishnan, have attempted to engage with the Katchatheevu issue.
- However, efforts to reopen discussions and renegotiate bilateral agreements have been met with resistance, both domestically and internationally.
- The reluctance of Indian fishermen to give up their livelihoods, coupled with the sensitivity of the issue for local communities in Tamil Nadu, complicates the resolution process.

Way Forward

- To protect the livelihoods of fishermen in the Palk Bay region and improve India-Sri Lanka relations, bold and innovative solutions are needed.
- One proposed approach is to view the Palk Bay as a common heritage area, allowing equitable access to marine resources for both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen.
- This could involve banning fishing equipment that is banned in Sri Lanka to promote fair fishing practices and implementing a rotational fishing schedule to ensure equal opportunities for both sides.
- Moreover, encouraging cooperation among Tamil fishermen from both countries through cooperative societies and joint ventures could foster a sense of solidarity and mutual benefit.
- Additionally, modifying trawlers into vessels to assist a mother ship and repairing damage caused by Indian counterparts could mitigate the adverse effects of bottom trawling and promote sustainable fishing practices.

Thus, addressing the Katchatheevu issue requires a nuanced and collaborative approach that prioritizes the livelihoods of fishermen on both sides of the Palk Bay while respecting the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. Continuous dialogue and bold initiatives are essential to finding a long-term solution that ensures regional stability and prosperity.

Pandora's box: On the electoral bonds scheme, emerging details (11 April) (GS Paper II: Election)

- The State Bank of India was compelled by the Supreme Court of India to reveal information on donations via electoral bonds to political parties.
- Investigation results, including those from The Hindu, disclosed that **33 companies with over ₹1 lakh crore in aggregate losses from 2016-17 to 2022-23 donated close to ₹582 crore, with 75% going to the ruling BJP.**
- **Concerns arise as loss-making companies donated significant sums, profit-making firms surpassed their aggregate profits in donations, and some donor firms didn't report data on net profits or direct taxes.**
- **Newly incorporated firms made donations before the stipulated three-year period, raising suspicions of rule-breaking and questionable funding sources.**
- **Questions linger about whether these loss-making firms were fronts for money laundering, whether firms not reporting profits/losses were shell companies, and whether profitable donor firms evaded taxes.**

Money Laundering

- Money laundering is the process of concealing the illegal origins of money (profits from crime, corruption, etc.) and making it appear as though it came from legitimate sources.
- It involves a series of transactions to disguise the money trail and obscure its true ownership.

Key Stages of Money Laundering:

1. **Placement:** Illicit money is introduced into the financial system (e.g., deposited into a bank account or used to purchase assets).
2. **Layering:** The funds are moved through complex transactions (often across borders) to distance them from their illegal origins. This can involve multiple accounts, shell companies, and financial instruments.
3. **Integration:** The laundered funds are re-introduced into the legitimate economy, appearing as though they came from a legal source (e.g., invested in real estate or businesses).

Shell Companies

- **Shell companies are corporations or other business entities that exist on paper but have no real office space, significant assets, or active business operations.**
- **They are often created in secrecy jurisdictions with lax regulations and oversight.**

How Shell Companies Facilitate Money Laundering

- **Obscuring Ownership:** Shell companies hide the identity of the true owners (beneficial owners) of illicit funds.
- **Disguising Transactions:** They are used to create a complex web of transactions that makes it difficult to trace the origin of the funds.
- **International Transfers:** Shell companies in different countries can move money across borders, making it even harder to track.

- Reserve Bank of India and Election Commission of India officials voiced concerns about the bonds scheme being used for money laundering and tax evasion, despite which the Union Finance Ministry proceeded with it.
- Over five and a half years, political parties cashed in thousands of crores via electoral bonds, with the BJP receiving the majority.
- While the Supreme Court's decision to end the opaque scheme is commendable, significant donations from dubious sources before each election highlight issues with campaign financing.
- It is crucial for Parliament and regulatory institutions to conduct thorough investigations into donations and potential law-breaking by donors and recipients post-election.
- The judiciary should urge these institutions to act, and a cleanup of campaign and electoral financing is necessary for a healthy democracy.

The advent of a holistic approach to 'one health' (11 April) (GS Paper II: Health Sector)

The 'National One Health Mission' is the result of recognition that only a coordinated approach will ensure a better response to disease outbreaks

- The emergence of pandemics like COVID-19 has highlighted the interdependence between humans, animals, and the environment.
- Pandemics not only affect humans but also livestock, as seen with outbreaks like lumpy skin disease.

Lumpy Skin Disease

- Lumpy skin disease (LSD) is a viral disease affecting primarily cattle.
- It's caused by the lumpy skin disease virus (LSDV), a poxvirus of the capripoxvirus genus.
- The disease is characterized by the development of multiple nodules on the skin and other parts of the body (skin, internal organs, and mucous membranes).



Symptoms of LSD:

- High fever
- Enlarged superficial lymph nodes
- Multiple nodules (2-5 cm) on the skin and mucous membranes
- Lameness due to swelling in the limbs
- Reduced milk production

- Weight loss
- In severe cases, death (especially in unvaccinated animals or those with low immunity)

Transmission of LSD:

- Lumpy skin disease can be transmitted by:
 - Blood-sucking insects like flies, mosquitoes, and ticks
 - Direct contact between infected and healthy animals
 - Contaminated fomites (objects or materials that can carry infectious agents)
 - Inhalation of infected aerosols
 - Placental transmission from mother to offspring

Prevention and Control:

- Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent LSD.
- Quarantine measures and movement restrictions for cattle in affected areas can help control the spread.
- Controlling insect populations that can transmit the virus is also important.

- The cabinet's decision on the '**National One Health Mission**' is a significant milestone in addressing this interconnectedness.

National One Health Mission

- An umbrella initiative launched by NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) aimed at fostering a collaborative approach to address zoonotic diseases (diseases transmissible between animals and humans) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
- It leverages the existing programs of various ministries and departments to create a more holistic disease control and pandemic preparedness strategy.

Objectives of the Mission:

- **Strengthening inter-sectoral coordination:** Bringing together human health, animal health, and environmental sectors for a unified response.
- **Building capacities:** Developing trained personnel and infrastructure for disease surveillance, diagnosis, and prevention.
- **Promoting One Health research:** Encouraging collaborative research efforts to understand zoonotic diseases and AMR.
- **Enhancing pandemic preparedness:** Improving national capabilities to identify, prevent, and respond to future pandemics.

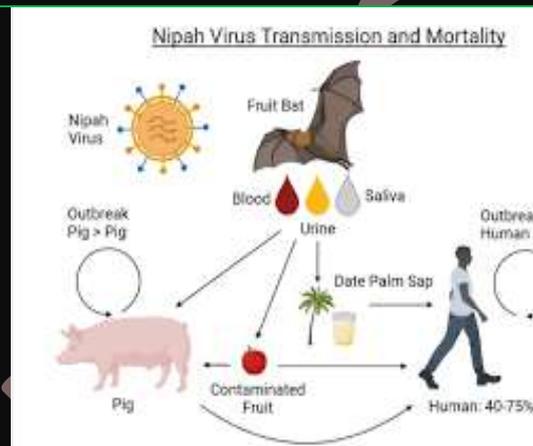
- In July 2022, the Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) endorsed the establishment of the mission.
- Thirteen Ministries and Departments, along with science funding agencies, including the Department Of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology (DBT), and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), came together to shape the mission.
- Ministries involved include Health, Animal Husbandry, Environment, Defence, and AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy).
- The mission takes a holistic approach to One Health and pandemic preparedness.
- There was consensus among the leadership to establish a National Institute for One Health.
- Located in Nagpur, the institute will serve as the anchor for coordinating national activities and as the nodal agency for international coordination.
- The foundation stone of the institute was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 11, 2022.

More a journey

- The 'National One Health Mission' aims to:
 - Develop strategies for integrated disease surveillance and joint outbreak response.
 - Coordinate research and development (R&D) efforts.
 - Ensure seamless information sharing to control both routine and pandemic diseases.
 - Diseases affecting animals, like foot and mouth disease or lumpy skin disease, can impact productivity and trade.
 - Diseases such as canine distemper also affect wild animals and their conservation.
- A coordinated approach is essential to prepare for diseases like avian influenza or Nipah, which could cause the next pandemic.

Nipah Virus (NiV)

- Nipah virus is a zoonotic virus, meaning it can spread from animals to humans. Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family are its natural reservoir.
- NiV causes severe illness in both animals and humans, with a high fatality rate (case fatality rates estimated between 40-75%).
- Symptoms range from asymptomatic (no symptoms) to acute respiratory illness and fatal encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).



History of Outbreaks

- **First Outbreak:** The disease was first identified in 1999 among pig farmers in Malaysia and Singapore.
- **Subsequent Outbreaks:** Since then, outbreaks have occurred almost annually in parts of South Asia, primarily Bangladesh and India.

Recent Outbreaks (India and Bangladesh)

- **Kerala, India (2018, 2021, 2023):** Several cases and deaths in the state of Kerala were recorded in these years.
- **Bangladesh:** Bangladesh experiences near-annual outbreaks, with cases reported with alarming frequency.

Transmission

- **Animal-to-Human:** Contact with infected animals (pigs, bats) or their bodily fluids. Consumption of date palm sap contaminated by bat excretions has been a major route in Bangladesh.
- **Human-to-Human:** Transmission can occur through close contact with bodily fluids of an infected person.

Prevention

- **No Specific Vaccine:** Currently, no specific vaccines or treatments exist for NiV infection in humans. Prevention relies heavily on:
 - Avoiding contact with sick animals in endemic areas.
 - Practicing good hygiene and washing fruits thoroughly, especially date palm sap.
 - Early detection and isolation of infected individuals to prevent onward transmission.

Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD)?

- FMD is a highly contagious viral disease primarily affecting cloven-hoofed animals, including cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and other livestock.
- It spreads rapidly and can cause significant economic losses to the livestock industry.
- While rarely fatal in adult animals, it can lead to severe illness and high mortality in young animals.



Clinical Signs of FMD:

- High fever
- Blister-like sores in the mouth, on the tongue, teats, and hooves
- Excessive salivation and drooling
- Lameness and reluctance to move
- Reduced milk production
- Weight loss

Transmission:

- Direct contact with infected animals through bodily fluids (saliva, nasal discharge, milk).
- Indirect contact with contaminated objects and surfaces (farming equipment, vehicles, etc.).
- Airborne transmission over short distances is possible.

Impact of FMD:

- Economic losses due to trade restrictions, decreased production, and animal culling.
- Disruption of the livestock industry and food supply chain.

Prevention and Control:

- **Vaccination:** Effective vaccines are available and play a crucial role in controlling FMD.
- **Biosecurity measures:** Strict quarantine procedures, movement restrictions, and disinfection protocols.
- **Culling:** In some cases, culling infected and exposed animals helps contain outbreaks

- **Strong R&D efforts** are crucial for pandemic preparedness, including developing vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics.
- **Departments involved include** the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), and Department of Pharmaceuticals.
- **Academic centers and the private sector are also vital stakeholders in this effort.**
- **Close coordination between the Centre and States** is necessary for effective implementation.
- Working with States will help introduce the One Health approach at the ground level and refine the strategy based on implementation lessons.

A network of laboratories

- The '**National One Health Mission**' has established a national network of high-risk pathogen laboratories, including Biosafety level 3 (BSL 3) and Biosafety level 4 (BSL 4) facilities.

- Bringing together these laboratories managed by different departments enhances disease outbreak response across human, animal, and environmental sectors.
- This integrated approach improves resource utilization and facilitates better coordination to tackle diseases involving multiple species, such as Nipah virus outbreaks.
- India aims to strengthen its epidemiology and data analytic capabilities under the mission.
- Efforts include applying artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and disease modeling to address public health challenges.
- Capacity building in epidemiology across sectors is being coordinated.
- Emerging techniques like genomic surveillance from wastewater, which showed promise during the COVID-19 pandemic, will be expanded.
- This expansion will cover various sentinel sites, including locations where animals (livestock or wildlife) gather, to monitor a wider range of diseases across human, livestock, and environmental domains.

A global subject

- During India's presidency of the G-20, the 'One Health' approach was emphasized and supported by all member countries.
- The goal is to collaborate on building better surveillance capacity, analytic capability, and establishing an international network of 'One Health' institutes.
- 'One Health' extends beyond diseases to encompass broader issues like antimicrobial resistance, food safety, plant diseases, and the impact of climate change on these aspects.
- Intersectoral cooperation involving governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector, and citizens is crucial for addressing 'One Health' challenges effectively.
- An actionable framework focusing on 'One Earth, One Health' and 'Health for All' can drive progress towards achieving these goals.

IIM-A among world's top 25 for management studies; JNU ranked India's top university (11 April)

- The QS World University Rankings by Subject were announced, and Indian institutions have made significant strides.
- Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad is ranked among the top 25 globally for business and management studies.
- IIM Bangalore and IIM Calcutta are ranked among the top 50 globally.
- Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) is the highest-ranked university in India, securing the 20th position globally for development studies.
- The Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences in Chennai is ranked 24th globally for dentistry studies.
- India faces challenges in providing high-quality tertiary education due to exploding demand, as recognized by the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020.
- However, there is reassurance in the increase in the number of Indian programs featured across subject rankings, from 355 to 454.

- In the broader Asian regional context, India ranks second in the number of universities featured (69), trailing China (101).
- India also holds the fourth position in the total number of ranked entries (454) after China, Japan, and South Korea.
- India ranks fifth regionally for the number of top 200 entries.

On unemployment in Indian States (11 April)

- A recent report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Institute for Human Development (IHD) found that two-thirds of unemployed individuals in India are young graduates, indicating a pressing need for policy intervention.
- The report highlights a lack of understanding regarding the causes of unemployment in India, emphasizing the urgency for addressing this knowledge gap.
- The analysis focuses on unemployment in major states of India (excluding Union Territories) among individuals aged 15 and above, using data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) of 2022-23.
- Fieldwork in Manipur was not completed due to conflict, so it's excluded from the analysis.
- The coverage of smaller states in the sample is relatively lower compared to larger states, so the estimates provided should be viewed as indicators rather than definitive measurements of unemployment factors.

An analysis of unemployment

- Figure 1 depicts the unemployment rates across Indian states for the year 2022-23, arranged from highest to lowest.
- Goa has the highest unemployment rate at almost 10%, which is more than three times the national average of 3.17%.
- Interestingly, four of the top five states with high unemployment rates (Goa, Kerala, Haryana, and Punjab) are comparatively richer states.
- Western Indian states like Maharashtra and Gujarat have unemployment rates much lower than the national average.
- All northern states (Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh) and most southern states have unemployment rates higher than the national average, except Karnataka.
- Out of the 27 states considered, 12 states have unemployment rates lower than the national average.
- Despite lower unemployment rates in larger states like Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, there's a conundrum as many states with rates below the national average have per capita incomes lower than the national average, except for Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The determinants of unemployment

- Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between unemployment rates and the share of the labor force involved in self-employment.

- The trend line in Figure 2 slopes downward, indicating a negative relationship: states with a higher proportion of self-employment tend to have lower unemployment rates.
- Since much of the self-employment in India is informal, states with a significant informal workforce can easily absorb job-seekers.
- However, it's unclear whether the relationship is causal. Does a lack of self-employment opportunities lead to high unemployment, or do states with high unemployment rates deter individuals from pursuing self-employment?
- Informal self-employment is largely found in agriculture and rural areas. Hence, examining the urban share of the labor force provides insight.
- Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between the urban share of the labor force and the unemployment rate.
- There's a clear positive relationship, indicating higher unemployment rates in highly urbanized states.
- This explains why states like Goa and Kerala, which are highly urbanized, experience high unemployment rates, while states like Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh have lower rates.
- Urbanized states have smaller agrarian sectors, leading to fewer informal job opportunities compared to rural areas, where agriculture serves as a significant source of informal employment.

On education and employment

- Gujarat and Maharashtra, despite being highly urbanized, have lower unemployment rates compared to states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, which have lower urban labor force shares.
- The discussion around the ILO-IHD report has focused on the correlation between education and unemployment.
- Figure 4 illustrates this correlation across Indian states, showing a clear positive relationship.
- Kerala, with a highly educated labor force (30% are graduates), experiences high unemployment.
- Gujarat and Maharashtra have a relatively lower share of graduates in their labor force (around 14% and 20% respectively) and consequently lower unemployment rates despite being richer and urbanized.
- Several reasons might explain this outcome, including the possibility that graduates lack the skills needed for the modern sector, highlighting the need for improved teaching infrastructure and standards.
- Another explanation could be that graduates aspire to high-wage jobs in line with their skills, and if the modern sector doesn't expand sufficiently to absorb them, unemployment results.
- State policies also play a significant role in influencing unemployment rates.
- As developing economies like India undergo structural transformation, with a decrease in the role of agriculture and an increase in urbanization and educational attainment, there is upward pressure on the unemployment rate.
- Policy focus should be on employment generation to counteract these trends and address unemployment effectively.

Major religions adopt varying stance over inclusion of transgender people (11 April)

- The Vatican released a new document rejecting the concept of changing one's biological sex, disappointing transgender individuals who had hoped for a more welcoming approach from the Catholic Church under Pope Francis.
- This disapproving stance towards gender transition is not unique to the Catholic Church; other denominations, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, also assert that God's design consists of two distinct and complementary sexes — male and female — determined by biological sex, not self-perception.
- However, some mainline Protestant denominations, like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, welcome transgender individuals as members and clergy. In fact, they elected an openly transgender man as a bishop in 2021.
- In Islam, there isn't a single central religious authority, so policies on transgender issues can vary across different regions. Abbas Shouman, secretary-general of Al-Azhar's Council of Senior Scholars in Cairo, stated that sex conversion is completely rejected in their view, as it goes against God's creation.
- In Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa decades ago, allowing for official support for gender transition surgery within the Shia theocracy's framework.

Recognised for millennia

- In Hindu society in South Asia, traditional roles are prescribed for men and women, but people of non-binary gender expression have been recognized for millennia and played important roles in holy texts.
- Transgender individuals have been revered throughout South Asian history, with many attaining significant positions of power under Hindu and Muslim rulers. A survey in 2014 estimated that around 3 million transgender people live in India alone.
- Sanskrit, the ancient language of Hindu scriptures, has the vocabulary to describe three genders — masculine, feminine, and gender-neutral.
- Some Hindus believe transgender people possess special powers and the ability to bless or curse, leading to stereotyping that causes fear and marginalization within the community. Many transgender individuals live in poverty without proper access to healthcare, housing, and employment.
- In 2014, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh officially recognized transgender people as citizens deserving of equal rights.
- The Supreme Court of India affirmed that it is the right of every human being to choose their gender, emphasizing that recognition of the group is a human rights issue, not merely a social or medical issue.
- Reform Judaism is accepting of transgender people and allows for the ordination of transgender rabbis.

- Jewish traditional wisdom allows for the exploration of gender identity and expression beyond those typically associated with the sex assigned at birth, as reflected in mystical texts like the Kabbalah.

Orthodox views

- **Orthodox Judaism is often challenging for transgender individuals due to its emphasis on binary gender and strict separation between men and women.**
- Transgender people may face difficulties in Orthodox communities, such as **determining where to sit during worship if they have not medically transitioned.**
- Rabbi Avi Shafran of Agudath Israel of America acknowledges the challenges faced by transgender individuals but maintains that Jewish religious law dictates living according to one's assigned gender at birth.
- In Buddhism, traditional adherence to binary gender roles is prevalent, especially in monastic traditions where men and women are segregated and assigned specific roles.
- The **Thai Sangha Council** attempted to ban ordinations of transgender individuals, reflecting the strong binary gender beliefs in **Theravada Buddhism.**
- However, some Theravada traditions have eased restrictions by ordaining gender nonconforming individuals based on their sex recorded at birth.
- **Mahayana and Vajrayana schools of Buddhism are more flexible, allowing exceptions for transgender individuals, while the Jodo Shinshu sect is particularly inclusive in ordaining transgender monks.**
- In Tibetan Buddhism, Tashi Choedup, an openly queer monk, was ordained without being asked about their gender identity, aligning with Buddhist doctrine that prioritizes spiritual qualities over gender.
- Many Buddhist denominations, especially in the West, intentionally include transgender people in their gatherings or sanghas.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS:

Question 1: Which of the following is a direct environmental concern associated with bottom trawling?

- (a) Increase in coral reef growth
- (b) Depletion of target fish stocks
- (c) Reduction in seawater salinity
- (d) Decline in phytoplankton populations

Question 2: Consider the following statements about bottom trawling:

1. It can lead to the destruction of seabed habitats.
2. It has no impact on non-target species of fish.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Question 3: Which of the following is a common characteristic of shell companies, often making them attractive tools for money laundering?

- (a) Extensive business operations across multiple countries
- (b) Transparent ownership structures
- (c) Lack of physical presence and minimal economic activity

(d) Strict adherence to financial regulations

Question 4: The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an international organization that primarily works to:

- (a) Facilitate international remittance payments.
- (b) Set global standards to combat money laundering.
- (c) Regulate cryptocurrency transactions.
- (d) Investigate cases of tax evasion.

Question 5: Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) primarily affects which species?

- (a) Poultry
- (b) Cattle
- (c) Goats and sheep
- (d) Pigs

Question 6: Which of the following is a common symptom of Lumpy Skin Disease in cattle?

- (a) Excessive sweating
- (b) Continuous sneezing
- (c) Formation of nodules on the skin
- (d) Tail biting and restlessness

Question 7: The Lumpy Skin Disease Virus (LSDV) belongs to which virus family?

- (a) Poxviridae
- (b) Retroviridae
- (c) Adenoviridae
- (d) Herpesviridae

Question 8: Which of the following best describes the focus of the National Institute for One Health (NIOH)?

- (a) Research and development of vaccines for neglected tropical diseases.
- (b) Training of community health workers for primary care in rural areas.
- (c) Coordination and research on zoonotic diseases and antimicrobial resistance.
- (d) Regulatory oversight and approval of new pharmaceutical drugs.

Question 9: The establishment of the National Institute for One Health aligns with the objectives of which broader initiative?

- (a) National Digital Health Mission
- (b) Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)
- (c) National One Health Mission
- (d) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

Question 10: Consider the following statements about the National Institute for One Health:

1. It is located in Nagpur, Maharashtra.
2. It will act as a nodal agency for international One Health collaborations.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Question 11: Foot-and-mouth disease is caused by a:

- (a) Bacteria
- (b) Fungus
- (c) Protozoan parasite
- (d) Virus

Question 12: Transmission of foot-and-mouth disease CANNOT occur through:

- (a) Direct contact with infected animals
- (b) Contaminated feed
- (c) Mosquito bites
- (d) Airborne particles over short distances

<p>Question 1: Which of the following is a direct environmental concern associated with bottom trawling?</p> <p>(a) Increase in coral reef growth (b) Depletion of target fish stocks (c) Reduction in seawater salinity (d) Decline in phytoplankton populations</p>	<p>Answer: (b) Depletion of target fish stocks Explanation: Option (a) is incorrect: Bottom trawling can damage coral reefs, not increase their growth. Option (b) is correct: Overfishing due to unsustainable bottom trawling can deplete populations of the intended catch. Option (c) is incorrect: Bottom trawling has little impact on overall seawater salinity. Option (d) is incorrect: While bottom trawling can disrupt the seafloor, its effects on phytoplankton are not as direct as on fish stocks.</p>
<p>Question 2: Consider the following statements about bottom trawling: 1. It can lead to the destruction of seabed habitats. 2. It has no impact on non-target species of fish. Which of the above statements is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2</p>	<p>Answer (a): 1 only Explanation: Statement 1 is correct. The heavy gear used in bottom trawling can damage fragile marine ecosystems on the ocean floor. Statement 2 is incorrect. Bottom trawling results in the capture of large amounts of bycatch (non-target species), causing damage to marine biodiversity.</p>
<p>Question 3: Which of the following is a common characteristic of shell companies, often making them attractive tools for money laundering?</p> <p>(a) Extensive business operations across multiple countries (b) Transparent ownership structures (c) Lack of physical presence and minimal economic activity (d) Strict adherence to financial regulations</p>	<p>Answer: (c) Lack of physical presence and minimal economic activity Explanation: Shell companies are often set up with little or no real business activity, making it easier to disguise illicit transactions. Options (a), (b), and (d) are not typical characteristics of shell companies used for money laundering.</p>
<p>Question 4: The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an international organization that primarily works to:</p> <p>(a) Facilitate international remittance payments. (b) Set global standards to combat money laundering. (c) Regulate cryptocurrency transactions. (d) Investigate cases of tax evasion.</p>	<p>Answer: (b) Set global standards to combat money laundering. Explanation: FATF is the leading international body that develops and promotes policies to fight money laundering and terrorist financing.</p>
<p>Question 5: Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) primarily affects which species?</p> <p>(a) Poultry (b) Cattle (c) Goats and sheep (d) Pigs</p>	<p>Answer: (b) Cattle Explanation: While LSD can sometimes occur in other species like Asian water buffalo, its primary targets are cattle.</p>
<p>Question 6: Which of the following is a common symptom of Lumpy Skin Disease in cattle?</p> <p>(a) Excessive sweating (b) Continuous sneezing (c) Formation of nodules on the skin (d) Tail biting and restlessness</p>	<p>Answer: (c) Formation of nodules on the skin Explanation: The characteristic nodules or lumps on the skin are a hallmark symptom of LSD, which gives the disease its name</p>
<p>Question 7: The Lumpy Skin Disease Virus (LSDV) belongs to which virus family?</p> <p>(a) Poxviridae</p>	<p>Answer: (a) Poxviridae</p>

<p>(b) Retroviridae (c) Adenoviridae (d) Herpesviridae</p>	<p>Explanation: LSDV is a member of the Poxviridae family, which also includes viruses like smallpox and monkeypox.</p>
<p>Question 8: Which of the following best describes the focus of the National Institute for One Health (NIOH)? (a) Research and development of vaccines for neglected tropical diseases. (b) Training of community health workers for primary care in rural areas. (c) Coordination and research on zoonotic diseases and antimicrobial resistance. (d) Regulatory oversight and approval of new pharmaceutical drugs.</p>	<p>Answer: (c) Coordination and research on zoonotic diseases and antimicrobial resistance. Explanation: The NIOH is a central institution designed to facilitate a collaborative approach to addressing health threats at the intersection of human, animal, and environmental health.</p>
<p>Question 9: The establishment of the National Institute for One Health aligns with the objectives of which broader initiative? (a) National Digital Health Mission (b) Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) (c) National One Health Mission (d) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)</p>	<p>Answer: (c) National One Health Mission Explanation: The NIOH serves as a key institute for research, capacity building, and coordination under the mission, which aims at strengthening the One Health approach nationwide.</p>
<p>Question 10: Consider the following statements about the National Institute for One Health:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. It is located in Nagpur, Maharashtra. 4. It will act as a nodal agency for international One Health collaborations. <p>Which of the above statements is/are correct? (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2</p>	<p>Answer: (c) Both 1 and 2 Explanation: The NIOH's location and role in international coordination are highlighted in your provided input.</p>
<p>Question 11: Foot-and-mouth disease is caused by a: (a) Bacteria (b) Fungus (c) Protozoan parasite (d) Virus</p>	<p>Answer: (d) Virus Explanation: The foot-and-mouth disease virus (FMDV) belongs to the Picornaviridae family.</p>
<p>Question 12: Transmission of foot-and-mouth disease CANNOT occur through: (a) Direct contact with infected animals (b) Contaminated feed (c) Mosquito bites (d) Airborne particles over short distances</p>	<p>Answer: (c) Mosquito bites Explanation: FMDV is not transmitted by mosquitoes. The main routes include direct contact, contact with contaminated objects, and sometimes short-distance airborne transmission.</p>