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News Analysis (28 Jan, 2020)

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India - Brazil

Why in News

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro attended India's 71st **Republic Day parade** as the chief guest for the event.

India-Brazil Business Forum held during his visit and 15 Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) were signed between the two countries.

Key Points



- **MoUs Signed:** The MoUs related to investments, trade facilitation, social security, agriculture, defence and double taxation were signed.
- **India - Brazil Business Leader's Forum:** The demand for reconstitution of the Forum was raised to make it more relevant and contemporary to businesses in both countries

- **Trade Target:** India-Brazil has set target of USD 15 billion trade by 2022.
 - It needs to be noted that **Brazil** is one of the **most important trading partners** of India in the **entire LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean) region**.
 - However, bilateral trade between the two countries stands at a dismal \$8 billion.
- **Tourism:** Both the countries announced for **visa-free travel** which is expected to deepen ties, especially in the business and tourism sector.
- **Cultural Cooperation:** India's services in the wellness sector like Yoga and Ayurveda is expected to grow as Brazil has a strong community of Yoga and Ayurveda practitioners.
 - Brazil has an association of Ayurveda (ABRA) and the third International Congress on Ayurveda was held from 12 to 15 March 2018 in Rio de Janeiro (a city in Brazil).
- **Case at the World Trade Organization**
 - The Brazilian government has challenged the **minimum price (Fair and Remunerative Price -FRP) for sugarcane set by the Indian government** at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
 - Indian farmers' groups have requested the Brazilian President to withdraw its complaint against India.
 - Brazil has responded that it is **open to finding a "non-litigious solution"** to the dispute. Also, added that the present issue would not affect bilateral collaborations on biofuels derived from sugarcane.

Note

- India and Brazil share a very close and multifaceted relationship at **bilateral level as well as in plurilateral fora** such as **BRICS, IBSA, G4, G20**, BASIC, International Solar Alliance, Biofuture Platform and in the larger multilateral bodies such as the UN, WTO, UNESCO and WIPO.
- The **strategic partnership** was established between Brazil and India in 2006.

Fair and Remunerative Prices for Sugarcane

- Minimum Support Price (MSP) for the different agricultural crops viz., food grains, oilseeds, fibre crops, sugarcane and tobacco are announced by the Government of India before their sowing seasons.
- In the case of sugarcane, the announced price is termed as a statutory minimum price, rephrased as Fair Remunerative Price (FRP).
- There is statutory binding on sugar factories to pay the minimum announced price and all those transactions or purchase at prices lower than this are considered illegal.

Source: PIB

Andhra Pradesh to Scrap Legislative Council

Why in News

The Andhra Pradesh (AP) assembly has passed a resolution to abolish the state's **Legislative Council**.

- The Andhra Pradesh government has to send the resolution to the **Governor** for his approval and then to the Parliament for **ratification**.
- The move comes after the Legislative Council referred the **Capital Decentralisation Bill** to a Select Committee for review.
- Andhra Pradesh's Legislative Council, set up in 1958, was abolished in 1985, then **reconstituted** in **2007**.

Note: Select committees are formed for a specific purpose, for instance, to deliberate on a particular bill. Once the Bill is disposed of, that select committee ceases to exist.

Legislative Council

- **Basis For Formation**

India has a **bicameral system of legislature**. Just as the Parliament has two Houses, the states can also have a Legislative Council (LC) in addition to the Legislative Assembly through Article 169 of the Constitution.

- **Abolition and Creation - Article 169**

The Parliament can abolish a Legislative Council (where it already exists) or create it (where it does not exist) by a simple majority, if the legislative assembly of the concerned state, by a special majority, passes a resolution to that effect.

Note

- **Simple Majority** implies a majority of the members of each House present and voting.
- **Special Majority** implies:
 - A majority of the total membership of the assembly and
 - A majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of the assembly present and voting.
- **States having Legislative Councils**
 - Besides Andhra Pradesh, the other states having Legislative Councils are Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Karnataka.
 - Legislative assemblies of Rajasthan, Assam and Odisha have passed resolutions for the formation of the Council.

- **Arguments in Favour of the Formation of the Council**

- A Legislative Council can help check hasty actions by the directly elected House.
- The Legislative Council also enables non-elected individuals to contribute to the legislative process.

- **Arguments Against**

- The Legislative Council can delay legislation.
- It can also be used to park leaders who have not been able to win an election.
- It strains state finances.

Way Forward

- The Parliamentary Committee that examined the Rajasthan Bill for the formation of the Legislative Council advocated for the evolution of a **national policy for creation/abolition of Legislative Councils**.
- It argued that **the status of Legislative Councils cannot be of temporary in nature** depending on the mood of the Government of the day nor can be abolished once created, only at the whims and fancy of a newly elected Government in the State.

Source: TH

Novel Strain of Coronavirus

Why in News

Recently, **the Lancet** published a study titled **“Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China”**.

- The study highlighted the **high mortality due to the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV infection)** which caused clusters of severe respiratory illness similar to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) coronavirus.
- It also pointed out that there are major gaps in the knowledge of the origin, epidemiology, duration of human transmission and clinical spectrum of the disease.

The Lancet

- It is a weekly peer-reviewed general British medical journal.
- It is among the world's oldest, most prestigious, and best known general medical journals.

Key Points

- **Findings of the Study**

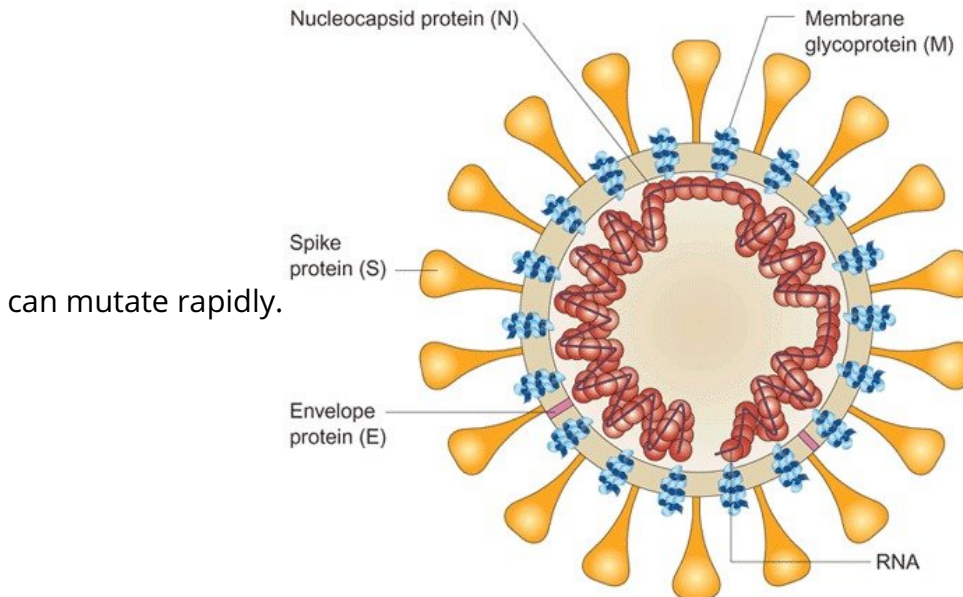
- Most of the infected patients were men.
- Less than half had underlying diseases (diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular ailments).
- 66% of patients had been exposed to Huanan seafood market.

- Researchers collected and analysed data by real-time **Reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR)**.

RT-PCR is a laboratory technique combining reverse transcription of RNA into DNA and next-generation sequencing.

Coronavirus

- **Coronaviruses** are a specific family of viruses, with some of them causing **less-severe damage**, such as the common cold and others causing **respiratory and intestinal diseases**.
- A coronavirus has many **“regularly arranged” protrusions on its surface**, because of which the entire virus particle looks like an emperor’s crown, hence the name **“coronavirus”**.
- **It is an RNA virus with ribonucleic acid (RNA)** as its genetic material instead of **deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)**. That means the virus blends with its host’s DNA and



Due to this property of rapid mutation, coronaviruses can be quite different from one another.

- These can affect **humans** as well as **mammals including pigs, cattle, cats, dogs, martens, camels, hedgehogs and some birds**.
- So far, there are **four known disease-causing coronaviruses**, among which the best known are the **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) coronavirus** and the **Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus**, both of which can cause **severe respiratory diseases**.

- In the newly identified coronavirus, a direct link with the disease has not been established yet. It was speculated that it was related to the SARS epidemic of 2002.
- **World Health Organisation (WHO)** has said that further investigations and research are required to determine the source, modes of transmission and extent of infection caused by the new virus.

Difference Between DNA and RNA Viruses

- A virus is a biological agent that can self-replicate inside a host cell. The infected cells by viruses may produce thousands of new copies of the original virus at an extraordinary rate.
- The genetic material of a virus can be either DNA or RNA. The viruses that contain DNA as their genetic material are called the **DNA viruses**. **RNA viruses**, on the other hand, contain RNA as their genetic material.
 - DNA viruses are mostly **double-stranded** while RNA viruses are **single-stranded**.
 - **RNA mutation rate is higher** than the DNA mutation rate.
 - **DNA replication takes place in the nucleus** while **RNA replication takes place in the cytoplasm**.
 - DNA viruses are stable while RNA viruses are unstable.

Mesothelioma

Why in News

There have been allegations against Johnson & Johnson that its Baby Powder (talcum powder) contains asbestos which can cause Mesothelioma, a type of rare cancer.

- Talc or talcum is a **naturally occurring clay mineral** mined from the earth which is used in baby powder because of its ability to absorb moisture.
- Mines that collect talc also **contain asbestos** that has been linked to health risks like **mesothelioma and asbestosis**.

Key Points

- **Malignant mesothelioma** is an aggressive and deadly form of cancer that occurs in the thin layer of tissue that covers the majority of internal organs (mesothelium).

- It is **divided into different types** based on what part of the mesothelium is affected.
 - **Pleural mesothelioma**- affects the tissue that surrounds the lungs (pleura).
 - **Peritoneal mesothelioma**- affects the tissue in the abdomen.
 - **Pericardial mesothelioma**- affects the tissue around the heart.
 - **Mesothelioma of tunica vaginalis**- affects the tissue surrounding the testicles.
- **Symptoms**
 - Chest pain
 - Painful coughing
 - Unusual lumps of tissue under the skin on chest
 - Unexplained weight loss
 - Abdominal pain
 - Abdominal swelling
 - Breathing difficulty
- Signs and symptoms of other types of mesothelioma are unclear since these forms of the disease are very rare.
- **Prevention**
 - **Reducing exposure to asbestos** may lower the risk of mesothelioma.
Asbestos exposure is the primary risk factor for this disease.

Asbestos

- It is a **mineral that is found naturally in the environment**. Asbestos fibres are **strong and resistant to heat**, making them useful in a wide variety of applications, such as in insulation, brakes, shingles, flooring and many other products.
- During the mining process or removal of asbestos insulation, **asbestos dust** is created which settles in the lungs or in the stomach if inhaled or swallowed. They can cause irritation that may lead to mesothelioma and **asbestosis**.
 - It can take 20 to 60 years or more for mesothelioma to develop after asbestos exposure.
 - However, the exact process of this is still not understood.
 - **Asbestosis** is a **chronic, inflammatory lung disease**, but it's **benign**. Its sole cause is asbestos exposure.
- Most people with asbestos exposure never develop mesothelioma indicating that other factors like inheriting a predisposition to cancer may be involved in determining whether someone gets mesothelioma.

Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve

- **Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve** is located in Chandrapur district in **Maharashtra**.
- It is **Maharashtra's oldest and largest national park**.

- It is one of India's 50 "**Project Tiger**" - **Tiger reserves**.
 - Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve was established as the **second Tiger Reserve** in Maharashtra in 1993-94.
 - The **first Tiger Reserve** established in the State is **Melghat Tiger Reserve** (1973-74).
- It represents Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Teak Forests in the Tiger habitat and has viable tiger population of more than 40 tigers.

Source: TOI

Colour-Coded Warnings by the IMD

Why in News

Recently, the **Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)** has issued a **yellow weather warning** for **heavy rain and snowfall** in Himachal Pradesh.

Yellow weather warning indicates **severely bad** weather spanning across several days.

Key Points

- **Colour- Coded Weather Warning**
 - It is issued by the **IMD** whose objective is to alert people ahead of severe or hazardous weather which has the potential to cause damage, widespread disruption or danger to life.
 - Warnings are updated daily.
 - The IMD uses 4 colour codes are:
 - **Green (All is well):** No advisory is issued.
 - **Yellow (Be Aware):** Yellow indicates **severely bad** weather spanning across several days. It also suggests that the weather could change for the worse, causing disruption in day-to-day activities.
 - **Orange/Amber (Be prepared):** The orange alert is issued as a warning of **extremely bad weather** with the potential of disruption in commute with road and rail closures, and interruption of power supply.
 - **Red (Take Action):** When the extremely bad weather conditions are certainly going to **disrupt** travel and power and have significant risk to life, the red alert is issued.
- These alerts are **universal** in nature and are also issued during **floods**, depending on the amount of water rising above land/in a river as a result of torrential rainfall.
For instance, when the water in a river is 'above normal' level, or between the 'warning' and 'danger' levels, a yellow alert is issued.

India Meteorological Department

- IMD was established in 1875.
- It is an agency of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences** of the Government of India.
- It is the principal agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology

Source: TH
