News Analysis (06 Oct, 2020)

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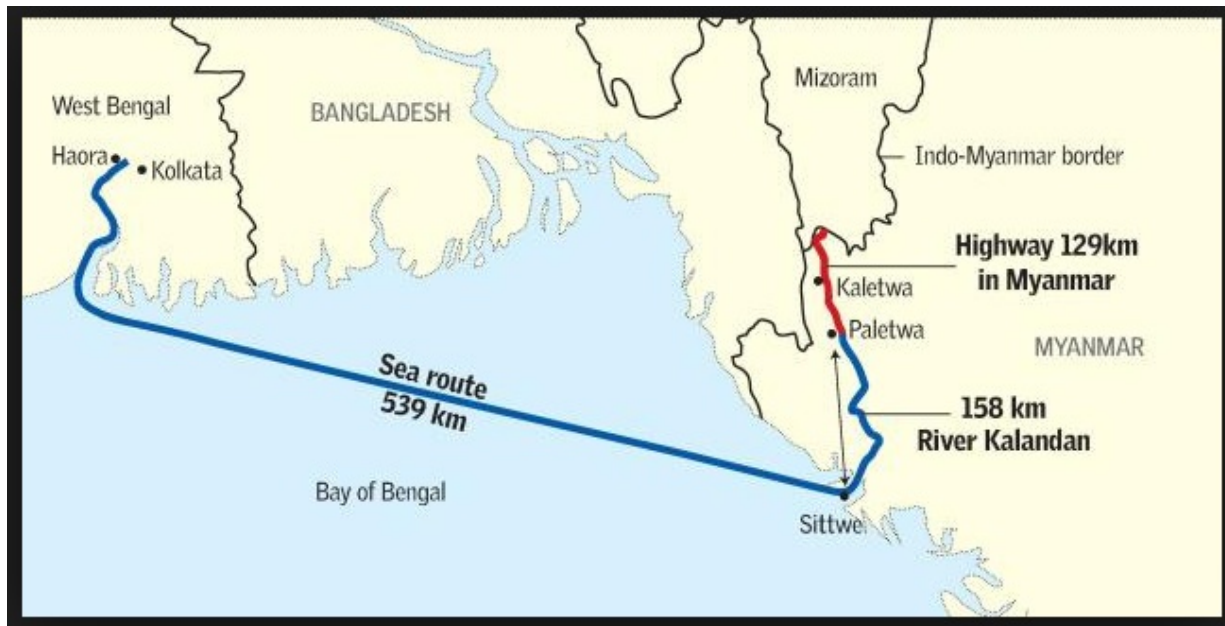
India-Myanmar Relationship

Why in News

A two-day visit by the Foreign Secretary of India and the Army Chief to Myanmar completed with greater engagement between **India and Myanmar.**

Key Points

- **Health and Pandemic:** As a part of India's **Medical or Drug Diplomacy** a package of **3,000 vials** of the **antiviral Remdesivir** given to assist Myanmar in its fight against the pandemic.
    - India has shown willingness to prioritise Myanmar in sharing Covid -19 vaccines, when available.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Operationalisation of the crucial **Sittwe port** in Myanmar's Rakhine state **by March 2021** is committed.
    - The two sides also discussed progress in the ongoing Indian-assisted infrastructure projects such as the **India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway** and the **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project**. The project will link **Kolkata to Sittwe in Myanmar** and then from **Myanmar's Kaladan river to India's north-east.**

- **Security:** India has been concerned over some militant groups like the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) from the North-East region taking shelter in Myanmar.
    - Myanmar handed over 22 cadres of Indian insurgent groups in May 2020.
    - The maintenance of security and stability in their border areas and mutual commitment not to allow their respective territories to be used for activities inimical to each other were re-stressed.
- **Transition to Democracy:** Myanmar successfully conducted the 4th meeting of the **21st Century Panglong Peace Conference in Nay Pyi Taw.**
    - **The Union Peace Conference: 21st Century Panglong** is a continuing peace conference started in **2016.**
    - **Aim:** To have a stable political environment in Myanmar with peaceful transition into democracy.
    - **Outcome of 4th meeting:** The government of Myanmar and ten armed ethnic groups signed a framework agreement for the **National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).**
    - **Indian Support:** India assured continued support in sharing experiences in constitutionalism and federalism to assist Myanmar in its democratic **transition.**
- **Rohingya Issues:** India came forward for support for ensuring safe, sustainable and speedy return of **Rohingya refugees** from refugees camps of Bangladesh. Building on the progress made under the **Rakhine State Development Programme (RSDP)**, India proposed to finalise projects under phase-III of the programme, including setting up of a **skills training centre** and **upgrading of agricultural mechanisation.**

- **Liaison Office:** With the formal inauguration of liaison office in Nay Pyi Taw, India has taken one more **significant step** towards establishing its **embassy** in Nay Pyi Taw.

  India has its embassy in **Yangon,** the former capital.
- **Other Highlights:**
  - A **bust of Bal Gangadhar Tilak** in **Mandalay Jail** is a symbolic gesture for a closer relationship and understanding mutual existence.
    - **Mandalay Jail Connection:** Between **1908 and 1914,** he spent 6 years in Mandalay Prison for defending the actions of revolutionaries Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki.
    - **Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki** had tried to assassinate the District Judge, Mr. Kingsford by throwing bombs at the carriage in which he was supposed to travel.
  - **Investment:** With investments of over USD 1.2 billion, Myanmar has the highest Indian investment in any country in South Asia.

    India's development cooperation in Myanmar is estimated at USD 1.4 billion.
- **Energy:** The two countries are also expanding partnership in the area of **energy cooperation.**

  Recently, India approved an investment of over USD 120 million in the Shwe Oil and Gas project.

India-Myanmar

- **India and Myanmar** have shared cultural roots and historical relations, apart from the strategic, economic, social and political ties.
- Myanmar is a **member of both Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),** which is an organization of East Asian nations as well as **the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** which bridges South and South-East Asia.
- Connectivity projects through Myanmar help India overcome its **Chicken-neck dilemma (Siliguri Corridor).** Myanmar is also necessary for the **development of North-Eastern India.**
- Myanmar stands at the confluence of India's **Neighbourhood First** and **Act East Policy** and **India-Myanmar partnership** is at the heart of India's vision to create a connected and cooperative neighbourhood.
- Recently, **India and Myanmar** had signed **10 agreements with a focus on socio-economic development of Myanmar**, during Myanmar President U Win Myint's visit to India.
- Myanmar's growing closeness with China and the recent proposal of **China Myanmar Economic Corridor** is a cause of concern for India amidst growing **India-China tension.**

Nobel Prize for Physiology/Medicine 2020

Why in News

Americans **Harvey J Alter** and **Charles M Rice,** and British scientist **Michael Houghton** were awarded the <u>**Nobel Prize for Medicine or Physiology**</u>, 2020 for the discovery of the Hepatitis C Virus.
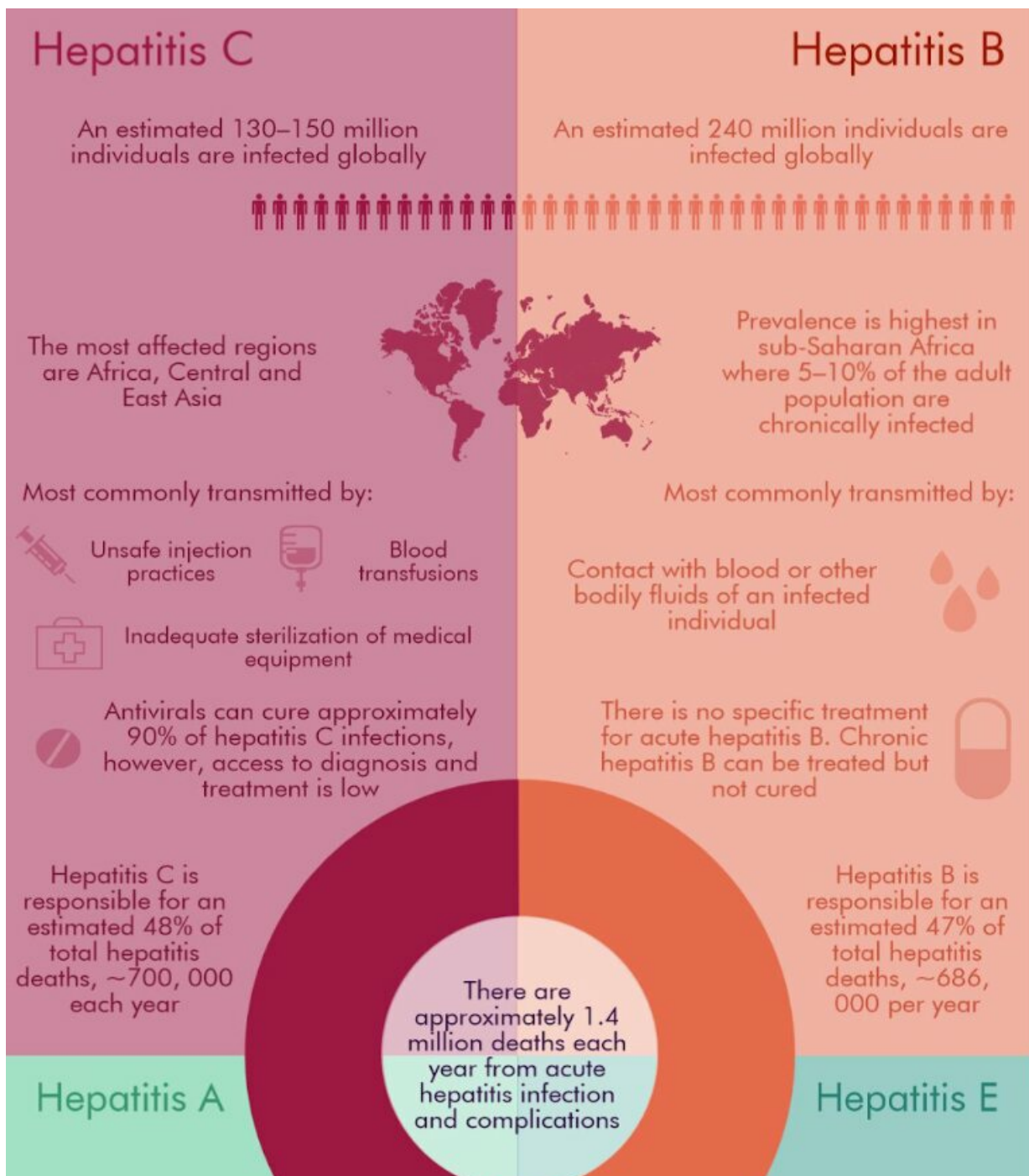
- The Hepatitis C virus was discovered in **1982** by **screening millions of DNA samples.**
- The Nobel award comes with a gold medal and prize money of 10 million Swedish **kronor** (over USD 1,118,000) and was created by Swedish inventor **Alfred Nobel.**
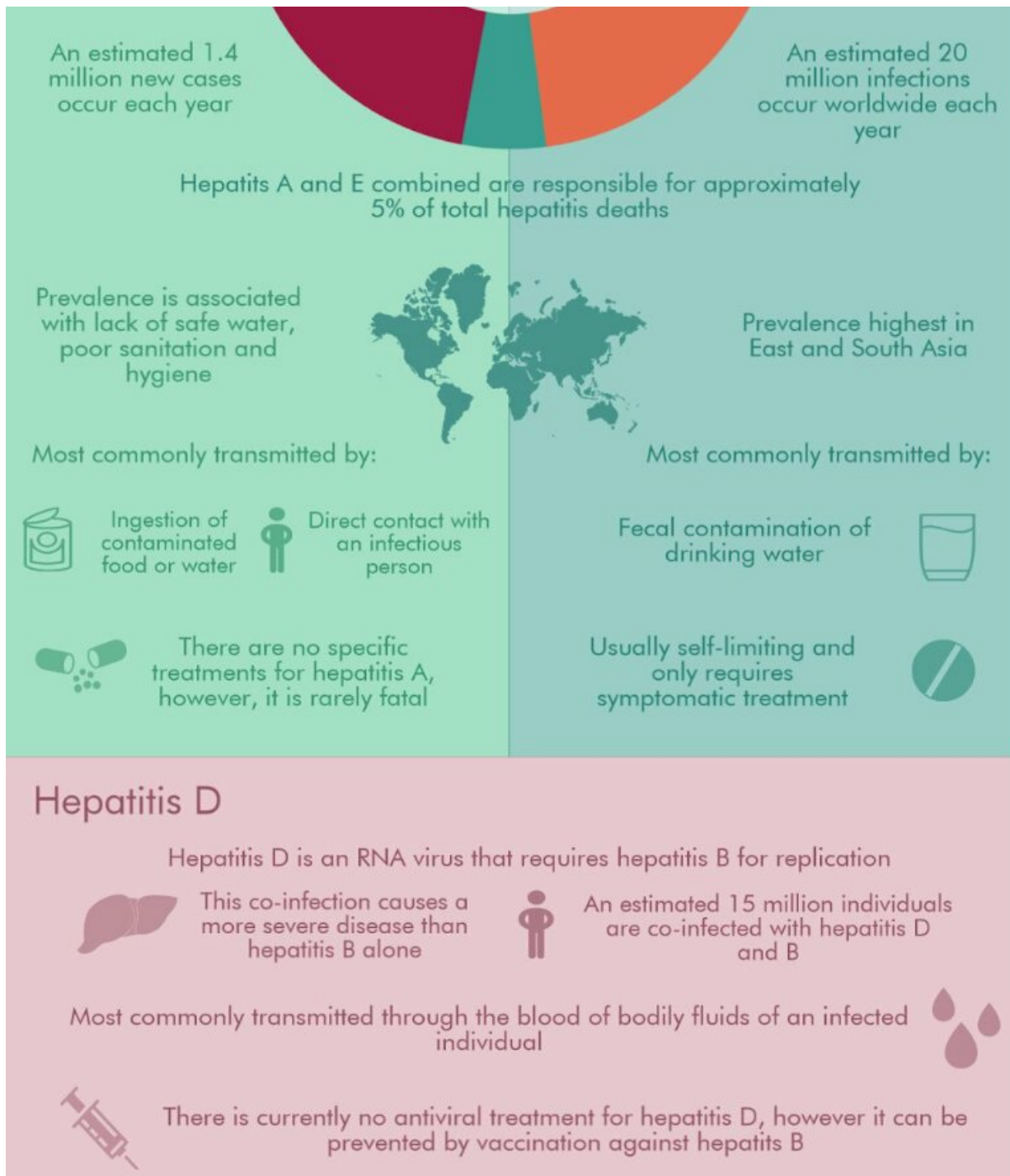
Key Points

- **Hepatitis:**
    - Hepatitis refers to an **inflammatory condition of the liver.**
    - It's commonly caused by a **viral infection,** but there are other possible causes of hepatitis like **autoimmune responses, medications, drugs, toxins, and alcohol.**
    - There are 5 main <u>**hepatitis**</u> viruses, referred to as types A, B, C, D, and E.
    - <u>**World Hepatitis Day**</u> is observed each year on **28th July** to enhance awareness of viral hepatitis.
- **Hepatitis C:**
    - Hepatitis C is caused by the **Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).**
    - It is transmitted through **direct contact with infected body fluids,** typically through injection drug use and sexual contact.
    - According to the <u>**World Health Organization**</u>, about 71 million people in the world have **chronic infection with the Hepatitis C virus,** which is also a major cause of **liver cancer.**
    - A vaccine for the disease has still not been developed but it can be treated with the help of **anti-viral drugs.**
- **Significance of the Discovery:**
    - The discovery helped in finding a cure for the disease, and effective anti-viral drugs are now available.
    - Tests have also been developed to **identify blood containing this virus,** so that infected blood is not given to any patient.

Hepatitis in India

- 40 million people are chronically infected with the Hepatitis B virus and 6 to 12 million with the Hepatitis C virus.
- In 2018 the **National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme** (NVHCP) was launched which has the target to **eliminate Hepatitis C by 2030.** The program is the largest program for Hepatitis B and C diagnosis and treatment in the world.
- **Hepatitis B** is included under <u>**India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)**</u> which provides free of cost vaccination against a total of 12 vaccine-preventable diseases.
- The first **recombinant DNA-based vaccine for Hepatitis B** infection was made in India by Hyderabad-based Shantha Biotech.

Hepatitis C

An estimated 130–150 million individuals are infected globally

The most affected regions are Africa, Central and East Asia

Most commonly transmitted by:

Unsafe injection practices

Blood transfusions

Inadequate sterilization of medical equipment

Antivirals can cure approximately 90% of hepatitis C infections, however, access to diagnosis and treatment is low

Hepatitis C is responsible for an estimated 48% of total hepatitis deaths, ~700, 000 each year

Hepatitis B

An estimated 240 million individuals are infected globally

Prevalence is highest in sub-Saharan Africa where 5–10% of the adult population are chronically infected

Most commonly transmitted by:

Contact with blood or other bodily fluids of an infected individual

There is no specific treatment for acute hepatitis B. Chronic hepatitis B can be treated but not cured

Hepatitis B is responsible for an estimated 47% of total hepatitis deaths, ~686, 000 per year

There are approximately 1.4 million deaths each year from acute hepatitis infection and complications

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis E

An estimated 1.4 million new cases occur each year

An estimated 20 million infections occur worldwide each year

Hepatits A and E combined are responsible for approximately 5% of total hepatitis deaths

Prevalence is associated with lack of safe water, poor sanitation and hygiene

Prevalence highest in East and South Asia

Most commonly transmitted by:

Ingestion of contaminated food or water

Direct contact with an infectious person

Fecal contamination of drinking water

There are no specific treatments for hepatitis A, however, it is rarely fatal

Usually self-limiting and only requires symptomatic treatment

Hepatitis D

Hepatitis D is an RNA virus that requires hepatitis B for replication

This co-infection causes a more severe disease than hepatitis B alone

An estimated 15 million individuals are co-infected with hepatitis D and B

Most commonly transmitted through the blood of bodily fluids of an infected individual

There is currently no antiviral treatment for hepatitis D, however it can be prevented by vaccination against hepatits B

<u>**Source: TH**</u>

Issues in Goa Lokayukta

Why in News

Recently, Justice Prafulla Kumar Misra has retired from the post of Goa **<u>Lokayukta</u>** and has highlighted the issues related to the state office and the proceedings.

Lokpal and Lokayukta

- The **Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013** provided for the **establishment of Lokpal for the Union and Lokayukta for States.**
    - **"India Against Corruption Movement"** led by **Anna Hazare put pressure** on the then government at the Centre and resulted in the **passing of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill, 2013,** in both the Houses of Parliament.
    - It received **assent from the President on 1st January 2014** and **came into force on 16th January 2014.**
- These institutions are **statutory bodies without any constitutional status.**
- They perform the **function of an "ombudsman" and inquire into allegations of corruption** against certain public functionaries and for related matters.
- The term Lokpal and Lokayukta were coined by **Dr L. M. Singhvi.**

Key Points

- **Goa Lokayukta Act:**
    - Even much before the enactment of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 itself, **many states had already set up the institution of Lokayuktas.**
    - It was sent to the **Central government in 2003** and **passed in the Assembly only in October 2011,** after it was reintroduced.
    - It is **modelled upon Karnataka and Kerala's Lokayukta Acts** but **with less strict provisions.**
    - This Act is intended to **remove grievances of individual(s) against maladministration of government officials.**
    - A **complaint** under this Act can be filed **either on the basis of an allegation** or on the **basis of the grievance.**
- **Data Analysis:** During his tenure, the office of the Lokayukta received 191 cases, 133 of which were disposed of. Among the 58 **pending cases are 21 in which he sent reports to the government,** but the **state government has not acted** and **Action Taken Reports** are still awaited.
    > **Pending Cases:** His **recommendations included** initiation of disciplinary action, transfer, probe into mishandled funds, misuse of powers of ministers and bureaucrats, detailed investigation by the Anti-Corruption Bureau or a declaration that an elected functionary is unfit to hold office.

- **Highlighted Challenges:**
  - **Overburdened:** Officials stalled preliminary enquiry by avoiding registering an **FIR** and hence **many cases went to Lokayukta** because of that.
    - To overcome it, he referred to the **Supreme Court's** *Lalita Kumari versus Government of Uttar Pradesh judgment (2013)* where the court has clearly said that whenever anyone comes to the police station and makes a complaint of a **cognisable offence** the police officer is bound to register an FIR, under the **Section 154 of Criminal Procedure Code** (CrPC).
  - **Lack of Governance:** His reports were **indicative of the lack of governance,** irrespective of any party of power of the day and highlighted **bureaucratic apathy and apathy of politicians.**
  - **Less Powers:** The state act **does not have the powers of the prosecution** that the Karnataka and Kerala Acts have, **nor does it have a provision for contempt of the Lokayukta's orders.**
  - **Inadequate Staff:** Lokayukta has an investigation wing in which police officers are supposed to be deputed however, it **lacked an adequate number of qualified personnel.**

Suggestions

- **Power of Prosecution:**
  - Under Section 17 of the Goa Lokayukta Act, the **power to prosecute should be given to the Lokayukta.**
  - It is there in Karnataka and Kerala acts but not present in Goa Act, where it is under 'initiation of Prosecution' and says that if the Lokayukta notices that an offence has been committed, then (s)he may pass an order and the appropriate authority "shall" initiate prosecution against the public functionary.
  - The **initiation of prosecution should not be left to the discretion** and the "shall" here means that the opinion of the Lokayukta is mandatory to be followed.
- **Power to Punish on Contempt:**
  - While making the rules, the Act **should have been included with the power to punish on contempt of the orders of Lokayukta,** which is still not available under the rules of the Act.
- **Increased Commitment:**
  - The **Act requires a retired Chief Justice or a retired Supreme Court judge to be appointed as the Lokayukta.** It means, whoever comes and joins would have taken the oath twice and joining the Lokayukta office will be the third oath, **tripling the commitment.**
  - (S)he must be **true to the oath and continue to be committed to discharging the duty without fear or favour, affection or ill will.**

MoU Under PM SVANidhi

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** (MoHUA) has entered into a **Memorandum of Understanding** (MoU) with **Swiggy** to onboard street food vendors on its **e-commerce** platform.

- This move is a part of the **Prime Minister Street Vendor's Atmanibhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme.**
- An **updated and modified version of PM SVANidhi Dashboard,** which facilitates users not only with a better granular view of the scheme's performance but also with additional tools for comparisons, has also been launched.

Key Points

- The MoU will **give the vendors online access to thousands of consumers** and help them grow their businesses.
- **Aim:**
  - To **radically transform the business of street vendors** across cities, by facilitating them to **receive orders and serve customers using online mode** of business.
    - It becomes important during the ongoing **Covid-19** pandemic where physical distancing is the key to check it's spread.
  - To **empower street vendors with digital technology and facilitate greater income-earning opportunities** through e-commerce platforms.
- **Phased Implementation:**
  - In a first of its kind initiative, MoHUA and Swiggy will run a **pilot program by on-boarding 250 vendors** across **five cities** namely **Ahmedabad, Chennai, Delhi, Indore, and Varanasi.**
  - Upon the successful completion of the pilot, MoHUA and Swiggy **plan to expand this initiative across the country in phases.**
- **Key Stakeholders:** MoHUA, Municipal Corporations, **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India** (FSSAI), Swiggy and **Goods and Services Tax** (GST) officials.
- **Assistance:** The street vendors will be helped with **Permanent Account Number** (PAN) and FSSAI registration, training on technology/partner app usage, menu digitisation and pricing, hygiene and packaging best practices.

PM SVANidhi Scheme

- It was announced as a part of the **Economic Stimulus-II** under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.**
- It has been implemented since **1ˢᵗ June 2020,** for providing affordable working capital loan to street vendors to **resume their livelihoods that have been adversely affected due to Covid-19 lockdowns,** with a sanctioned **budget of Rs. 700 crore.**
- **Aims:**
  - To **benefit over 50 lakh street vendors** who had been vending on or before 24ᵗʰ March 2020, in urban areas including those from surrounding peri-urban/rural areas.
  - To **promote digital transactions** through cash-back incentives up to an amount of Rs. 1,200 per annum.
- **Features:**
  - The **vendors can avail a working capital loan of up to Rs. 10,000,** which is **repayable in monthly instalments** in the **tenure of one year.**
  - On timely/early repayment of the loan, an **interest subsidy of 7% per annum will be credited** to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through **Direct Benefit Transfer** on a quarterly basis.
  - There will be **no penalty on early repayment** of the loan. The vendors can avail the facility of the enhanced credit limit on timely/early repayment of the loan.
- **Recent Developments:**
  - As of **October 2020, over 20 lakh loan applications have been received** under the scheme and out of these over 7.5 lakh loans have been sanctioned.
  - **However, only 2 lakh applicants have received the money so far,** with officials and applicants pointing to a number of hurdles that are slowing the process.
- **Challenges:**
  - Several banks are **seeking applications on stamp papers** worth between Rs. 100 and Rs. 500.
  - There have also been instances of banks **seeking PAN cards and even checking the CIBIL or Credit score of applicants or state authorities asking for voter ID cards,** which many migrant vendors do not carry with them.
    - CIBIL score is an **evaluation of one's credit history** and **determines their eligibility for a loan.**
  - There have also been complaints of harassment by police and municipal officials.

- **Solutions:**
    - States should be asked to **ensure that street vendors are not harassed** by the authorities as all they are asking is a right to livelihood.
    - The Centre has also decided to **send the applications directly to bank branches listed by the applicant as a "preferred lender"** or where the vendor holds a savings bank account.
    - A **software has also been developed** that can "push" around 3 lakh applications to the banks.

Source: PIB

World Habitat Day 2020

Why in News

The **United Nations** has designated the **first Monday of October every year** as **World Habitat Day** (5th October 2020).

Key Points

- **About the Day:** It focuses on the **state of human settlements and people's right to sufficient shelter.**
    - It also aims to remind people that they are responsible for the habitat of future generations.
    - The Global Observance of World Habitat Day 2020, is being co-hosted by **UN-Habitat and the Government of Indonesia.**
        - **UN-Habitat** is a **United Nations agency** for Urban development that promotes sustainable human settlements.
    - World Habitat Day was **first celebrated in 1986** with the theme **"Shelter is My Right".**
        - **Nairobi** (Kenya) was the host city for the observance that year.
- **Theme: "Housing for All-A better Urban Future".**
    The **focus** is to promote **sustainable housing management** to achieve **Sustainable Development Goal 11.**
        - Sustainable Development Goal 11 aims to make cities more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
- **Global Scenario:**
    - **Urban Population:** Currently, around 55% of the world population is living in cities, and the number is growing every day.
    - **Slum Dwellers:** Around 1.8 billion people are still living in the slums.
    - **Sanitation:** Around 3 billion lack basic hand washing and sanitation facilities.

- **Indian Scenario:**
  - **Challenges:** In a country of India's size, diversity, and population, it is a staggering challenge to implement an ambitious urban agenda.
    - **Lack of Basic Amenities:** Drinking Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Housing Condition, there is a shortage in slum areas especially.
    - **Public Health Infrastructure:** Despite the huge growth in urban population density during the last two decades, there has been no commensurate improvement in the healthcare infrastructure.
    - **High Level of Pollution:** The growing rate of air pollution due to vehicular traffic and huge construction and demolitions waste increase morbidity amongst the people living the cities.
    - The **large-scale migration from urban areas to the rural areas** in the time of Covid-19 pandemic was a major challenge.
  - **Measures:**
    - Major flagship Missions such as **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban**, **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban**, the **Smart Cities Mission**, the **AMRUT Mission** were in implementation mode in India well before the SDGs were adopted by the other Member States.
    - **Housing:** There is a huge focus on the use of new and environmentally safe construction technologies and techniques. Through a **global housing technology challenge (GHTC)**, the very best of national and international technologies are sought to be brought in.
      - GHTC aims to fast-track the construction of affordable housing and meet the target of constructing 1.2 crore houses by 2022.
      - GHTC focuses on identifying and mainstreaming proven demonstrable technologies for lighthouse projects and spotting potential future technologies for incubation and acceleration support through ASHA (Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators).
    - **Urban Poor:** The **PM SVANidhi scheme** targeting the **street vendors** who were affected by the lockdown that was imposed.
      - A **collateral free working capital of Rs.10,000** is made available to the street vendors immediately by the participating banks.
      - Simultaneously, they are being brought on to the formal economy and the formal, digital banking ecosystem.
    - **National urban policy framework 2018** seeks to rebuild Indian cities around clusters of human capital, instead of considering them simply as an agglomeration of land use.

Way Forward

- **Creation of a Database of Migrant Workers:** Recognition and identification of migrants is the first step towards a more enhanced framework to provide basic amenities.
- **Addressing Challenges:** The central and state governments need to continue their efforts to address the informality of the Indian economy, the rural-urban divide, the uneven growth within states and between regions in the country, and the social and economic inequalities associated with the poorest and vulnerable.
- **Unorganised Worker Index Number Cards** by the Labour Ministry would also help in formalisation of the workforce.
- **Focusing on Public Health Infrastructure:** Smart cities project does well by focusing on creation of hard infrastructure for urban renewal.

Source:PIB

Upgradation and Expansion of Zoos in PPP Mode

Why in News

The **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** is formulating a policy for the up-gradation and development of **Zoos** in **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)** across the country to encourage interaction between wildlife and humans, and help people observe and understand wildlife behaviour more closely.

> Wildlife Week, 2020 is also being celebrated. **Wildlife Week** is celebrated every year in India between **October 2 and 8.**
> > It started in the year 1952 with the notion to preserve fauna of the country.

Key Points

- A report of the **Central Zoo Authority** (CZA)- **The Energy and Resources Institute** (TERI) titled **"Economic valuation of ecosystem services, National Zoological Park, New Delhi'** was also released.
  - The study was first of its kind in India.
  - It pegs the total annual economic value of the ecosystem services (biodiversity conservation, employment generation, carbon sequestration, education, and research, recreational and cultural) of the zoo.
- The Minister also gave away the **CZA-Prani Mitra** awards to encourage the zoo officers and staff towards working for captive animal management and welfare.

- **Zoological Parks**
  - Zoos or Zoological parks are facilities used for **ex situ conservation** of animals.
    - **Ex-situ conservation** is the technique of conservation of organisms outside their natural habitats through different techniques like captive breeding, aquarium, botanical garden, and gene bank.
    - The process of protecting an endangered plant or animal species in its natural habitat is commonly known as **in situ conservation.** It includes National Parks, Biosphere Reserves, Wildlife Sanctuaries, community reserves, sacred groves etc.
  - The Zoos in India are managed as per the provisions of the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** and guided by the **National Zoo Policy, 1998.**
  - The Government of India established the **Central Zoo authority in the year 1992** to oversee the functioning of Zoos in the country and to control mushrooming of ill-planned and ill-conceived Zoos.

Central Zoo Authority

- The CZA is a **statutory body** under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. It was constituted in 1992 under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**
- **Members:** It is **chaired by the Environment Minister** and has 10 members and a member-secretary.
- **Objective:** The main objective of the authority is **to complement and strengthen the national effort in the conservation of rich biodiversity.**
- **Functioning:** The authority provides **recognition to zoos** and is also tasked with **regulating the zoos** across the country.
  - It **lays down guidelines** and prescribes rules under which animals may be transferred among zoos nationally and internationally.
  - It **coordinates and implements programmes** on capacity building of zoo personnel, planned breeding programmes, and ex-situ research.

The Energy and Resources Institute

- TERI is a non-governmental research institute in New Delhi that specializes in the fields of energy, environment, and sustainable development.
- Established in 1974, it was formerly known as the Tata Energy Research Institute.

Source: PIB

SMART System: DRDO

Why in News

The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** conducted a successful flight test of the **Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART)** from **Wheeler Island** off the coast of **Odisha.**

- This follows the successful test firing of **indigenously developed nuclear capable hypersonic missile 'Shaurya'.**
- In 2017, the Odisha government formally named the Outer Wheeler island in Bhadrak district as **APJ Abdul Kalam Island** as a tribute to the former President on his second death anniversary.

Key Points

- **About:** SMART is a **missile assisted release of lightweight Anti-Submarine Torpedo System** for **anti-submarine warfare (ASW)** operations far beyond torpedo range.
- **Functioning:**
    - SMART, when launched from a warship or a truck-based coastal battery, **takes off like a regular supersonic missile.**
    - It covers most of its flight in the air at lower altitudes with **two-way data link** from the warship or an airborne submarine target detection system and **provides the exact location of the hostile submarine** to correct its flight path midway.
    - Just when it approaches close enough to the submerged submarine, the missile will eject the torpedo system into the water and the autonomous torpedo will start moving towards its target to take out the submarine.
        - **Torpedo** is a cigar-shaped, self-propelled underwater weapon, launched from a submarine, surface vessel, or airplane and designed for exploding upon contact with the hulls of surface vessels and submarines.
        - **Varunastra** is the first indigenous heavyweight ship launched anti-submarine electric torpedo.
- **Significance:**
    - Strengthens the country's **maritime strategic capabilities.**
    - A major breakthrough for **stand-off capability in anti-submarine warfare.**
        - **Project 28,** approved in 2003, is a class of anti- submarine warship corvettes currently in service with the Indian Navy. It includes INS Kamorta, INS Kadmatt, INS Kiltan and INS Kavaratti.
        - **Project 75** is a programme by the Indian Navy that entails building six Scorpene-Class attack submarines (Kalvari, Khanderi, Karanj, Vela, Vagir and Vagsheer).

THSTI: Part of Vaccine Assessment Project

Why in News

The **Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness for Innovation (CEPI),** a global initiative, has named **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI),** Faridabad as **one of the six laboratories for assessing Covid-19 vaccine candidates** that are under development.

Key Points

- **Six Laboratories:**
    - The **CEPI network will initially involve six labs,** one each in **Canada, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Bangladesh** and **India.**
    - All the labs would use the same reagents (cause a chemical reaction) and follow a common set of protocols to **measure the immune response of multiple vaccine candidates** under development and trial.
    - This will **greatly harmonise the vaccine trial process** and allow different vaccine candidates to be compared and speed up the selection of the most effective candidate.
    - The **mandate of the THSTI** is to provide validated assays (analysis) for vaccine development on a par with global standards.
        - Bioassay is the determination of the relative strength of a substance (drug) by comparing its effect on a test organism with that of a standard preparation.
- **Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness for Innovation (CEPI):**
    - CEPI is a **global partnership launched in 2017** to develop vaccines to stop future epidemics.
    - CEPI was **founded in Davos (Switzerland)** by the governments of **Norway and India,** the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation,** the Wellcome Trust, and the **World Economic Forum.**
    - The **Department of Biotechnology**, Ministry of Science & Technology, and Government of India has been implementing the **IndCEPI mission** 'India Centric Epidemic Preparedness through Rapid Vaccine Development: Supporting Indian Vaccine Development'.
        - The **objectives of this mission** are aligned with that of CEPI and aims to strengthen the development of vaccines and associated competencies/technologies for the diseases of epidemic potential in India.

- **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI):**
    - It is an **autonomous institute of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).**
    - It is located in **Faridabad (Haryana).**

Source: PIB