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India-Vietnam Talks

Why in News

Recently, **Defence Ministers of India and Vietnam** have discussed collaboration in defence industry capability building, training and cooperation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations, etc.



Key Points

- **Defence Cooperation:** Both countries reaffirmed the strong India-Vietnam Defence cooperation which is a key pillar of **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** (2016).
 - Underlining the vision of “**Atmanirbhar Bharat**” for enhancing self-reliance including defence industries, India **urged closer defence industry cooperation** by concluding an **institutionalised framework agreement in the near future**.
 - **Vietnam thanked India for the assistance** by Indian Armed Forces in capacity building of Vietnamese Defence Forces especially in the field of Human Resource development.
 - **India** conveyed its willingness to **enhance the scope and level of training for all three services** of Vietnam Defence forces in Indian Defence Institutes.
 - It needs to be noted that the two countries **have built ties** on the procurement of weaponry and military hardware, capacity building, collaboration in the area of warship building and repair.
- **UN Peacekeeping:** Discussed cooperation in **UN peacekeeping** operations, which help countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace.
- **Cooperation in the field of Hydrography:** This will enable sharing of Hydrographic data and assist in production of navigational charts by both sides.

Hydrography is the science that **measures and describes the physical features of the navigable portion of the Earth's surface** and adjoining coastal areas.
- **ADMM Plus Meeting:** Vietnam **invited India for ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus** (ADMM Plus) being hosted by Vietnam in December 2020.
 - The **ADMM-Plus is a platform for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations** (ASEAN) and its **eight Dialogue Partners** Australia, China, **India**, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA (collectively referred to as the “Plus Countries”), to strengthen security and defence cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region.
 - **Vietnam is a member of ASEAN.**

ASEAN is a regional grouping that promotes economic, political and security cooperation among its **ten members**.

India-Vietnam Relations

- India and Vietnam have agreed to enhance their **bilateral cooperation** in line with **India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative** (IPOI) and the ASEAN's Outlook on Indo-Pacific.

This came in the backdrop of China's aggression in the Indo-Pacific region including **South China Sea region** and its actions along the **Line of Actual Control** (LAC) with India.

- **Cooperation at Multiple Fora:**
 - At the **UN Security Council**, both India and Vietnam will serve concurrently as **non-permanent members in 2021**.
 - India and Vietnam closely cooperate in various **regional forums** such as **East Asia Summit, Mekong Ganga Cooperation, Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM)**.
- **Economic Relations:**
 - India has on many occasions explained that it will **continue to maintain its oil and gas exploration tie-ups** with Vietnam in Vietnamese waters.
 - Vietnam is also the **second largest export destination for India after Singapore in the ASEAN region**.
 - **Bilateral trade** for the period **April-November 2019** reached **USD 9.01 billion**.
- **India's Assistance:**

India has **reaffirmed its development and capacity building assistance** to Vietnam through initiatives such as **Quick Impact Projects (QIP), Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** and e-ITEC initiatives, PhD fellowships, as well as projects in **water resource management** in Vietnam's Mekong Delta region, **SDGs, digital connectivity** and **heritage conservation**.
- **Tourism and People-to-People Contacts:**
 - The **year 2019 was celebrated as the ASEAN-India Year of Tourism**. Both countries have facilitated a **simplified visa regime** to promote bilateral tourism.
 - The **Embassy of India organized various events to celebrate ** in 2018-19. These include Jaipur artificial limb fitment camps, which were organized in four provinces of Vietnam, benefitting 1000 people, under '**India for Humanity**' initiative of the Government of India.

Way Forward

- As India and Vietnam geographically lie at the heart of the emerging Indo-Pacific construct, both would play a major role in this strategic space which is becoming a core theatre for competition for power and influence amongst the major powers.
- The strategic partnership under the broad India-Vietnam cooperation framework would be critical towards building the vision laid out under **India's 'Act East' Policy**, which looks to expand engagement that is mutually positive and which ensures an inclusive growth for all in the region.

Source: TH

Why in News

Recently, the **Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** has virtually inaugurated the **Honey Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) Programme** of the **National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited** (NAFED).

- A **Producer Organisation (PO)** is a legal entity formed by primary producers, viz. farmers, milk producers, fishermen, weavers, rural artisans, craftsmen, etc.
FPO is one type of PO where the members are farmers.
- **Apiculture or beekeeping** is the care and management of honey bees for the production of honey and wax. In this method, bees are bred commercially in apiaries, an area where a lot of beehives can be placed.

Key Points

- The programme has been launched under the **Formation and Promotion of FPOs**.
 - It is a new **Central Sector Scheme** for the promotion of **10,000 new FPOs**.
 - Under it, the **National Level Project Management Advisory and Fund Sanctioning Committee (N-PMAFSC)** had allocated FPO clusters for **2020-21** to all implementing agencies.
 - Initially there will be three implementing agencies to form and promote FPOs, namely **Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium** (SFAC), **National Cooperative Development Corporation** (NCDC) and **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development** (NABARD).
 - **NAFED** has been appointed as the 4th national implementing agency.
 - States may also, if so desire, nominate their implementing agency in consultation with the **Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare (DAC&FW)**.
 - FPOs will be developed by specialist **Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs)** engaged by implementing agencies.
- NAFED, through CBBOs and the **Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals (ISAP)** has initiated the formation and promotion of FPOs of beekeepers and honey collectors in 5 states of India.
 - These 5 locations are **East Champaran** (Bihar), **Morena** (Madhya Pradesh), **Bharatpur** (Rajasthan), **Mathura** (Uttar Pradesh) and **Sunderbans** (West Bengal).
 - The **first Honey FPO** has been registered in the state of Madhya Pradesh under the **National Beekeeping and Honey Mission** (NBHM).

- **Benefits:**
 - **Skill Upgradation** in scientific beekeeping.
 - State of the art **infrastructural facilities** for processing honey and allied beekeeping products like **bee's wax, propolis, royal jelly, bee venom**, etc.
 - Quality upgradation by **quality control laboratories**.
 - Better **supply chain management** by improving **collection, storage, bottling and marketing centres**.
 - Promotion and Formation of FPOs is the first step for **converting Krishi into Atmanirbhar Krishi**.
- **Other Efforts by Government to Promote Beekeeping:**
 - Government is promoting beekeeping as part of its **aim to double farmers' income and ensure tribal upliftment**.
 - The Government has **allocated Rs. 500 crore** towards beekeeping under the **Atmanirbhar Abhiyan**.
 - **Apiary on Wheels:**
 - It is a unique concept designed by the **Khadi and Village Industries Commission** (KVIC) for the easy upkeep and migration of Bee Boxes having live Bee colonies.
 - The **National Bee Board** has created four modules to impart training as part of the NBHM.
 - Under it, 30 lakh farmers have been trained in beekeeping and are also being financially supported by the Government.
 - Mini Mission 1 and Mini Mission 2 are schemes under the mission.
 - The Government launched **NBHM** as part of '**Sweet Revolution**'.
 - The 'Sweet Revolution' was launched in **2016** to **promote beekeeping and associated activities**.

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd

- It is an **apex organization of marketing cooperatives** for agricultural produce in India.
- It was founded on **2nd October 1958** and is registered under the **Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002**.
- NAFED is now **one of the largest procurement as well as marketing agencies** for agricultural products in India.

- **Objectives:**

- To organize, promote and develop marketing, processing and storage of agricultural, horticultural and forest produce.
- To distribute agricultural machinery, implements and other inputs, undertake inter-state, import and export trade, wholesale or retail as the case may be.
- To act and assist for technical advice in agricultural production for the promotion and the working of its members, partners, associates and cooperative marketing, processing and supply societies in India.

National Bee Board

- SFAC registered the NBB as a society under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860** in 2000 and it was reconstituted (with the secretary as chairman) in June 2006.
- Objective:
 - Overall **development of beekeeping by promoting scientific beekeeping** in India to increase the productivity of crops through pollination and increase the honey production for increasing the income of the beekeepers/farmers.
- Presently NBB is implementing **National Horticulture Mission (NHM) and Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan State (HMNEM)**.

Source:PIB

Climate Change Knowledge Portal

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** has launched the '**India Climate Change Knowledge Portal**'.

Key Points

- **India Climate Change Knowledge Portal:**
 - **Objective:** The Portal will **help in disseminating knowledge among citizens** about all the major steps the Government is taking at both national and international levels to address **climate change issues**.
 - **Benefit:** It will be a **single point Information** resource which provides information on the different **climate initiatives** taken by various Line Ministries enabling users to access updated status on these initiatives.

- **Components:** The eight major components included in the knowledge portal are:
 - **India's Climate Profile**

The northern part of the country is characterized as a continental climate with hot summers and cold winters. The coastal regions of the country, however, experience warmer temperatures with little variation throughout the year and frequent rainfall.
 - **National Policy Framework**

For Example In order to strengthen the implementation of environmentally sound management of hazardous waste in the country, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has amended the **Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management & Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016.**
 - **India's Nationally determined contributions (NDC) Goals**
 - NDC's are at the heart of the **Paris Agreement** and the achievement of these long-term goals.
 - NDC's embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
 - **Adaptation Actions**

To meet the high energy demand India is adapting to clean energy development. **Example: Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission** which aims to increase the share of **solar energy** in India.
 - **Mitigation Actions**

For example, to mitigate water issues Indian government launched the **National Water Mission.**
 - **Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation**

The Paris climate deal is a great example of multilateral cooperation.
 - **International Climate Negotiations**

In the **Conference of Parties (COP21)** in **Paris in 2015**, India accepted 1.5 degrees Celsius as a target limit for the increase in the global average temperature and announced an ambitious domestic renewable energy programme.
 - **Reports & Publications**

For example, reports like **Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region** published by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

- **Other Initiatives to Fight Climate Change:**

- **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)**: It is a five-year action plan with a tentative target of 20-30% reduction in concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 by 2024, with 2017 as the base year.
- India has also shifted from **Bharat Stage-IV (BS-IV) to Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) emission norms** from 1st April 2020 which was earlier to be adopted by 2024.
- It has distributed more than **360 million LED bulbs** under the **UJALA scheme**, which has led to energy saving of about 47 billion units of electricity per year and **reduction of 38 million tonnes of CO2 per year**.
- **International Solar Alliance**: It is an Indian initiative conceived as a coalition of solar-resource-rich countries (which lie either completely or partly between the tropic of Cancer and the tropic of Capricorn) to address their special energy needs.
- The **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** was launched in **2008** which aims at creating awareness among the representatives of the public, different agencies of the government, scientists, industry and the communities on the threat posed by climate change and the steps to counter it.

Source:PIB

The Constitution Day

Why in News

Recently on 26th November, **71st constitution day** was celebrated in the country. Every year as part of the celebrations, a number of activities aimed **at highlighting and reiterating the values and principles enshrined in the Constitution** are organised.

Key Points

- **Constitution Day or Samvidhan Diwas** is also known as **National Law Day**. The day commemorates the adoption of the Constitution in India.
 - On this day in 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India **formally adopted the Constitution of India that came into force on 26 January 1950**.
 - **The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** on 19 November, 2015, notified the decision of the Government of India to celebrate 26 November as 'Constitution Day'.

- **Facts about the Constitution of India:**
 - The framing of the Constitution took over **2 years, 11 months and 18 days**.
 - The original copies of the Indian Constitution **weren't typed or printed. They have been handwritten** and are now kept in a helium-filled case within the library of the Parliament.
 - **Prem Bihari Narain Raizada** had written the unique copies of the Structure of India.
 - Originally, the Constitution of India was written in English and Hindi.
 - The Constitution of India has borrowed some of its features from a number of countries, including Britain, Ireland, Japan, USA, South Africa, Germany, Australia, and Canada.
 - The basic structure of the Indian Constitution stands on the **Government of India Act, 1935**.
 - World's lengthiest Constitution
 - Federal System with Unitary Features
 - Parliamentary Form of Government
- **Background:**
 - In 1934, **M N Roy** first proposed the idea of a **constituent assembly**. Under the **Cabinet Mission plan** of 1946, elections were held for the formation of the constituent assembly.
 - **Drafting Committee:**
 - The Drafting Committee had seven members: Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, N. Gopalaswami, B.R. Ambedkar, K.M Munshi, Mohammad Saadulla, B.L. Mitter and D.P. Khaitan.
 - At its first meeting on 30th August 1947, the Drafting Committee elected **B.R Ambedkar** as its Chairman.

Important Constitutional Amendment

- **First Amendment Act, 1951**
 - Provided for the saving of laws providing for the acquisition of estates, etc.
 - Added **Ninth Schedule** to protect the land reforms and other laws included in it from the judicial review. After Article 31, Articles 31A and 31B were inserted.
- **The Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956**

The Second and Seventh schedules were substantially amended for the purpose of the States Reorganization Act.

- **The Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976**
 - The major Amendments made in the Constitution by the 42nd Amendment Act are:
 - **Preamble**
 - The characterization of India as ‘Sovereign Democratic Republic’ has been changed to ‘Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic’.
 - The words ‘Unity of the nation’ have been changed to ‘Unity and integrity of the nation’.
 - **Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles**

A major change that was made by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment was to give primacy to all Directive Principles over the Fundamental Rights contained in Articles 14, 19 or 31.
 - **Fundamental Duties**

The 42nd Amendment Act inserted Article 51-A to create a new part called IV-A in the Constitution, which prescribed the Fundamental Duties to the citizens.
- **The Constitution (44th Amendment) Act, 1978**
 - A new provision was added to Article 74(1) saying that the President could require the council of ministers to reconsider its advice to him, either generally or otherwise and the President should Act in accordance with the advice tendered after such reconsideration.
 - It has been provided that an Emergency can be proclaimed only on the basis of written advice tendered to the President by the Cabinet.
 - Right to Property has been taken out from the list of Fundamental Rights and has been declared a legal right.
- **The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992**

A separate part IX has been added to the Constitution with the addition in Article 243A and a fresh Schedule called the Eleventh Schedule enumerating the powers and functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- **The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992**
 - The Act provides constitutional status to Urban Local Bodies. After part VIII of the Constitution, a separate part IXA has been added to the Constitution with the addition in Article 243A and a fresh schedule called Twelfth schedule enumerating the powers and functions of urban local bodies has been incorporated.
 - The Act provides Municipal Panchayat, Municipal Council and Municipal Corporation, reservation of seats for SCs and STs in proportion to their population and one-third reservation of seats for women.
- **The Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2017**

Introduced the Goods and Services Tax.

- **The Constitution (102nd Amendment) Act, 2018**
Constitutional status to National Commission for Backward Classes
- **The Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act, 2019**
A maximum of 10% Reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWSs) of citizens of classes other than the classes mentioned in clauses (4) and (5) of Article 15, i.e. Classes other than socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Source:PIB

National Organ Donation Day

Why in News

National Organ Donation Day was celebrated on **27th November** by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

Key Points

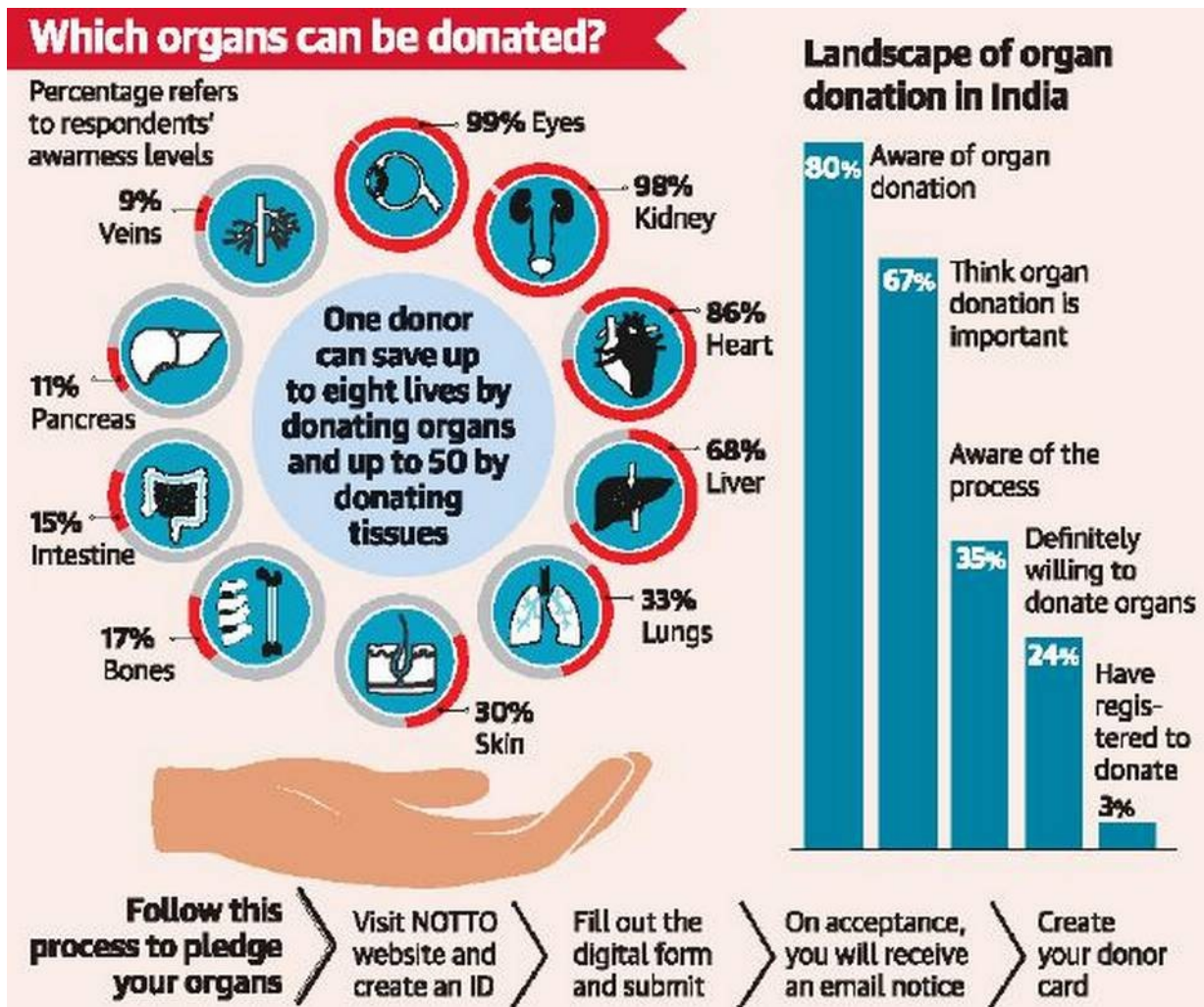
- **National Organ Transplant Programme (NOTP)**
Provides financial grants for establishing ROTTOs, SOTTOs, developing new and upgrading existing retrieval and transplant centres.
- **Organ Donation Institutional Set up:**
The **National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation** (NOTTO), the **Regional Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisations** (ROTTO) at regional level and the **State Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisations** (SOTTO) at state level.
- **State of Organ Donation in India:**
India **ranked third** in the world as per **WHO Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation** (GODT) in terms of organ donation.

Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994

- Transplantation of Human Organs Act was passed in 1994 and subsequently amended in 2011 thus bringing in form **Transplantation of Human Organs (Amendment) Act 2011**.
- It provides various regulations for the removal of human organs and its storage.
- It also regulates the transplantation of human organs for **therapeutic purposes** and for the **prevention of commercial dealings** in human organs.

- **Main Provisions**

- The act recognises brain death identified as a form of the death process and defines criteria for brain death.
- It provides **regulatory and advisory bodies for monitoring transplantation activity.**
- It also provides for **maintenance of a registry of donors and recipients** of human organs and tissues.



Way Forward

Initiatives such as **Indian Organ Donation Day** helps **promote awareness and recognize the selfless contribution** made by deceased donors to healthcare and mankind re-instill our faith in humanity.

Source: PIB

Dry Swab RT-PCR Covid-19 Test

Why in News

Recently, the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology** (CSIR-CCMB) has got the permission of the **Indian Council of Medical Research** (ICMR) to commercially use the **dry swab RNA-extraction free testing method** for the **Covid-19**.

Key Points

- **About:**

- Dry swab method has a consistency of 96.9%.
- The comparison of **conventional** (swab-VTM-RNA extraction-RT-PCR) and the **simplified** (direct elution from dry swab-RT-qPCR) protocols suggested that dry swabs eluted directly into a simple buffered solution can support molecular detection of SARS-CoV-2 via endpoint RT-PCR without substantially compromising sensitivity.

- **Conventional Method:**

- In the conventional testing method, **nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal** swab samples are **collected by sample collection centres** from the suspected coronavirus patients. These are **then transported to testing centres**, sometimes even hundreds of kilometres away.
 - The **nasopharynx** is the **upper part of the pharynx** (throat) **behind the nose**.
 - The **oropharynx** is the **middle part of the pharynx just beyond the mouth** and includes the back part of the tongue (base of tongue), tonsils, soft palate (back part of the roof of the mouth), and the sides and walls of the throat.
- The swab samples are generally placed in a liquid called **Viral Transport Medium** (VTM) and to avoid leakage, the samples are packed heavily that **adds on to sample processing times** at both the sample collection and testing centres.
- **RNA extraction**, even with automation, takes **four hours for roughly 500 samples**. VTM and RNA extraction both add a **significant burden on money and time required** for mass testing.

- **New and Simplified Method:**

- Dry swab technique **does not require VTM and RNA extraction process**, and can be directly used for RT-PCR testing.
- It has the **potential of bringing the costs and time of testing by 40-50%** and the **screening can also be enhanced several-fold** with immediate effect while, at the same time, **making the whole process safer**.
- It is **easy to implement with no requirement of new kits and existing manpower can perform this** with no additional training.

- **Benefits:**
 - It will **scale up the testing**.
 - More economical than **conventional RT-PCR tests**.
 - Quicker results

RT-PCR Test

- **Kary Mullis**, the **American biochemist** invented the PCR technique. He was awarded the **Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1993**.
- Under the test, copies of a **segment of DNA** (deoxyribonucleic acid) are **created using an enzyme called Polymerase**.

The '**chain reaction**' signifies **how the DNA fragments are copied exponentially**, where one is copied into two, the two are copied into four, and so on.
- A **fluorescent DNA binding dye** called the "**probe**" is added to DNA, which shows the presence of the virus on a fluorometer.
- **Covid-19 is made of RNA** (ribonucleic acid), so to detect it, **RNA is converted into DNA** using a technique called reverse transcription.

Then the copies of the DNA are then made and amplified.

Source: TH
