



News Analysis (29 May, 2021)

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Non Aligned Movement: Health Ministers' Meet

Why in News

Recently, the **Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare** virtually participated in a meeting with **Ministers of Health** of the **NAM (Non-Aligned Movement)** Countries.

Key Points

- **India's Stand at the Meeting:**
 - **Vaccine Maitri Initiative:**

Despite its own needs, during the Covid-19 pandemic, India ensured supply of medicines to 123 partner countries including 59 NAM nations.
 - **Efforts to 'Universal Health Coverage':**
 - **Universal health coverage** is defined as ensuring that all people have access to needed health services (including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation) of sufficient quality to be effective while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship.
 - **Ayushman Bharat** aims at providing free health assurance to over 500 million underprivileged people, making it the world's largest health assurance scheme.

It adopts a **two-pronged approach:**

 - **Firstly**, the creation of **health and wellness centres** to bring health care closer to homes.
 - **Secondly**, the formulation of a **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)** to protect poor and vulnerable families against financial risk arising out of catastrophic health episodes.
 - **Full immunization coverage is increasing at a rapid pace** with a **greater emphasis on village-based micro-plans** that is aimed at **enhancing coverage to 90% in a year.**

- **About Non-Aligned Movement:**

- **Background:**

It was formed during the **Cold War** (1945-1991) as an organisation of States that did not seek to formally align themselves with either the **USA (Capitalism)** or the **Soviet Union (Socialism)** but sought to remain independent or neutral.

- **Foundation:**

- **Six years** after the **Bandung Conference** in **1955**, the Movement of **Non-Aligned Countries** was founded on a wider geographical basis at the First Summit Conference of Belgrade, which was held in **September 1961**.
- It was held under the leadership of **Josip Broz Tito** of Yugoslavia, **Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt**, **Jawaharlal Nehru of India**, **Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana**, and **Sukarno of Indonesia**.

- **Purpose:**

- **Members and Observers:**

- It had **120 members** as of **April 2018** comprising **53 countries** from Africa, **39 from Asia**, **26 from Latin America** and the **Caribbean** and **2 from Europe**.
- There are **17 countries** and **10 international organisations** that are **Observers at NAM**.

- **Headquarters:**

- **NAM** does not have a **formal constitution or permanent secretariat**, and its administration is non-hierarchical and rotational.
- Decisions are made by consensus, which requires substantial agreement, but not unanimity.

- **Last Summit:**

In 2020, the meeting was convened at the initiative of **President Ilham Aliyev (present chairman until 2022) of Azerbaijan**, in his capacity as chair of the Non Aligned Movement.

Source: PIB

43rd GST Council Meeting

Why in News

Recently, the 43rd **Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council** meeting was held.

This was the **first meeting of the GST Council in the financial year 2021-22**. The council's last meeting was held in October 2020.

GST Council

- It is a **constitutional body (Article 279A)** for making recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to **Goods and Services Tax**.
- The GST Council is **chaired by the Union Finance Minister** and other members are the Union State Minister of Revenue or Finance and Ministers in-charge of Finance or Taxation of all the States.

- It is considered as a **federal body where both the centre and the states get due representation.**

Key Points

- **Ad Hoc Exemptions for Covid-Related Equipment:**
 - The GST Council decided to exempt the import of many such items.
The exemption has been **extended to August 2021.**
 - Exemptions will be granted **to the import of relief items** even if they have been purchased as long as they are meant for donations to state governments.
Earlier, **Integrated Goods & Services Tax (IGST) exemption was granted only free of cost imports.**
 - With the rising cases of **Black Fungus**, a particular medicine required for it — **amphotericin-B** — has also been included in the exemption list **(for tax-free imports).**
 - It also proposed to set-up a **Group of Ministers (GoM) committee to look into further exemptions** that can be provided on account of the **Covid-19** relief measure.
- **GST Amnesty Scheme:**
 - It has been **recommended for reducing late fees.** Taxpayers can file pending returns, avail benefits of the scheme, with reduced late fees.
It will provide **relief to small taxpayers who constitute 89% of GST payers.**
 - **Late fees have also been rationalised.** The maximum amount of late fee has been reduced and it will come into effect from **future tax periods.**
This will provide **long-term relief for small GST taxpayers.**
- **GST Compensation Cess (States' Dues):**
 - Same formula as in 2020 will be adopted this year too. The rough estimate is that the **Centre will have to borrow Rs 1.58 lakh crore**, which will be passed on to states as back-to-back loans.
 - A special session of the GST Council will be held to discuss **extending paying compensation to states beyond 2022.**
- **Advance Payment to Vaccine Manufacturers:**
 - Rs. 4,500 crore rupees were paid to two vaccine manufacturers as advance payment.
 - The country is engaging with **suppliers and manufacturers including from Japan, and Europe for vaccines.**
- **Annual Return Filing:**
 - Annual return filing has been **simplified.** The Council has **recommended amending the Central Goods & Services Tax (CGST) Act 2017** to allow for self-certification of reconciliation statements, instead of getting it certified by Chartered Accountants.
 - The **Annual Return filing will continue to be optional** for 2020-21 for **small taxpayers**, having a **turnover of less than two crore rupees** while reconciliation statements for 2020-21 will be furnished only by those taxpayers whose turnover is five crore rupees or more.

GST Compensation Cess

- GST Compensation Cess is **levied by the GST Act 2017.** The object of levying this cess is to **compensate the states for the loss of revenue arising due to the implementation of GST on 1st July 2017 for a period of five years** or such period as recommended by the GST Council.

- Compensation cess is levied **over and above the amount of GST charged in relation to a particular supply**. The calculation is similar to that of GST – the prescribed rate is applied to the transaction value given under **section 15 of the CGST Act 2017 to arrive at the cess liability**.

Source:IE

DBT for Mid Day Meal Scheme

Why in News

The **Ministry of Education** has approved the proposal to provide monetary assistance to students through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of the cooking cost component of the Mid-Day-Meal (MDM) Scheme**, to all eligible children.

Key Points

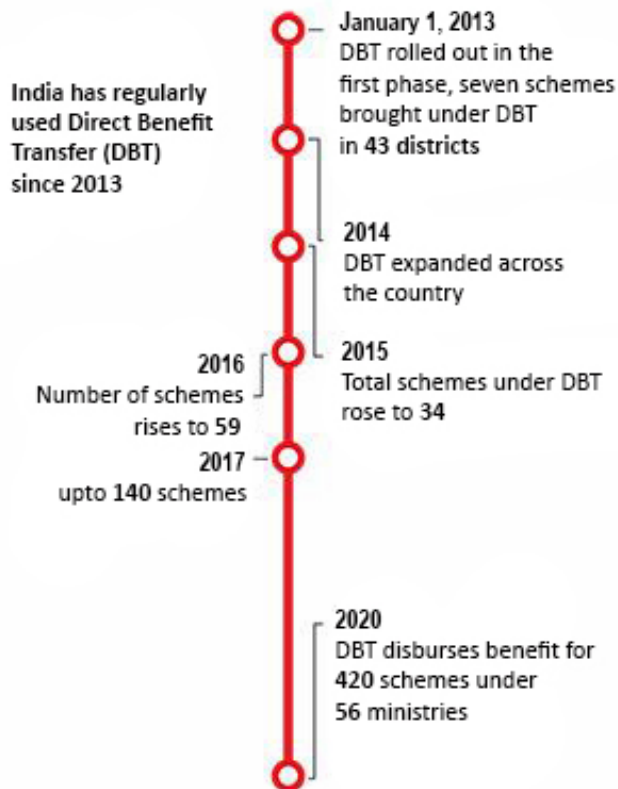
- **Implications of DBT for MDM Scheme:**
 - With schools closed for months due to Covid-19, this move will **give a fillip to the Midday Meal programme**.
 - This is **in addition** to the Government of India's announcement of distribution of free-of-cost food grains at Rs. 5/kg per person per month to nearly 80 crore beneficiaries under the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY)**.
 - It will **help safeguard the nutritional levels of children and aid in protecting their immunity** during the challenging pandemic times.
 - This **one time special welfare measure will benefit about 11.8 crore children studying in class I to VIII in the 11.20 lakh Government and Government aided schools** across the country.
 - The **central government will provide additional funds of about Rs. 1200 crore** to state governments and UT administrations for this purpose.

- **About Mid-Day-Meal Scheme:**

- **Launch:** It is a centrally sponsored scheme which was **launched in 1995**.
It is considered as the **world's largest school feeding programme** aimed to **attain the goal of universalization of primary education**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of **Education**.
- **Aim:** To address hunger and malnutrition, increase enrolment and attendance in school, improve socialisation among castes, provide employment at grassroot level especially to women.
- **Provisions:**
 - Provides **cooked meals to every child within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII** who enrolls and attends the school.
 - Cooked meal having **nutritional standards** of 450 calories and 12 gm of protein for primary (I-V class) and 700 calories and 20 gm protein for upper primary (VI-VIII class).
 - If the **Mid-Day Meal is not provided in school on any school day** due to non-availability of food grains or any other reason, **the State Government shall pay food security allowance** by 15th of the succeeding month.
- **Beneficiaries:** All children in government and aided schools and madrasas supported under Samagra Shiksha.

Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme

- **Aim:** It has been visioned as an aid for simpler/faster flow of information and funds to the beneficiaries and to reduce the fraud in the delivery system.
- **Implementation:** It is a mission or an initiative by the government of India started on 1st January 2013 as a way to reform the government delivery system.
Central Plan Scheme Monitoring System (CPSMS), the earlier version of the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), of the Office of Controller General of Accounts, was chosen to act as the common platform for routing of the Direct Benefit Transfer.
- **Components of DBT:** Primary components in the implementation of DBT schemes include Beneficiary Account Validation System, a robust payment and reconciliation platform integrated with RBI, NPCI, Public & Private Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Cooperative Banks (core banking solutions of banks, settlement systems of RBI, Aadhaar Payment Bridge of NPCI) etc.
- **Other Schemes involving DBT:**



Source: PIB

January 30: World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day

Why in News

The ongoing **74th World Health Assembly** declared **30th January** as ‘**World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day**.’

- The proposal to recognise the day was **floated by the United Arab Emirates**. It was adopted unanimously by the delegates. The **first World NTD Day** was celebrated **informally in 2020**.
- The World Health Assembly is the **decision-making body of World Health Organization (WHO)**.

Key Points

- **Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD):**
 - NTDs are a **group of infections that are most common among marginalised communities in the developing regions** of Africa, Asia and the Americas. They are caused by a variety of **pathogens** such as viruses, bacteria, protozoa and parasitic worms. NTDs are especially **common in tropical areas where people do not have access to clean water** or safe ways to dispose of human waste.
 - These diseases **generally receive less funding for research and treatment than** malaises like **tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS and malaria**.
 - **Examples of NTDs are: snakebite envenomation, scabies, yaws, trachoma, Leishmaniasis and Chagas disease etc.**
- **London Declaration on NTDs:**
 - It was adopted on **30th January, 2012** to **recognise the global burden of NTDs**.
 - Officials from the **World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**, **representatives** from leading global pharmaceutical companies as well as representatives of several national governments met at **London's Royal College of physicians** to pledge to end the diseases.**
- **WHO's New Roadmap for 2021–2030:**
 - From measuring process to **measuring impact**.
 - From disease-specific planning and programming to **collaborative work across sectors**.
 - From externally driven agendas reliant to programmes that are **country-owned and country-financed**.
- **NTD Scenario:**
 - NTDs **affect more than a billion people globally**.
They are **preventable and treatable**. However, these **diseases - and their intricate interrelationships with poverty and ecological systems** - continue to cause devastating health, social and economic consequences.
 - There are **20 NTDs** that impact over **1.7 billion** people worldwide.
 - **India carries the largest burden of at least 11 of these diseases**, with parasitic illnesses like **kala-azar** and **lymphatic filariasis** affecting millions of people throughout the country – often the poorest and most vulnerable.
- **Indian Initiatives to Eliminate NTDs:**
 - The **Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF)** was launched in **2018**, as part of intensifying efforts towards the elimination of NTDs.
 - A **WHO-supported regional alliance established by the governments of India, Bangladesh, and Nepal in 2005** to expedite early diagnosis and treatment of the most vulnerable populations and improve disease surveillance and control of sandfly populations (**Kala-azar**).
 - India **has already eliminated several other NTDs**, including guinea worm, trachoma, and yaws.

Source: DTE

Veer Savarkar Jayanti

Why in News

On **28th May**, India paid tribute to the freedom fighter, **Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (Veer Savarkar)** on his **birth anniversary**.

- He was an Indian independence activist, politician, lawyer and writer.
- He is also known as **Swatantryaveer Savarkar**.

Key Points

- **Birth:** Born on **28th May, 1883** in **Bhagur**, a village near Nashik in **Maharashtra**.
- **Related Organisations and Work:**
 - Founded a secret society called **Abhinav Bharat Society**.
 - Went to the United Kingdom and was involved with organizations such as **India House and the Free India Society**.
 - He was the **president of Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943**.
 - Savarkar wrote a book titled '**The History of the War of Indian Independence**' in which he wrote about the guerilla warfare tricks used in **1857 Sepoy Mutiny**.
 - He also wrote the book '**Hindutva: who is hindu?**'.
- **Trial and Sentences:**
 - **Arrested in 1909** on charges of plotting an armed revolt against the **Morley-Minto reform (Indian Councils Act 1909)**.
 - **Arrested in 1910** for his **connections with the revolutionary group India House**.
 - One of the charges on Savarkar was abetment to murder of Nashik Collector Jackson and the second was waging a conspiracy under Indian Penal Code 121-A against the King emperor.
 - Following the two trials, Savarkar was convicted and sentenced to **50-years imprisonment also known as Kala Pani** and transported in 1911 to the **Cellular Jail** in the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- **Death:** He died on 26th February 1966 due to fasting on his own wish of death.

Abhinav Bharat Society (Young India Society)

- It was a secret society founded by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and his brother Ganesh Damodar Savarkar **in 1904**.
- Initially founded at Nasik as Mitra Mela, the society was associated with several revolutionaries and political activists with branches in various parts of India and London.

India House

- It was **founded by Shyamji Kishan Verma in 1905** in London.
- It was opened to promote nationalist views among Indian students in London.

Free India Society

Savarkar went to London in 1906. He soon founded the Free India Society, based on the thoughts of the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini (Savarkar had written a biography of Mazzini).

Hindu Mahasabha

- **Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha** is one of the oldest organizations of India as it was **formed in 1907**. Eminent leaders **extended this Organization in 1915 on ALL India basis**.
- The Eminent personalities who founded this Organisation and who presided over the ALL INDIA Sessions held include Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lal Lajpat Rai, Veer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, etc.

Source: PIB

Cyclone Yaas

Why in News

Recently, cyclone **Yaas** made landfall south of **Balasore in Odisha**.

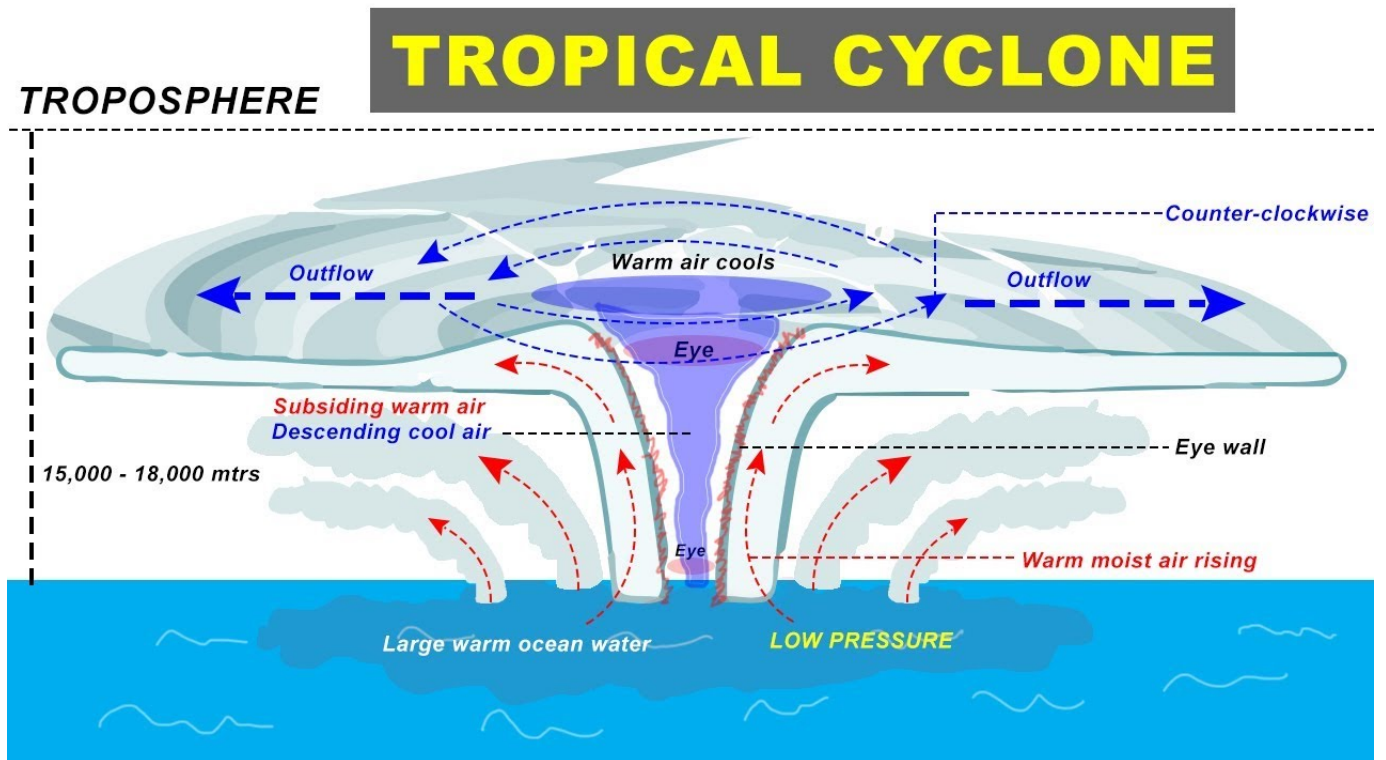
Earlier, another **cyclonic storm named 'Cyclone Tauktae'** had affected the Indian states of Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, along with two Union Territories: Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The cyclone has been **named Yaas by Oman**. The word Yaas has originated from the Persian language and means '**Jasmin**' in English.
 - Typically, **tropical cyclones in the North Indian Ocean region** (Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea) **develop during the pre-monsoon** (April to June) and **post-monsoon** (October to December) periods.
 - **May-June** and **October-November** are known to produce cyclones of severe intensity that affect the Indian coasts.
- **Classification:**
 - It has been classified as a **very severe cyclone**.
 - The **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** classifies cyclones on the **basis of the maximum sustained surface wind speed** (MSW) they generate.
 - The cyclones are classified as **severe** (MSW of 48-63 knots), **very severe** (MSW of 64-89 knots), **extremely severe** (MSW of 90-119 knots) and **super cyclonic storm** (MSW of 120 knots or more).
- **Areas Affected:**
 - It affected the **bordering regions of West Bengal and Odisha** and weakened into a cyclonic storm, leaving behind a **trail of destruction on the eastern coast**.
- **Bay of Bengal Getting Warmer:**
 - The Bay of Bengal, where cyclone Yaas has formed, is at least **two degrees warmer than what is normal for this time of the year**.
 - The north Bay of Bengal is exceptionally warm with temperatures up to 32 degrees.

- **Tropical Cyclones:**

- A **tropical cyclone** is an **intense circular storm that originates over warm tropical oceans** and is characterized by low atmospheric pressure, high winds, and heavy rain.
- A **characteristic feature of tropical cyclones is the eye**, a central region of clear skies, warm temperatures, and low atmospheric pressure.
- Storms of this type are called **hurricanes in the North Atlantic and eastern Pacific and typhoons in SouthEast Asia and China**. They are called **tropical cyclones in the southwest Pacific and Indian Ocean region and Willy-willies in north-western Australia**.
- Storms **rotate counterclockwise in the northern hemisphere and clockwise in the southern hemisphere**.
- The **conditions favourable** for the formation and intensification of tropical storms are:
 - **Large sea surface** with temperature higher than 27° C.
 - Presence of the **Coriolis force**.
 - Small **variations in the vertical wind speed**.
 - A pre-existing **weak low- pressure area** or low-level-cyclonic circulation.
 - Upper **divergence** above the sea level system.



Naming of Tropical Cyclones:

- According to **WMO (World Meteorological Organization)** guidelines, countries in every region are supposed to give names for cyclones.
- The **North Indian Ocean Region** covers tropical cyclones formed over Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
- The 13 members, which come under the region, are **Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Yemen.**
- IMD, one of the six **Regional Specialised Meteorological Centres (RSMC)** in the world, is mandated to issue advisories and name tropical cyclones in the north Indian Ocean Region.

It is an agency of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences.**

Bay of Bengal vs Arabian Sea (Cyclones)

- **Bay of Bengal:**

- As it is **concave or shallow** where when strong winds push water, it gets **concentrated as a storm.**
- It is **shaped like a trough** that makes it more hospitable for storms to gain force. Moreover, the **high sea surface temperature** makes matters more worse in the Bay triggering the intensity of the storms.
- Additionally, it **gets more rainfall** with sluggish winds and warm air currents around it that keep temperatures relatively high all year. The **constant inflow of fresh warm water from the perennial rivers** like Brahmaputra, Ganga makes it further impossible to mix with the cooler water below.
- **Lack of landmass between the Pacific Ocean and the Bay of Bengal** tend cyclonic winds to move into the coastal areas causing heavy rainfall.
- The **absence of air movements from north-western India towards the Bay in the post-monsoon phase is also another reason** for the chances of cyclones in the Bay of Bengal.

- **Arabian Sea:**

- It is much **calmer** as the **stronger winds help dissipate the heat and lack of constant fresh water** helps the warm water to mix with the cool water underneath, reducing the surface temperature.
- The Arabian Sea enjoys the **locational advantage** as the winds from the Pacific Ocean encounter the Western Ghats and the Himalayas cutting down on its intensity and sometimes never reaching the Arabian Sea.

DEATH TOLLS FROM RECENT CYCLONES

Year	BAY OF BENGAL		ARABIAN SEA	
	Cyclone	Deaths	Cyclone	Deaths
2021			Tauktae	104
2020	Amphan	90	Nisarga	4
	Nivar	12		
	Burevi	9		
2019	Fani	64	Hikka	13
	Bulbul	25		
2018	Titli	78	Mekanu	26
			Luban	14
2017	Ockhi	110		
2016	Vardha	6		
2015			Chapala	5
			Megh	18
2014	Hudhud	46		
2013	Phailin	21		
2012	Nilam	43		
2011			Keila	14
2010	Laila	6	Phet	44
TOTAL		510		148



648 deaths include 552 in India, 43 in Bangladesh (Nilam), 38 in Oman (Keila and Phet), and 15 in Pakistan

Source: TH

Jayanti: New Species of Cricket

Why in News

Recently, a new species of Cricket named '**Indimimus jayanti**' was found in the **Kurra caves of Chhattisgarh**.

The new species was **named after Professor Jayant Biswas**, one of the leading cave explorers in the country.



Key Points

- **About the New Spider Cricket:**
 - The new species of cricket has been identified under the **genus Arachnomimus Saussure, 1897**.
 - **Jayanti** has led to the **new subgenus 'Indimimus'**.
 - Males of the new Jayanti subgenus **cannot produce sound** and their **females don't have ears**.
- **About the New Subgenus:**
 - The newly discovered subgenus, Indimimus, is different from the two subgenera, **Arachnomimus and Euarachnomimus**, because of the **male genitalia structure**.
 - Insects have a **lock-and-key model genitalia structure** which is unique to each subgenus.
- **Arachnomimus Saussure, 1897:**
 - Arachnomimus is the **genus name given by Swiss Entomologist Henri Louis Frédéric de Saussure in 1878** to crickets that resembled spiders.
 - Crickets of this group are **commonly called spider crickets** because of their smaller body size and long legs.
- **Significance of the Discovery:**
 - It can **help in designing hearing aids for humans**.
 - The new species **may be communicating by beating their abdomen or any other body part on the cave walls**.
 - **Vibrational communication** is one of the softest but fastest modes of signal transmission.

Vibrational communication can be regarded as an interaction between the physical properties of the environment and insect's anatomy and physiology and resulting behavior.
 - Further studies on their skills of vibrational communication may help in designing hearing aids for humans which can capture quietest signals and amplify to an audible hearing range.
 - With the discovery of Jayanti from India, the **genus Arachnomimus is now known from 12 species**. Distribution of these species is very wide, ranging from Brazil to Malaysia.
 - In India, the diversity of spider crickets is still unexplored. Given India is home to four **biodiversity hotspots**, and all the hotspots have unexplored caves, there is **significant scope for many more discoveries**.
- **About Crickets:**
 - Cricket, any of approximately 2,400 species of leaping insects that are worldwide in distribution and known for the musical chirping of the male.
 - They have mainly cylindrical bodies, round heads, and long antennae. Behind the head is a smooth, robust pronotum.
 - Crickets are noticeable for their loud calls, especially at night. Male crickets produce this sound by rubbing their wings against each other to attract females.
 - The females listen to these calls using ears located on their legs and approach the males for mating and reproduction.

Source: IE

Yellow Fungus

Why in News

After black and white fungus, the recent case of yellow fungus has become a cause for concern.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Yellow fungus, **also called mucor septic**, initially **develops by the presence of moulds** (a type of fungi) in the environment.
 - **It may be present** with unnecessary fatigue, rashes, burning sensation **on skin** etc.
 - Humidity levels below 30-40% can promote the growth of fungus.
 - **It may not start from the lungs but it invades internal organs of the body** and affects the entire functioning.
- **Potential Causes:**
 - Prolonged use of steroids, contaminated environment, uncontrolled diabetes, unhygienic habits, lesser immunity, comorbidities.
 - The treatment for **Covid-19** includes steroids and immunosuppressants that leave the body with weak immunity.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Weight loss, reduced appetite, lethargy are the **common symptoms** of yellow fungus infection.
 - If not detected in time, symptoms can become **more severe including pus leakage, sunken eyes, organ failure, slow healing of wounds and necrosis** (cells in the living tissues die prematurely).
- **Treatment:**

Till now the only **known treatment for yellow fungus is Amphotericin B injection**, which is an antifungal drug also being **used to treat black fungus**.
- **Prevention:**

Maintaining hygiene, not consuming stale food, keeping the humidity in the room in check, etc.

Black Fungus

Mucormycosis, previously known as zygomycosis and sometimes termed as black fungus, is generally spread by breathing in, eating food contaminated by, or **getting spores of molds of the Mucorales type** in an open wound.

White Fungus

White Fungus or **Candidiasis** is a fungal infection **caused by a yeast (a type of fungus) called Candida**.

Source: IE
