



News Analysis (09 Jul, 2021)

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Department of Public Enterprises

Why in News

Recently, the government **reallocated the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE)** to the **finance ministry** from **the ministry of heavy industries**.

The **Finance Ministry will now have six departments** while DPE's parent ministry, the **Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises will now be called the Ministry of Heavy Industries**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is the **nodal department for all the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs)** and formulates policy pertaining to CPSEs.
CPSEs are those companies in which the **direct holding of the Central Government or other CPSEs is 51% or more**.
 - It lays down, in particular, **policy guidelines on performance improvement and evaluation, autonomy and financial delegation and personnel management in CPSEs**.
 - It furthermore **collects and maintains information in the form of a Public Enterprises Survey on several areas in respect of CPSEs**.
It will now be the **sixth department in the finance ministry** besides economic affairs, revenue, expenditure, financial services and **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)**.
 - The shift of DPE to the Finance Ministry will **help in efficient monitoring of the capital expenditure, asset monetisation and financial health of the CPSEs**.
- **Background:**
 - In their report, the **Estimates Committee** of 3rd Lok Sabha (1962-67) stressed the **need for setting up a centralized coordinating unit, which could also make continuous appraisal of the performance of public enterprises**.
 - Which led to the setting up of the **Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) in 1965** in the Ministry of Finance.
 - In **1985, BPE was made part of the Ministry of Industry**. In **May, 1990, BPE was made a full-fledged Department** known as the **Department of Public Enterprises (DPE)**.

• **Major Functions:**

- Coordination of **matters of general policy affecting all Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs)**.
- **Restructuring or closure of PSEs** including the mechanisms.
- Rendering advice relating to **revival**.
- **Counselling, training and rehabilitation of employees** in CPSEs under Voluntary Retirement Scheme.
- **Categorisation of CPSEs including conferring 'Ratna' status**, among others.

CPSEs are classified into 3 categories- **Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna**.

Presently, there are 10 Maharatna, 14 Navratna and 74 Miniratna CPSEs.

Classification of CPSEs			
Category	Launch	Criteria	Examples
Maharatna	○ Maharatna Scheme was introduced for CPSEs in May, 2010, in order to empower mega CPSEs to expand their operations and emerge as global giants .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Having Navratna status. ○ Listed on Indian stock exchange with minimum prescribed public shareholding under Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) regulations. ○ An average annual turnover of more than Rs. 25,000 crore during the last 3 years. ○ An average annual net worth of more than Rs. 15,000 crore during the last 3 years. ○ An average annual net profit after tax of more than Rs. 5,000 crore during the last 3 years. ○ Should have significant global presence/international operations. 	○ Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Coal India Limited, GAIL (India) Limited, etc.
Navratna	○ Navratna Scheme was introduced in 1997 in order to identify CPSEs that enjoy comparative advantages in their respective sectors and to support them in their drive to become global players .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Miniratna Category – I and Schedule ‘A’ CPSEs, which have obtained ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ rating under the Memorandum of Understanding system in three of the last five years, and have composite score of 60 or above in the six selected performance parameters, namely, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Net profit to net worth. ○ Manpower cost to total cost of production/services. ○ Profit before depreciation, interest and taxes to capital employed. ○ Profit before interest and taxes to turnover. ○ Earning per share. ○ Inter-sectoral performance. 	○ Bharat Electronics Limited, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, etc.
Miniratna	○ Miniratna scheme was introduced in 1997 in pursuance of the policy objective to make the public sector more efficient and competitive and to grant enhanced autonomy and delegation of powers to the profit-making public sector enterprises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Miniratna Category-I: The CPSEs which have made profit in the last three years continuously, pre-tax profit is Rs.30 crores or more in at least one of the three years and have a positive net worth are eligible to be considered for grant of Miniratna-I status. ○ Miniratna Category-II: The CPSEs which have made profit for the last three years continuously and have a positive net worth are eligible to be considered for grant of Miniratna-II status. ○ Miniratna CPSEs should have not defaulted in the repayment of loans/interest payment on any loans due to the Government. ○ Miniratna CPSEs shall not depend upon budgetary support or Government guarantees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Category-I: Airports Authority of India, Antrix Corporation Limited, etc. ○ Category-II: Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India, Bharat Pumps & Compressors Limited, etc.

- **About:**
 - It was first established during British Era in the 1920s but **Independent India's first Estimates Committee was established in 1950.**
 - This committee **examines the estimates included in the budget and suggests 'economies'** in public expenditure.
 - **Other Financial Committees of Parliament** include - Public Accounts Committee and Committee on Public Undertakings.
- **Members:**
 - It has **30 members** and all these members are from **Lok Sabha.**
 - The members are elected by Lok Sabha members from amongst themselves **every year by principles of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote,** so that all parties get due presentation in it.
 - **A minister cannot be elected as member/Chairman of estimates committee.**
 - The **chairman is appointed by the Speaker** and the chairman is **always from the ruling party** or coalition.
- **Functions:**
 - This committee tries to **report the economy and efficiency in expenditures.**
 - It **suggests what changes in policy or administrative framework** can be done and what alternative policies can be considered to bring economy and efficiency.
 - The works of this committee continue **throughout the year and it keeps reporting to the house as examination proceeds.**
 - Due to this reason, this committee is also called '**continuous economy committee**'.

Source: IE

Youth and Food System

Why in News

A new **UN report on youth and agriculture** underscores the urgent need to make agri-food systems more appealing to young people to secure the future of global food security and nutrition.

- The report '**Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems**' is prepared and shared to the UN by the **Committee on World Food Security (CFS).**
- **CFS** is an inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together on **food security and nutrition for all.** The CFS is hosted by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations** (UN).

Key Points

- **Youth in Numbers:**
 - Youth aged between 15 and 24 years accounted for **16% of the world's population** in 2019.
 - Young people were concentrated in **Asia, Central and Southern Asia** with 361 million youth and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia with 307 million youth, followed by sub-Saharan Africa (211 million youth).
 - The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** estimated that 440 million youth from the African continent would enter the labour market between 2015 and 2030.
- **Key Findings:**
 - **Food systems are the largest employer:** Particularly in the developing countries, yet they often do not provide decent and meaningful work or adequate livelihood opportunities, nor maintain a balance between the needs and rights of different generations.
 - Food systems** are a **complex web of activities** involving production, processing, handling, preparation, storage, distribution, marketing, access, purchase, consumption, food loss and waste, as well as the outputs of these activities, including social, economic and environmental outcomes.
 - **More Employment Opportunities: Covid-19** has affected labour markets around the world, hurting employment prospects for the youth more than those belonging to other age groups. Globally, employment among the youth fell 8.7% in 2020 compared with 3.7% for adults.
 - Agri-food systems, if made more appealing and equitable to youth, are a large, **untapped reservoir of employment opportunities.**
 - **Importance of Focusing on Developing Countries:** As almost 88% of the world's 1.2 billion youth live, particularly in Africa, where over 70% of youth subsist on USD 2 per day or less.
 - **Achieving Sustainable Development Goals:** The youth engagement and employment in sustainable agri-food systems is simultaneously a goal to be realized and a means for the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals**, and of economic well-being.
 - Youth are on the **front lines to build the food systems of the future**, while also bearing significant risks from **climate change, social and economic inequities**, and **political marginalization.**
- **Recommendations:**
 - **Approaches, initiatives and policies** to strengthen youth engagement and employment in food systems need to be based on the **pillars of rights, equity, agency and recognition.**
 - Improving youth-focused **social protection programmes, labour laws** and regulations, and **young people's access to resources** (land, forests, fisheries etc), finance, markets, digital technologies, knowledge and information.
 - Supporting youth-led **start-up initiatives** is also important, and requires a supportive policy environment.
 - The **redistribution of resources, knowledge and opportunities for youth** can contribute to creating jobs for the youth, as well as directly supporting transitions to sustainable agri-food systems.

Indian Scenario

- **Youth in Numbers:**
 - The youth (18-29 years) constitute 22% of India's population, which is more than 261 million people.
 - According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the median age of Indian population is around 28 years in 2021 and will become 31 years by 2031.
 - India is also going through the stage of **demographic dividend**.
 - Hardly **5% of the youth are engaged in agriculture** though over 60% of the rural people derive their livelihood fully or partly from farming and its related activities.
 - Clearly, the modern youth are disenchanted with agriculture and are shunning it as a profession.
- **Related Initiatives:**
 - **MAYA Roadmap, 2018:** This was formulated in a conference in New Delhi on “**Motivating and Attracting Youth in Agriculture**” (MAYA).
 - The MAYA road map envisages offering the youth a variety of avenues and opportunities for economic growth, social respect and application of modern technologies in farming and allied activities.
 - **ARYA (Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture): Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** has initiated this programme. Following are its **Objectives:**
 - To attract and empower the Youth in Rural Areas to take up various Agriculture, allied and service sectors.
 - To enable the **Farm Youth to establish network groups** to take up resource and capital intensive activities like processing, value addition and marketing.
 - **National Policy for Farmers, 2007:** To introduce measures which can help attract and retain youths in farming and processing of farm products for higher value addition by making it intellectually stimulating and economically rewarding.

Source: DTE

Deaths Due to Hazardous Chemical

Why in News

According to latest estimates by the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, **deaths due to exposure to hazardous chemicals worldwide rose 29% in 2019** from what they were in 2016.

- **Two million people died** due to exposure to hazardous chemicals in **2019**, compared to **1.56 million in 2016**. Between **4,270 and 5,400 people died every day** due to unintentional exposure to chemicals.
- The estimates were released by WHO Director-General, during the Ministerial Dialogue held at the Berlin Forum on **Chemicals and Sustainability: Ambition and Action towards 2030**.

Key Points

- **Hazardous Chemical:**

- A hazardous chemical is a chemical that has **properties with the potential to do harm** to human or animal health, the environment, or capable of damaging property.
- They are frequently used in the **workplace as raw materials, solvents, cleaning agents, catalysts**, and for a number of other functions.
- These are normally classified according to the risk they pose to health and property.

Hazardous chemicals are categorized as follows:

- **Flammable or explosive** (e.g. petroleum, TNT, plastic explosives)
 - **Irritating or corrosive to skin, lungs, and eyes** (e.g. acids, alkali, paints, fumes)
 - **Toxic chemicals** (e.g. carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, cyanide, **heavy metals**)
 - These are present in **the air, in consumer products, at the workplace, in water, or in the soil.**
 - They **can cause several diseases** including mental, behavioural and neurological disorders, cataracts, or asthma.
- **Chemicals Causing Most Deaths:**
 - **Lead Poisoning:**
 - It was responsible for **nearly half of the deaths in 2019.**
 - Lead exposure causes **cardiovascular diseases (CVD), chronic kidney diseases and idiopathic intellectual disability.**
 - Lead is **added to paints** for various reasons, including enhancing the colour, reducing corrosion and decreasing the drying time.
 - Just 41% of countries including India, have legally binding controls on the production, import, sale and use of lead paints.
 - In 2020, **UNICEF** too had raised concerns on the impact of lead pollution on the health of children.

Approximately 800 million globally have blood lead levels at or above the permissible quantity (5 micrograms per decilitre (µg/dL).
 - **Particulates and Carcinogens:**

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) from occupational exposure to **particulates (dust, fumes and gas)** and **cancers** from occupational exposure to **carcinogens (arsenic, asbestos and benzene)**, too accounted for a substantial share of the preventable deaths.
 - **Disability-adjusted Life-years Lost**
 - In 2019, **53 million disability-adjusted life-years were lost.** This is an increase by over 19% since 2016.
 - There has been a 56% increase in disability-adjusted life-years lost due to exposure to lead since 2016.
 - **Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)** is the sum of the number of years of life lost due to premature death and a weighted measure of the years lived with disability due to a disease or injury.

The use of DALYs to track disease burden is recommended by India's **National Health Policy of 2017.**

Steps Taken

There are many international chemical conventions restricting or even banning the production, use, and trade of certain hazardous chemicals.

- **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)**: To protect human health and the environment from the harmful effects of POPs (i.e. toxic chemicals).
India has ratified and acceded to the convention.
- **Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade.**
India ratified the Convention in 2005.
- **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.**
India ratified the Convention.
- **The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)** is an arms control treaty prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of chemical weapons by States Parties.
India is a signatory and party to the Convention.
- **The Minamata Convention on Mercury** is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury and its compounds.
More than 140 countries including India have ratified the Convention.
- **The United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances** provides comprehensive measures against drug trafficking, including provisions against money laundering and the diversion of precursor chemicals.
India is one among the signatories.
- The **Chemicals Convention concerning Safety in the use of Chemicals at Work** was promulgated by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1990 and entered into force on 4th Nov 1993.
- **The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)** is a policy framework to promote chemical safety around the world.
The first Conference and the process to develop the strategic approach were co-convened by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment)** along with other stakeholders.

Way Forward

- **Need For Comprehensive Law:** There is a need for a comprehensive law in the countries to regulate chemical use, production and safety.
- In this context, India must take note as the country's **national chemical policy has been pending** since 2012.
- **Reducing or Removing Chemical Exposure:** Extreme cautions are to be taken when **handling, storing, transporting, and using hazardous chemicals.**
The user needs to wear protective clothing and personal protective equipment to protect themselves from hazardous chemicals.

Source: DTE

India Rejects OIC's Proposal

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of External Affairs rejected the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) proposal to assist a dialogue between India and Pakistan.

Earlier in December 2020, India also rejected the criticism of its Kashmir policy by the OIC.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

- It is the **second largest intergovernmental organization** after the United Nations (UN) with a membership of 57 states.
- It is the **collective voice of the Muslim world**. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

India is not a member of the OIC.

- It was **established** upon a decision of the **historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco in September 1969.**
- **Headquarters:** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

What is OIC?

OIC- Organization of the Islamic Cooperation

It was founded in **1969**

First OIC Charter Adopted in **1972**

Number of Member Countries **57**

Founding Members **30**

Key Bodies of OIC:

- ▶ Council of Foreign Ministers
- ▶ General Secretariat
- ▶ Islamic Summit
- ▶ Al-Quds Committee

Key Points

- **OIC's Stand:**

Offered to **arrange a meeting between India and Pakistan** and proposed to send a delegation to Jammu & Kashmir in line with resolutions of the OIC council of foreign ministers.

Pakistan has **repeatedly sought to raise the Kashmir issue at the OIC** against the backdrop of **India's dramatically improved relations with several key players in West Asia** and in the Islamic organisation, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

- **India's Response:**

The OIC **should be watchful that their platform is not subverted by "vested interests" such as Pakistan to interfere in internal affairs of India** or for anti-India propaganda through biased and one-sided resolutions.

India & OIC

- **India's relationship with OIC as an organisation:**

- At the 45th session of the Foreign Ministers' Summit in 2018, **Bangladesh, the host, suggested that India, where more than 10% of the world's Muslims live**, should be given Observer status, but Pakistan opposed the proposal.
- In **2019, India made its maiden appearance** at the **OIC Foreign Ministers' meeting**, as a "guest of honour".

This **first-time invitation was seen as a diplomatic victory for India**, especially at a time of heightened tensions with Pakistan following the Pulwama attack.

- **Criticism of India's Policies by OIC:**

- It has been **generally supportive of Pakistan's stand on Kashmir**, and has issued statements criticising the alleged Indian "atrocities" in the state/Union Territory.
 - In 2018, the OIC General Secretariat had "**expressed strong condemnation of the killing of innocent Kashmiris by Indian forces** in Indian-occupied Kashmir".
 - It described the "**direct shooting at demonstrators**" as a "**terrorist act**", and "called upon the international community to play its role in order to reach a just and lasting solution to the conflict in Kashmir".
- OIC has **criticised the Government of India over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019**, and the **Babri Masjid verdict** of the **Supreme Court**.
- OIC has also criticised the Indian government for what it called "**growing Islamophobia**" in India.

- **India's Response:**

India has always **maintained that OIC has no locus standi in matters strictly internal to India** including that of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir which is an integral and inalienable part of India.

- **India's relationship with OIC member countries:**

- Individually, India has **good relations with almost all member nations**.
- Ties with the **UAE** and **Saudi Arabia**, especially, have improved significantly in recent years.

The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi (UAE) was a special chief guest at the 68th **Republic Day** celebrations in 2017.

- The OIC includes two of India's close neighbours, **Bangladesh and Maldives**. Indian diplomats say **both countries privately admit that they do not want to complicate their bilateral ties with India** on Kashmir.

Source: TH

Council of Ministers

Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister **expanded and reshuffled his Council of Ministers (COM)**. The Prime Minister now has 77 ministers, nearly half of them new.

Key Points

- **About:**

- **Article 74 of the Constitution** deals with the **status of the council of ministers** while **Article 75 deals with the** appointment, tenure, responsibility, qualification, oath and salaries and allowances of the ministers.
- The COM consists of three categories of ministers, namely, **cabinet ministers, ministers of state, and deputy ministers**. At the **top of all these ministers stands the Prime Minister**.
 - **Cabinet Ministers:** These head the important ministries of the Central government like home, defence, finance, external affairs and so forth.

Cabinet is the chief policy formulating body of the Central government.
 - **Ministers of State:** These can either be given independent charge of ministries/ departments or can be attached to cabinet ministers.
 - **Deputy Ministers:** They are attached to the cabinet ministers or ministers of state and assist them in their administrative, political, and parliamentary duties.
- At times, the COM **may also include a deputy prime minister**. The deputy prime ministers are appointed mostly for political reasons.

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **Article 74 (COM to aid and advise President):** The advice tendered by Ministers to the President shall not be inquired into in any court.
 - The **President may require the COM to reconsider such advice** and the President **shall act in accordance with the advice tendered after such reconsideration.**
 - **Article 75 (Other Provisions as to Ministers):** The PM shall be **appointed by the President** and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the President on the **advice of the PM.**
 - The **total number of ministers, including the Prime Minister, in the COM shall not exceed 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha.**
 - This provision was added by the 91st Amendment Act of 2003.
 - A **minister who is not a member of the Parliament (either house) for any period of six consecutive months** shall cease to be a minister.
 - **Article 77 (Conduct of Business of the Government of India):** The President shall make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business.
 - **Article 78 (Duties of Prime Minister):** To communicate to the President all decisions of the COM relating to the administration of the affairs of the Union and proposals for legislation.
 - **Article 88 (Rights of Ministers as Respects the Houses):** Every minister shall have the right to speak and take part in the proceedings of either House, any joint sitting of the Houses and any Committee of Parliament of which he may be named a member. But he shall not be entitled to vote.
- **Responsibility of Ministers:**
 - **Collective Responsibility:**
 - Article 75 clearly states that the **COM is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.** This means that all the ministers own joint responsibility to the Lok Sabha for all their acts of omission and commission.
 - **Individual Responsibility:**
 - Article 75 also contains the principle of individual responsibility. It states that the ministers hold office during the pleasure of the President, which means that the President can remove a minister even at a time when the COM enjoys the confidence of the Lok Sabha.
 - However, the President removes a minister only on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- **Council of Ministers in States:**
 - The **Council of Ministers in the states** is constituted and functions in the **same way** as the **Council of Ministers at the Centre (Article 163: COM to aid and advise Governor)** and **Article 164: Other Provisions as to Ministers).**

Source: TH

Methane in the Moons of Saturn

Why in News

NASA's (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) Cassini spacecraft had detected an unusually high **concentration of methane, along with carbon dioxide and dihydrogen, in the moons (Titan and Enceladus) of Saturn** by flying through their plumes (in 2017).

- It found that **Titan** has methane in its atmosphere and **Enceladus** has a liquid ocean with erupting plumes of gas and water.
- An international research team has used new statistical methods to understand if methanogenesis or methane production by microbes could explain the molecular hydrogen and methane.

Key Points

- **Findings:**
 - Cassini found **ice particles, salts, hydrogen and organic molecules** in the plumes, tentative **hints of an ocean that is similar to Earth's oceans** in composition.
 - There is also evidence for **alkaline hydrothermal vents on Enceladus' seafloor**, similar to those that support methanogens in Earth's oceans.
- **About Methanogens:**
 - Most of the methane on Earth has a biological origin. **Microorganisms called methanogens are capable of generating methane** as a metabolic byproduct.
 - They **do not require oxygen to live** and are widely distributed in nature.
 - They are **found in swamps, dead organic matter, and even in the human gut**.
 - They are **known to survive in high temperatures** and simulation studies have shown that they **can live in Martian conditions**.
 - Methanogens have been widely studied to understand **if they can be a contributor to global warming**.
- **Possibility of Methanogens on Enceladus:**
 - Methane **could be formed by the chemical breakdown of organic matter** present in Enceladus' core.
 - **Hydrothermal processes** could help the formation of carbon dioxide and methane.
 - Enceladus' hydrothermal vents **could be habitable to Earth-like microorganisms (Methanogens)**.

Saturn

- Saturn is the **sixth planet from the Sun and the second largest planet** in our solar system.
- Adorned with thousands of beautiful ringlets, Saturn is unique among the planets. It is not the only planet to have rings—made of chunks of ice and rock—but none are as spectacular or as complicated as Saturn's.
- Like fellow gas giant Jupiter, Saturn is a massive ball made mostly of hydrogen and helium.
- **Few missions** have visited Saturn: Pioneer 11 and Voyagers 1 and 2 flew by; But Cassini orbited Saturn 294 times from 2004 to 2017.

Titan

- Titan is the **largest moon of Saturn** and the second largest moon in our solar system. **Jupiter's moon Ganymede** is just a little bit larger.

- It has **liquid rivers, lakes, and seas on its surface** (though these contain hydrocarbons like methane and ethane, not water).
- Titan's atmosphere is **made mostly of nitrogen**, like Earth's, **but is four times denser**.
- Unlike Earth, it has **clouds and methane rain**.
- Because it is so far from the **Sun its surface temperature is (-179 degree Celsius)**.

Enceladus

- Enceladus is **a small, icy moon which has an abundance of hydrogen molecules** in water plumes. 98% of the gas in the plumes was found to be water and **1% is hydrogen** and the remaining is a mixture of molecules of carbon dioxide, methane, and ammonia.
- Underwater **vents present on Enceladus resemble the vents present on Earth's ocean floors**, where microbes and other sea life congregate.

Source: IE

Zika Virus Disease

Why in News

Recently, Zika Virus Disease (ZVD) was reported for the first time in Kerala.

Key Points

- **About:**

Zika virus is a **mosquito-borne flavivirus** that was **first identified in Uganda** in 1947 in monkeys. It was later identified in **humans in 1952 in Uganda** and the **United Republic of Tanzania**.
- **Transmission:**
 - ZVD is caused by a virus **transmitted primarily by Aedes mosquitoes (AM)**, mainly *Aedes aegypti*.

This is the same mosquito that **transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever**.
 - Zika virus is **also transmitted** from mother to fetus during pregnancy, through sexual contact, transfusion of blood and blood products, and organ transplantation.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Symptoms are generally mild and include fever, rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise or headache. Most people with Zika virus infection do not develop symptoms.
 - Zika virus infection during pregnancy **can cause infants to be born with microcephaly** (smaller than normal head size) and other congenital malformations, known as congenital Zika syndrome.
- **Treatment:**

There is **no vaccine or medicine for Zika**. Instead, the focus is on relieving symptoms and includes rest, rehydration and acetaminophen for fever and pain.

- **Related Government Programme/Initiatives:**
 - **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme**: To strengthen/maintain decentralized laboratory based and IT enabled disease surveillance systems for epidemic prone diseases to monitor disease trends.
 - **National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme**: The central nodal agency for prevention and control of six vector borne diseases i.e. Malaria, Dengue, Lymphatic Filariasis, Kala-azar, Japanese Encephalitis and Chikungunya in India.
 - **Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK)**: An initiative under the **National Health Mission**, has a **surveillance for Microcephaly** (system for monitoring birth defects).

Dengue

- Dengue is transmitted by several species of **mosquito within the genus Aedes**.
- Symptoms include **fever, headache, muscle, and joint pains, and a characteristic skin rash** that is similar to measles.
- The **dengue vaccine CYD-TDV or Dengvaxia** has been approved in about 20 countries.

Chikungunya

- Chikungunya is caused by a **mosquito-borne virus**.
- It is transmitted by **Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus mosquitoes**.
- Its symptoms are characterized by **abrupt fever and severe joint pain**, often in hands and feet, and may include headache, muscle pain, joint swelling or rash.
- There is no **specific antiviral drug** treatment for chikungunya.
- There is **no commercial chikungunya vaccine**.

Yellow Fever

- It is an **acute viral haemorrhagic disease** transmitted by infected mosquitoes. The "yellow" in the name refers to the jaundice that affects some patients.
- **Symptoms** of yellow fever include **fever, headache, jaundice, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting and fatigue**.
- Yellow fever vaccine which is **known as 17D** and according to the **World Health Organization (WHO)** also it is safe and affordable. However, there are reports of multisystem organ failure following vaccination.

Source: IE

India's Covid-19 Emergency Response Package: Phase II

Why in News

The Union Cabinet has recently approved a Rs. 23,123 crore package to boost emergency response and healthcare systems.

It includes funding for 20,000 additional ICU (intensive care unit) beds and the setting up of paediatric units in all districts, ahead of a potential third wave of **Covid-19** in the country.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - **Phase I of Package:** In March 2020, when the country was faced with the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Central Sector Scheme of Rs. 15,000 crore was announced for the "**India Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package**". It aimed at providing a critical impetus to the efforts of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and States/UTs, and catalysing health systems activities for pandemic management.
 - Since mid-February 2021, the country is experiencing a **second wave** which has spread into rural, peri-urban and tribal areas.
- **Phase II of Package:**
 - The Phase-II of the Package has **Central Sector (CS)** and **Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)** components.

The Union government fully funds the central sector schemes, whereas centrally sponsored schemes are jointly funded by the Centre and states.
 - It would be **implemented from 1st July 2021 to 31st March 2022**.
- **Purpose:**
 - Includes funding for paediatric units in all 736 districts, and the setting up of 20,000 ICU beds, 20% of which would be "hybrid", that is, for adults as well as children.

There are apprehensions about **a third wave of Covid-19 affecting children more than before**.
 - It is **aimed at preventing the problems observed during the second wave**, including lack of transport facilities for oxygen and shortage of medicines, from happening again.
 - The Centre **would provide support to its hospitals, the All India Institutes of Medical Sciences, and other institutes of national importance**, for repurposing 6,688 beds for Covid-19 management.
 - **Genome sequencing** machines would be provided to the **National Centre for Disease Control**.
 - The package would also provide for the expansion of the national telemedicine platform, **eSanjeevani**, by increasing daily consultations from 50,000 at present to 5 lakh.
 - **States would be supported** to carry out at least 21.5 lakh tests a day and add 8,800 ambulances.

Source: PIB

SPARSH: System for Pension Administration Raksha

Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Defence** has implemented **SPARSH (System for Pension Administration Raksha)**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - It is an **integrated system for automation of sanction and disbursement** of defence **pension**.
 - This **web-based system processes pension claims** and credits pension directly into the bank accounts of defence pensioners without relying on any external intermediary.
 - A **Pensioner Portal** is available for pensioners **to view their pension related information**, access services and register complaints, if any.
 - SPARSH envisages **establishment of Service Centres to provide last mile connectivity to pensioners** who may be unable to directly access the SPARSH portal.
 - The two largest banks dealing with defence pensioners – State Bank of India (SBI) and Punjab National Bank (PNB) – have been co-opted as Service Centres.
- **Other Initiative Related to Defence Pensions:**
 - One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme**: It provides the **payment of the same pension to military officers for the same rank** for the **same length of service**, irrespective of the date of retirement.

Source: PIB
