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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Mucormycosis in COVID-19 patients

Context:

- Hospitals across India have started to report an **increasing number of cases of mucormycosis**.

Mucormycosis:

- Mucormycosis is an aggressive and invasive **fungal infection** caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes.
- It is also known by the name '**black fungus**'.

Causative factors:

- According to a study, **Diabetes mellitus is the most common underlying cause**, followed by haematological malignancies and solid-organ transplants for mucormycosis.
 - Diabetes mellitus was reported in 54% to 76% of cases, according to a report.

Effect:

- It can affect various organs but is currently manifesting as an **invasive rhino-orbito-cerebral disease**, affecting the ear, nose, throat, and mouth and at times the brain, leading to blindness, stroke or death. It can cause a lot of damage internally and can be fatal if not detected early.
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S., calls it a serious but rare disease.

Treatment:

- The main line of treatment is an **anti-fungal drug called amphotericin B**, which is given over an extended period of time under the strict observation of a physician. Surgery to remove the fungus growth might also be warranted.

Reasons for sudden spike in cases:

- Mucormycosis has been affecting patients who have recently recovered from COVID-19. The sudden increase in the mucormycosis cases can be attributable to the following reasons:
 - The **indiscriminate use of a high dose of steroids** in COVID-19 patients, sometimes even in minimally symptomatic patients is a major reason. This leads to spikes in the sugar level among diabetics, which, in turn, renders them vulnerable.
 - The **use of monoclonal agents like Tocilizumab** may be a factor, too. Monoclonal antibodies are man-made proteins that act like human antibodies in the immune system. The overuse of such antibodies reduces the inherent immunity of the body in the long run making it vulnerable to future infections.
 - Though the disease is not contagious, the **use of nasal prongs and other devices for oxygen delivery** and possible breach of sterile conditions can possibly lead to cross-infection and **hospital-acquired infection**.

Recommendations:

- Following appropriate **treatment protocols as recommended by the World Health Organization for COVID-19**, including **rational use of steroids and monoclonal antibodies** only when they can help a patient, is important.
- In case of usage of steroids, **constant monitoring of sugar levels** and resorting to insulin use to control these levels if required, is essential.
- Recognising the symptoms and **seeking treatment early** would be the key intervention. Like most illnesses, if detected early, mucormycosis can be cured.

2. The hurdles in accessing foreign COVID-19 aid

Background:

- Nasscom has urged the Prime Minister to temporarily relax **the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) norms**.
 - Given that the amended provisions of the FCRA 2020 are proving to be a deterrent for inflow of foreign aid, Nasscom has requested the government to grant a temporary waiver to the FCRA Act and the 2020 amendments.
- Petitions concerning the restrictive FCRA provisions are being heard in the High Courts.
- A Bench of the Delhi High Court has asked the Finance Ministry to consider dropping GST levies on all oxygen concentrator imports as they can be linked

to the **Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution** amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

- State governments are expected to raise the issue of GST levies on COVID-19 supplies, including vaccines, at the upcoming GST Council meeting.

Steps taken to facilitate imports of relief supplies:

- As India ran out of critical supplies for managing the severe second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre unveiled gradual measures over the past month to ease the imports of some items.
 - **Import duties and taxes** were cut in some cases.
 - The government allowed individuals to import oxygen concentrators for personal use through courier from e-commerce portals or global vendors. The customs department was directed to clear them as 'gifts' till July 31.
 - Special protocols have been put in place by the Shipping Ministry to ensure that vessels with COVID-19 relief material are **unloaded on a priority basis and paperwork and cargo clearances are processed expeditiously** by Customs and the Directorate General of Foreign Trade.

Concerns:

- Despite several facilitative measures introduced by the government to aid inflow of critical materials, serious lacunae's continue to exist.

GST on critical imports:

- Not all critical COVID-19 imports have been made temporarily tax-free.
- Though customs duties have been slashed, **imports such as oxygen concentrators and related equipment, vaccines still attract the Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, specifically termed the Integrated GST (IGST).
- GST payments are mandatory for the material to be released at the customs. Several shipments sent by foreign donors, including groups of NRIs, or procured online by resident Indians from abroad, were held up due to a lack of awareness of this. This would lead to delay in the release of critical relief material and also would dent the quantities of relief material they send.

Exemptions for exemption of GST:

- Recently, the Finance Ministry granted a conditional 'ad-hoc' GST exemption for imports of all COVID-19 relief material, including vaccines, medical oxygen and Remdesivir vials, et al, till June 30. However the **regulations in**

place to avail of this IGST exemption have made the relaxation redundant in some cases.

- The regulation that the incoming material has to be “received free of cost for free distribution anywhere in India for COVID relief” has rendered domestic companies or charities importing these items by purchasing them, even if for free distribution in the country, unqualified for availing the GST break.
- Entities that wish to import relief material for free distribution need a prior certification from State governments. So, global donors and their intended recipients for the donations would need to register with individual States where they wish to route relief material.

FCRA regulations:

- No entity in India is allowed to receive foreign aid or cash donations unless they have an **approval to do so under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)**.
- Pre-existing rules that require such NGOs to open a bank account for receiving foreign funds at the State Bank of India’s Parliament Street branch has also further curtailed their ability to receive foreign aid.
- Also an NGO receiving foreign funds or material can no longer transfer foreign aid to any other person, which would make it difficult to pass on the relief material to patients or smaller NGOs or groups working on the ground.

3. Sukhdev Thapar

What’s in News?

Sukhdev Thapar’s birth anniversary.

- Sukhdev Thapar is a **revolutionary Indian freedom fighter**.
- He was involved in promoting national consciousness among the country’s young people in the Punjab area.
- He showed a defiant spirit from an early age itself. During his school days, he would refuse to salute the British officers who visited his school.
- Having lost his father at an early age, Sukhdev was raised by his uncle. It was the arrest of his uncle that led him to revolutionary activities for freedom from colonial rule.
- Sukhdev joined the Naujawan Bharat Seva, which had been started by Bhagat Singh in 1926. The two became close friends and associates.
- He participated in many activities to promote national consciousness among the country’s young people in the Punjab area.

- He was also an active member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). The HSRA was a radical organisation actively involved in revolutionary activities against the British government.
- Sukhdev, while in college, studied the various revolutions of the world, particularly the Russian Revolution.
- In an anti-Simon Commission rally in 1928, veteran Congress leader Lala Lajpat Rai was cruelly beaten by a lathi by a British police officer named James A Scott. Lajpat Rai succumbed to injuries sustained a few days later.
- The young revolutionaries including Sukhdev decided to avenge Lajpat Rai's death. As per Bhagat Singh's biographer, it was Sukhdev who chose Bhagat Singh to assassinate Scott.
- However, on 17th December 1928, Bhagat Singh and his accomplices Sukhdev and Rajguru killed an Assistant Superintendent of Police, John P. Saunders in a case of mistaken identity.
- They still declared that Lajpat Rai's death had been avenged. After committing the act, the trio escaped.
- They fled from Lahore by rail to Lucknow. Rajguru went on to Benares from Lucknow. He returned to Lahore a few days later.
- The British government managed to capture all the people involved in the assassination. Rajguru was arrested while he was in a bomb factory in Lahore in March 1929. All three were sentenced to death by hanging in the trial that ensued.
- While lodged in prison, Rajguru and his friends went on a hunger strike demanding improved conditions for political prisoners.
- He also wrote and sent a letter to Mahatma Gandhi while in prison.
- Despite tremendous pressure on the government to spare the youngsters, the trio was executed by hanging on 23rd March 1931.
- Rajguru was just 23 years old. He will always be remembered for his patriotism and courage. His story, as that of his accomplices, continues to inspire Indians.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. Mars landing gives China's space programme a leg-up

- China landed a spacecraft on Mars carrying its first Mars rover.
 - China has previously launched its **first Mars mission, called Tianwen-1**, carrying a lander and rover. Tianwen-1 had been in orbit and recently a lander descended successfully on to the surface of the red planet carrying a **rover named Zhurong**.
- This **makes China the third country to achieve this feat**. Only the Soviet Union and the U.S. had previously carried out a successful landing on Mars.

- China had previously tried to launch a Mars orbiter along with Russia in 2011, but that failed to enter orbit.
- The space programme marks another landmark progress in China's space industry development. China's Mars mission, along with lunar mission and space station, is key to its space programme.
 - In 2019, the fourth **lunar probe, Chang'e-4**, carried out the world's first landing on the far side of the moon.
 - **China's first space station called the Tianhe** is set to be functional by the end of next year and only the second space station after the International Space Station.

5. New approach combines biologics, antibody-drug conjugates

Context:

- **University of Massachusetts, Amherst, researchers have engineered a nanoparticle** that has the potential to revolutionize the treatment of diseases in humans.

Details:

- The new method **combines two different approaches to drug delivery-biologics and antibody-drug conjugates** to produce Protein-Antibody Conjugates or PACs.

Biologics:

- A biologic drug (biologics) is a product that is **produced from living organisms or contain components of living organisms**. Biologic drugs include a wide variety of products derived from human, animal, or microorganisms by using biotechnology.
- Biologics can be composed of sugars, proteins, or nucleic acids or complex combinations of these substances.
- Biologics are used to target a defective protein in the system by delivering proteins to it.
 - Example: If a person is short of insulin, which is a protein, they are given a shot of this to balance the system. This is referred to as **insulin treatment**.
- Despite the usefulness of biologics, one drawback of this method is the inability of this method in taking protein specifically inside the affected cells. This mode of protein delivery to cells can be a breakthrough in medical field.

Antibody conjugates:

- This approach **uses antibodies for drug delivery**.
 - An antibody, also known as an immunoglobulin, is a protein used by the immune system to identify and neutralize foreign objects inside the body. The antibody recognizes a unique molecule of the pathogen, called an antigen.
- Antibodies can be developed to recognise cancer cells. Drug molecules can be attached to the antibody, forming drug-antibody conjugates
- **Protein-antibody conjugates or PACs**, have a protein attached to the antibody. These PACs can be used for targeted drug delivery.

Significance:

- The new method offers a **potentially revolutionary approach to treating diseases**.
- This could have an **impact on incurable diseases, so-called undruggable ones like pancreatic cancer**.
 - The issue with designing drugs for diseases such as pancreatic cancer is the fact that it is difficult to design drugs that can bind with the target protein, especially when the associated proteins have an open structure.
 - If the protein has a particular shape – bent concave like a cup, for example, the drug is designed to fit into the bent portion, like a key into a lock, so that the protein's function is inhibited, and it cannot function.
 - Using a protein molecule, which is typically large, can solve the problem of designing drugs for pancreatic cancer.

6. Two killed in Kerala as cyclone intensifies

Context:

- **Cyclonic storm Tauktae** in the Arabian Sea.

Details:

Crisis in Kerala:

- **Torrential rainfall and strong winds** lashed several Kerala districts under the influence of Cyclone Tauktae, causing extensive damage to crops and buildings, and forcing district administrations to relocate more people to relief camps.
- The power sector has also reported heavy damage.
- **Severe sea erosion** persists in all the nine coastal districts, triggering a crisis.

- In the face of severe sea erosion Kerala CM has stated that seawalls cannot be viewed as the ultimate solution to sea erosion and stressed the importance of “Punargeham”, the government project to resettle people residing within 50 m of the tide zone.
- The **storm surges have inundated coastal areas**.
- **Low-lying areas of the state have been inundated by runoff water** from the high ranges.
 - The Irrigation Department has opened the Thottappally pozhi mouth to drain floodwaters from Kuttanad into the sea.

Movement of the cyclone:

- The storm has been **moving northwards** and is also expected to cross the Gujarat coast.
- The cyclonic storm Tauktae is **expected to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm**, with wind speeds expected to touch 160 kmph.
- Rain is expected to intensify in coastal Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat over the next 48 hours, raising concerns about damage to plantations and existing infrastructure.

Linkage between climate change and cyclones:

- **Storms are common in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea in May, ahead of the monsoon onset** though climatologists have said there is an **increase in the number** of such storms in the Arabian Sea in recent years.
 - Tauktae is the fourth cyclone in as many years over the Arabian Sea in the pre-monsoon months.
- This is being attributed to a **rise in average sea surface temperatures driven by global warming**.

7. AI begins zeolite cargo service

Context:

- National carrier Air India (AI) has begun the first of its “zeolite cargo flights”. Through this India has begun the process of importing zeolite from across the world for use in medical oxygen plants.

Background:

- Under the **Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund**, DRDO is to set up medical oxygen plants.

- The medical oxygen plant technology uses the **pressure swing adsorption process** and **molecular sieve zeolite** in oxygen generation.
 - The oxygen concentrator compresses air and passes it over zeolite, causing the **zeolite to adsorb the nitrogen from the air**. It then collects the remaining gas, which is mostly oxygen, and the nitrogen desorbs from the zeolite under the reduced pressure to be vented.

Significance:

- The proposed medical oxygen plant technology would help in supplementing oxygen supplies for COVID-19 patients.
- This technology would be especially useful in urban, remote and rural settings with the **on-site generation of medical oxygen in a cost-effective manner**.

8. New skink species from Western Ghats

Context:

- A new species of an **Asian gracile skink** has been discovered recently at **Anaikatti hills, Coimbatore**.

Details:

- The new species has been named *Subdoluseps nilgiriensis*.
 - Based on genetic studies, the new species is closely related to *Subdoluseps pruthi* found in parts of the Eastern Ghats.
- This species is **only the third skink species discovered from mainland India** in the last millennium.
- The reptile has a slender body of just about 7 cm and is sandy brown in colour. The **inconspicuous limbs of skinks make them resemble snakes**.
- Most skinks are diurnal and are **non-venomous**.
- Skinks are known to feed on insects such as termites, crickets and small spiders.

Threats:

- *Subdoluseps nilgiriensis* is currently classified as a **vulnerable species**.
- The main threats faced by the shinks include the following:
 - Seasonal forest fires
 - Brick kiln industries and their associated activities in the area
 - Rapid urbanisation which has led to high level of housing and road construction in the area, has also threatened the shinks's relatively small geographical range.

- Given their resemblance with snakes often leads to confusion resulting in humans killing them.

Significance of the new discovery:

- The discovery of the new species in the dry deciduous area, shows that even the **dry zones of India are home to unrealised skink diversity**. This challenges the notion that high biodiversity can be found only in the wet and evergreen forests and calls attention for the conservation of such areas.
- The new discovery also questions the current conservation policy wherein studies are carried out only in the protected areas and focus only on megafauna such as tigers and elephants. There is **the need to study the little-known animal groups which are fundamental and indispensable components of the world's biodiversity**.
- This discovery also highlights the neglected reptile diversity of India.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Covid-19 infections being reported among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

In news

- Covid-19 infections are being reported among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Odisha

Key takeaways

- As many as 21 tribals across eight different PVTGs in the State have so far tested positive, including two from the Bonda tribe.
- **Bonda people** live in the highlands of Malkangiri.
- Members of Dongria Kondh, another PVTG, have tested positive in Rayagada district.

Do you know?

- Odisha has among the largest and most diverse tribal populations in the country.
- Of the 62 tribal groups residing in Odisha, 13 are recognised as PVTGs.
- According to the 2011 Census, Odisha's share of the country's total tribal population was 9%.
- Tribals constitute 22.85% of the State's population.
- **PVTGs in the states:** Bonda, Birhor, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongaria Kandha, Hill Kharia, Juang, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankirdia, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora.
- These PVTGs have been identified on the basis of stagnant or diminishing populations, subsistence level of economy associated with pre-agricultural stages of hunting, food gathering and shifting cultivation, and relative physical isolation.

2. Violence between Israel- Palestine

Context: The ongoing violence between Israeli forces and Hamas – the worst fighting since 2014 – comes at a time when there seemed to be hope for a genuine easing of tensions in West Asia

What was the reason for violence?

- **Israeli Police Action during Ramzan month:** The immediate provocation for the current conflict appears to have been the action taken by Israeli police and security forces to prevent Palestinians from gathering at the Damascus gate in Jerusalem after Ramzan prayers – a long-standing tradition – in which hundreds of civilians were injured.
- **Hamas Counter:** The action allowed Hamas (largest of several Palestinian militant Islamist groups) to don the mantle of “protector” and the bombs they launched initially killed three Israeli citizens.
- **Disproportionate response by Israeli army:** The Benjamin Netanyahu government’s response was disproportionate: It carried out hundreds of airstrikes in Gaza and reportedly deployed artillery and troops as well.
- Over 100 Palestinians have been killed, at least 27 of them children. Both Hamas and Israel are attempting to use airstrikes and bombs against each other. Residential areas are bearing the brunt of Israeli attacks and there are **reports of rioting.**

Who is benefitting from the violence?

While there are no winners in war, there are certainly some who benefit from it.

- Netanyahu continues to expand the offensive against Hamas at a time when his government – which has been in a minority in the legislature – is on the brink of collapse. This stokes nationalistic feelings and yields political benefits.
- Hamas, too, finds relevance in conflict, in stoking the flames of resentment that are bound to be just under the surface in places like Gaza, where an entire generation has lived through blockades and occupation.

Implications of the recent violence

- **Erodes recent gains:** There was the softening of the hard stance vis a vis diplomatic ties with Israel by several Islamic regimes in the region (Ex: Abraham Accords.) However, the violence is a grave setback for peace in the region.
- **Deteriorating situation:** In the region, it is likely to make it harder for those trying to normalise ties with Israel.
- **Promotes Extreme Positions:** Within Israel and Palestine, it could embolden the maximalist, anti-peace voices.
- **Root problems remain unresolved:** The fundamental question of semi-legal settlements, of the differential rights enjoyed by Palestinians and Israelis, and violence as a means of political expression, remain unaddressed.

India

- India, for its part, has thus far managed to balance its historical commitment to the rights of Palestinians with its growing closeness to Israel.
- Delhi must continue to tread a fine line, without compromising either on its national and strategic interests, or its core humanitarian values.

3. Child Marriages and Pandemic

Context: The Global Girlhood Report 2020 says that at least half-a-million girls are now at risk of being victims of forced child marriages as this year comes to an end. Up to 2.5 million girls may be married early due to the pandemic over the next five years, says a Save the Children report.

Pandemic & Child Marriages

- **Increased poverty is directly related to child marriage:** In pandemic induced economic distress, vulnerable families are forced to choose between a girl child and the prospect of hunger & deprivation. A girl child is considered a burden, making her vulnerable to early marriage
- **Marriage seen as safety net:** One reason, cited by parents, in several surveys is that marriage is way of ensuring the girl child's safety at a time when many young men are out of jobs and seen as posing a danger to young girls.
- **Interrupted Education:** With so much uncertainty about when schools will reopen, there is every likelihood of girls not returning to school and this increases the danger of their being married early.
- **Lack of access to counsellor:** Without the safety net of schools, the girl child being forced into marriage is cut off from any possible communication with a teacher or counselor. Most of them do not have access to child helplines though the government has set these up.

Consequences of Child Marriages

- Child marriage is not only a violation of girls' human rights and their children's, but also represents a substantial **economic burden for countries** (early child marriage => tendency for more children => higher population growth)
- Child brides are often robbed of their rights to safety and security, **to health and education**, and to make their own life choices and decisions
- Child marriage brings with it the **prospect of early pregnancy** whereby the life of the girl and her unborn child are at much greater risk.
- Early marriage heightens the risk of domestic slavery, **spousal violence** and poor health with girls married under the age of 15 almost 50% more likely to have experienced either physical or sexual intimate partner violence

GS 3 :Economy, Science and Technology,Environment

3. Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22

In news

- The Central Government in consultation with the RBI, has decided to issue Sovereign Gold Bonds.

Key takeaways

- The Sovereign Gold Bonds will be issued in six tranches from 17th May to September 2021.
- The Bonds will be sold through Scheduled Commercial banks (except Small Finance Banks and Payment Banks), Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post offices, and National Stock Exchange of India Limited and Bombay Stock Exchange Limited.
- The minimum permissible investment will be one gram of gold.
- Investors will be compensated at a fixed rate of 2.50% per annum payable semi-annually on the nominal value.
- The Bonds will be restricted for sale to resident individuals, Hindu Undivided Families, Trusts, Universities and Charitable Institutions.
- The tenor of the Bond will be for a period of 8 years with exit option after 5th year to be exercised on the next interest payment dates.

4. Elephant Casualties On Railway Lines

In news

- According to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), a total of 186 elephants were killed after being hit by trains across India between 2009-10 and 2020-21.
- Assam accounted for the highest number of elephant casualties on railway tracks (62), followed by West Bengal (57), and Odisha (27). Uttar Pradesh saw just one death.

Measures taken to avoid elephant casualties on railway lines

- A Permanent Coordination Committee was constituted between the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) and the MoEFCC for preventing elephant deaths in train accidents.
- Clearing vegetation along railway tracks to enable clear view for loco pilots.
- Setting up underpass/overpass for safe passage of elephants.
- Regulation of train speed from sunset to sunrise in vulnerable stretches
- Regular patrolling of vulnerable stretches of railway tracks
- The MoEFCC released ₹212.49 crore to elephant range States under Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) of Project Elephant to protect elephants, their habitat and corridors, to address man-elephant conflicts, and for the welfare of captive elephants, between 2011-12 and 2020-21.



Prelims Practice Questions

1. Consider the following statements with respect to Cat Que virus:

1. It infects both humans and livestock species.
2. It is an arbovirus.
3. Pigs are its primary mammalian hosts.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3
- d. None of the above

Answer: c

Explanation:

- CQV belongs to the Simbu serogroup.
- One of the arthropod-borne viruses (arboviruses), the CQV may cause febrile illnesses, meningitis, and paediatric encephalitis among humans.
- Arbovirus is an informal name used to refer to any viruses that are transmitted by arthropod vectors.
- It infects both humans and economically important livestock species.
- The presence of CQV in Culex mosquitoes in China and pigs in Vietnam suggests the susceptibility of Asian countries to CQV.

2) India has recently launched a Green Strategic Partnership with which of the following countries?

- a. Israel
- b. Canada
- c. Denmark
- d. Netherlands

Answer : c

Explanation:

- At the virtual Summit held recently, the Prime Ministers of India and Denmark agreed to elevate **India-Denmark** relations to a Green Strategic Partnership.

- Through this partnership, India and Denmark agree to be at the forefront in the global fight against climate change.
- Both countries have set very ambitious national targets on climate and energy that will contribute to an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement.
- Together, the two countries will show the world that delivering on ambitious climate and sustainable energy goals is possible.
- This partnership would build on and consolidate the existing agreement establishing a Joint Commission for Cooperation (signed 6 February 2009) between India and Denmark which envisaged cooperation within the political field; economic and commercial field; science and technology; environment; energy; education and culture.

Green Strategic Partnership

- It is a mutually beneficial arrangement to advance political cooperation, expand economic relations and green growth, create jobs and strengthen cooperation on addressing global challenges opportunities; with focus on an ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, according to the joint statement released after the Summit.

3) Health in India Report was published recently by the?

- a. World Health Organization
- b. Indian Council of Medical Research
- c. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- d. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Answer : d

Explanation:

- **Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** has released a report titled '**Health in India**'.

Health in India Report

- The objective of the report is to gather basic quantitative information on India's health sector.
- The survey defines ailment as any deviation from a person's state of physical and mental well-being.
- The 'Proportion of Persons who Responded as Ailing', or PPRA, in a 15-day period when they were approached by the surveyors, were registered as those suffering from ailments.

Findings of the report

- Around 7.5 % of Indians reported that they were suffering from ailments.
- While in rural India only 6.8 % said that they were suffering from an ailment, this number in urban India was 9.1 %
- The Zoroastrian community remains the most susceptible to ailments (31.1 % of them were suffering from an ailment)
- The survey shows that women remain more susceptible to suffering from ailments than men.
- In rural India 6.1 % of males said that they were suffering from ailments, while 7.6 % of rural women said the same.
- While 8.2 % of urban males said that they were sick, 10 % urban females said the same.

4. Which of the following could be the reason/s for Current Account Deficit?

1. Overvalued exchange rate
2. Increase in exports
3. Long periods of consumer-led economic growth
4. High inflation

Choose the correct option:

- a. 1, 3 and 4 only
- b. 2, 3 and 4 only
- c. 2 only
- d. 1 and 4 only

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The current account deficit is a measurement of a country's trade where the value of the goods and services it imports exceeds the value of its exports.
- If the currency is overvalued, imports will be cheaper, and therefore there will be a higher quantity of imports resulting in a Current Account Deficit.
- One of the reasons for the Current Account Surplus is an increase in exports.
- A period of consumer-led economic growth will cause deterioration in the current account. Higher consumer spending will lead to higher spending on imports. The recession of 2009 also led to a temporary improvement in the deficit as consumers cut back on spending.
- If a country's inflation rises faster than its main competitors then it will make the exports less competitive and imports more competitive for that country. This will lead to deterioration in the current account.

5. Which of the following have been given the Geographical Indication Tag?

1. Sawantwadi toys
2. Channapatna toys
3. Etikoppaka toys
4. Kondapalli toys
5. Kinhal toys

Choose the correct option:

- a. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- b. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- c. 2, 3 and 5 only
- d. 2 and 4 only

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Channapatna toys – Karnataka, Etikoppa Toys and Kondapalli Bommalu (Toys) – Andhra Pradesh have been given the Geographical Indication Tag.
- Sawantwadi toys refer to handmade works of art made of wood in Sawantwadi, a town in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra.
- To mark the occasion of 151 years of postcards in India, Maharashtra Circle of India Post will release picture postcards on ‘Sawantwadi Toys’. The postcard is inspired by the Prime Minister’s speech on the country’s ability to become a “toy hub”.

6) Yakshagana is a traditional folk dance form popular in which of the following states?

- a. Odisha
- b. Karnataka
- c. Tamil Nadu
- d. Andhra Pradesh

Answer : b

Explanation:

- Yakshagana is a traditional folk dance form popular in **coastal districts of Karnataka** and northern area of **Kasaragod** district of **Kerala**.

- It is a rare combination of dance, music, song, scholarly dialogues and colourful costumes.
- A celestial world unfolds before the audience, as loud singing and drumming form a backdrop to dancers clad in striking costumes.
- Hence the name Yaksha (celestial) Gana (music).
- This is a night-long event, with elaborately adorned performers dancing to the beat of drums in open-air theatres – usually in the village paddy fields after the winter crop has been harvested.
- Traditionally, men portray all roles, including the female ones, though women are now part of Yakshagana troupes.
- A typical troupe consists of 15 to 20 actors and a Bhagavatha, who is the master of ceremonies and the main storyteller.
- The performances draw crowds from far and wide, with a fair-ground atmosphere pervading the venue till dawn.
- Each performance typically focuses on a small sub-story (known as ‘**Prasanga**’) from ancient Hindu epics of Ramayana or Mahabharata.
- The show consists of both stage performances by talented artists and commentary (performed by the lead singer or Bhagavatha) accompanied by traditional music.
- Musical instruments used in Yakshagana include Chande (drums), Harmonium, Maddale, Taala (mini metal clappers) and flute among others.

Mains Practice Questions

1Q. Social audits help in bridging the gap between policy objectives and outcomes. Discuss. (250 words)

Approach

- Describe Social audit as introduction.
- Highlight role of Social Audit in bridging gap between objectives stated in policy and desired outcomes.
- Give conclusion.

2Q. What do you understand by scheduled tribes? Examine the dilemma related to the development of the tribes in India. (250 words)

Approach

- Explain the term 'scheduled tribes' and 'tribals general characteristics' in India.
- List out some challenges faced while developing tribals in India in dilemmatic form.
- Give some suggestive steps to come out of such a dilemma.