Prelim Bits 07-10-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Ethylene Glycol and Diethylene Glycol

After the death of 66 children in Gambia, the World Health Organization (WHO) has urged the people to not use four India-manufactured fever, cough and cold syrups.

- Diethylene glycol (DEG) and Ethylene glycol both are sweet-tasting, colourless, odourless liquid commonly used in the commercial preparation of antifreeze,
- Ethylene glycol is used in the production of polyester fibres, paints and polyethene terephthalate (PET)
- DEG because of its hygroscopic property, is used in brake fluid, cigarettes, treatment of paper and some dyes.
- It is an excellent solvent for many relatively insoluble substances.
- **Current Issue** - These four products contain unacceptable amounts of *diethylene glycol* and *ethylene glycol* as contaminants in them.
- These chemicals can cause toxic effects, including abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, inability to pass urine, headache, altered mental state, and acute kidney injury that may lead to death.
- Currently, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) is investigating this case.
- **Legal Action -** If contaminants are found in the imported drugs, proportionate action will be taken against the company, which may include suspension of the licence to export the drug.
- The current Drugs and Cosmetics Act has provisions for up to three-year imprisonment, while the proposed Bill has increased this to a minimum of 10 years.

Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India

- Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) is a promotion body set up by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
- It was set up to promote the Indian pharmaceutical industry.
- The roles of the council are
    1. To advise the government,
    2. To organize seminars and meetings on export-related issues,
    3. To organize business meetings in India and abroad
    4. To organize trade delegations.

Central Drugs Standard Control Organization

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) is the national regulatory body for pharmaceuticals and medical devices in India.
- It is divided into zonal offices which do pre-licensing and post-licensing inspections, post-market surveillance, and recalls when needed.
- The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), which is an organ of the CDSCO, is responsible for approving and licensing of drugs and medical devices.

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Sri Lanka and U.N. Human Rights Council

India abstained from voting on a resolution against Sri Lanka at the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

- The resolution was titled 'Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka'.
- The resolution was adopted with 20 nations voting in favour in the 47-member UNHRC, seven against, including China and Pakistan, and 20 abstentions, including by India, Japan, Nepal and Qatar.
- India abstained from voting while observing that Sri Lanka's progress in implementing commitments on the 13th Constitutional Amendment, meaningful devolution and the early conduct of provincial elections.

The 13th Constitutional Amendment passed in 1987 mandates a measure of power devolution to the provincial councils, which were established to govern the island's nine provinces.

The 13th Amendment is the only constitutional provision on the settlement of the long-pending Tamil question.

UN Human Rights Council

- The Human Rights Council (HRC) was established in 2006 as part of the UN's reform process.
- It replaced the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
- The UNHRC is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system, made up of 47 States.
- Members are elected by the UNGA with 3-year terms, with a maximum of 2 consecutive terms.
- They are responsible for promotion and protection of human rights.
- It meets 3 times a year to examine human rights violations worldwide.
- Its resolutions are not legally binding but carry moral authority.

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Vyommitra

'Vyommitra' humanoid is undergoing pre-flight ground tests, in order to fly aboard the first unmanned test flight ahead of the crewed Gaganyaan flight.

A humanoid is a robot with the appearance of a human being.

- **Vyommitra** (vyoma means space, mitra means friend) is a female-looking spacefaring humanoid robot.
- It was designed and developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) **to fly aboard unmanned test missions** like the Gaganyaan.
- Vyommitra is also being called a half-humanoid since she will only have a head, two hands and a torso, and will not have lower limbs.
- The AI-enabled robot, has been designed to resemble a human with facial expressions and speech and sight capabilities.
- ISRO has successfully integrated it with a computer 'brain' which enables it to 'read' control panels aboard the unmanned test flights and communicate with the ISRO ground stations.
- Vyommitra can withstand vibrations and shock during the flight.
- **Digital twin** of Vyommitra will be developed to undergo computer simulations where the control systems are tested for microgravity conditions.

Gaganyaan

- ISRO's Gaganyaan is India's first manned space mission.
- The Gaganyaan programme would demonstrate human spaceflight by sending a crew of three astronauts to the 400-km Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and bringing them back safely.
- As per the mandate of Gaganyaan, two unmanned missions will be undertaken prior to the manned mission.
- To know more about the Gaganyaan Mission, click here.

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Paris Club on Sri Lanka Debt Restructuring

Creditors of the Paris Club have reached out to China and India to coordinate talks on a Sri Lanka debt restructuring.

India and China are non-Paris Club official bilateral creditors to Sri Lanka.

- Sri Lanka is nearly bankrupt and has suspended repaying its $51 billion foreign debt, of which it must repay $28 billion by 2027.
- The Paris Club's willingness to coordinate with the non-Paris Club creditors has led to the

formation of an official creditors' committee.
- This official creditors' committee, where China and India agreed to work with the Paris Club, would help Sri Lanka to bailout a $2.9-billion rescue package from the International Monetary Fund.

The Paris Club

- The Paris club is an informal group of mostly wealthy, bilateral Western creditors.
- The club is headquartered in Paris, France.
- The Paris Club has 22 permanent members, including most of the western European and Scandinavian nations, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan.
- Its role is to find coordinated and sustainable solutions to the payment difficulties experienced by borrower countries.

Common Framework

- G20's Common Framework plan is a programme set up at the height of COVID-19 for debt-crippled poor countries.
- This framework is to help these countries restructure their debt and deal with insolvency and protracted liquidity problems.

Sri Lanka is not part of this framework as it was classified as middle income country at that time.

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Padmanabhapuram Palace

Recently, the Kerala government has conducted a preliminary study for conservation of the Padmanabhapuram Palace.

Padmanabhapuram or Kalkulam was the capital of erstwhile princely state of Travancore (Venad).

- Padmanabhapuram Palace, an exemplar of Kerala architecture, is listed in the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- The 400-year-old palace was built between the 1590s and the early 1800s.
- The palace is in Kanniyakumari district of Tamil Nadu.
- It continues to be under the control of the Kerala government even after Kanniyakumari was

annexed to Tamil Nadu.

- The Palace is a Protected Monument of the Department of Archaeology, State Govt. of Kerala.
- **Architecture** - Padmanabhapuram Palace is the oldest, largest and well-preserved surviving example of the traditional wooden architecture in India.
- Timber is used for constructing the walls, the roof frame, and also the structural elements such as pillars and beams.

Taccusastra is the prescription for the function and placement, direction, size and design of a structure and specifications for designated spaces within individual structures.

- The palace was built in adherence to the traditional building code, the Taccusastra.
- The palace also showcased the influence of the Portuguese and the Dutch in the details of decorative motifs.

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