Prelim Bits 13-03-2022 & 14-03-2022 | Daily UPSC Current Affairs

Revoking Russia's 'Most Favoured Nation' Status

The United States, the European Union, Britain, Canada and Japan are considering revoking Russia's "most favoured nation" (MFN) status over its invasion of Ukraine.

- **MFN Status -** MFN status is an economic position in which a country enjoys the best trade terms given by its trading partner.
- That means it receives the lowest tariffs, the fewest trade barriers, and the highest import quotas (or none at all).
- **WTO's MFN Status** - The World Trade Organization's 164 members have the principle of non-discrimination known as most favoured nation (MFN) treatment.
- Under this principle, the WTO members commit to treating other members equally so they can all benefit from each other's lowest tariffs, highest import quotas and fewest trade barriers for goods and services.
- The only exceptions are developing countries, regional trade areas, and customs unions.

  Developing countries receive preferential treatment without having to return it, so their economies can grow.

- For countries outside the WTO, such as Iran, North Korea, Syria or Russian ally Belarus, the WTO members can impose whatever trade measures they wish without flouting global trading rules.
- **Removal of MFN status -** There is no formal procedure for suspending MFN treatment and it is not clear whether members are obliged to inform the WTO if they do so.
- India suspended Pakistan's MFN status in 2019 after a suicide attack by a Pakistan-based Islamist group killed 40 police.
- Pakistan never applied MFN status to India.
- **Impact of losing MFN status -** The loss of MFN status exposes a country to discriminatory import tariffs on its products.
- Revoking Russia's MFN status sends a strong signal that the US and its Western allies do not consider Russia an economic partner in any way.
- But it does not in itself change conditions for trade.
- It does formally allow the Western allies to increase import tariffs or impose quotas on Russian goods, or even ban them, and to restrict services out of the country.
- They could also overlook Russian intellectual property rights.

  The MFN move comes on top of unprecedented sanctions, export controls and banking restrictions aimed at pressuring Russian President to end the largest conflict in Europe since World War-II.

Reference

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2. https://www.thebalance.com/most-favored-nation-status-3305840
3. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/mostfavorednation.asp

Prosecuting Russian President for War Crimes

Amid mounting calls to prosecute Russian president Vladimir Putin, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has launched an investigation into the alleged war crimes committed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

- **War crime -** The ICC lays down clear definitions of what qualifies as genocide, war crime, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.
- These definitions are included in a treaty called the **Rome Statute**, which forms the foundation of the ICC.
- As per its guidelines, the following qualifies as war crimes,
    1. Targeting civilian populations,
    2. Violating the Geneva Conventions, and
    3. Targeting specific groups of people all.
- War crimes also include murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, taking hostages, rape and sexual slavery, the ICC's guidelines state.
- International humanitarian law also prohibits the use of weapons that can cause indiscriminate suffering, such as anti-personnel landmines and chemical or biological weapons.
- The sick and wounded must be cared for - including injured soldiers, who have rights as prisoners of war.

Today, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) have roles upholding the rules of war.

The ICJ rules on disputes between **states**, but cannot prosecute individuals.

The ICC investigates and prosecutes **individual** war criminals who are not before the courts of individual states.

- **Punishing Putin -** The Hague-based ICC operates independently and can prosecute individuals for four primary offences - war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and the crime of aggression.
- Nearly 123 countries in the world fall under the ICC's jurisdiction and have signed the Rome Statute.
- But there are around 31 countries - including the US, Russia and Ukraine - have signed the treaty but have not ratified it.
- Russia pulled out of the court in 2016 after the ICC's verdict on Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014.
- The court tries individuals and not countries. It generally tries top officials and leaders who hold the most responsibility.

In the case of the war in Ukraine, investigators will look into both past and present

allegations. This is likely to include the war crimes that Putin ordered during Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

- If there is enough evidence, ICC judges will issue arrest warrants to bring the accused to trial. It cannot conduct a trial in absentia.
- Since Russia is not a member of the court, it is unlikely that he will show up on his own.
- He would either have to be handed over by Russian forces or taken into custody outside Russia.
- Either a national government or the UN Security Council can refer cases to the ICC for investigation. Since Russia is a permanent member of the UNSC, it has veto power and can thus stall its actions.
- **Related Links** - War Crimes**;** Cluster Bombs and Vacuum Bombs; Humanitarian Corridors

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-can-putin-be-prosecuted-for-war-crimes-in-ukraine-7818545/
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Nutraceuticals

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) Kendras have added to its product basket, nutraceuticals like protein powder and bar, malt-based food supplements and immunity bar for its customers.

- The term "nutraceutical" combines two words "nutrient" (the nourishing food component), and "pharmaceutical," (which is a medical drug).
- The name was coined in 1989 by Stephen DeFelice.
- Nutraceuticals is a broad umbrella term that is used to describe any product derived from food sources with extra **health benefits** in addition to the basic **nutritional value** found in foods.
- Nutraceuticals are **food or part of food** that provides medical or health benefits including the prevention and/or treatment of a disease.
- A nutraceutical product may be defined as a substance, which has physiological benefit or provides protection against chronic disease.
- Nutraceuticals may be used to improve health, delay the aging process, prevent chronic diseases, increase life expectancy, or support the structure or function of the body.
- Recent studies have shown promising results for these compounds in various complications.
- Emphasis has been made to present herbal nutraceuticals effective on hard curative disorders related to oxidative stress including allergy, alzheimer, cardiovascular, cancer, diabetes, etc.

Functional Foods

- Functional foods are foods that have a potentially positive effect on health beyond basic nutrition.
- Proponents of functional foods say they promote optimal health and help reduce the risk of disease.
- **Examples** - Oatmeal (because it contains soluble fiber that can help lower cholesterol levels); Orange juice that's been fortified with calcium for bone health.

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Pal-Dadhvav Massacre

The Gujarat government marked 100 years of the Pal-Dadhvav killings, calling it a massacre "bigger than the Jallianwala Bagh".

- Pal-Dadhvav or Palchitaria massacre took place on March 7, 1922, in which the tribal revolutionaries fell to British bullets.
- This happened in the Pal-Chitariya and Dadhvaav villages of Sabarkantha district, then part of Idar state (of Gujarat).
- **Eki movement** - The day was Amalki Ekadashi, which falls just before Holi, a major festival for tribals.
- Villagers from Pal, Dadhvav, and Chitariya had gathered on the banks of river Heir as part of the 'Eki movement', led by one Motilal Tejawat.
- The movement was to protest against the land revenue tax (lagaan) imposed on the peasants by the British and feudal lords.
- Tejawat, who belonged to Koliyari village in the Mewad region of Rajasthan, had also **mobilised Bhils** from Kotda Chhavni, Sirohi, and Danta to participate.
- The impact of the protest was felt in many parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan, all of which were then princely states.
- **Ending** - Mewad Bhil Corps (MBC), a paramilitary force raised by the British that was on the lookout for Tejawat, heard of this gathering and reached the spot.
- Then they shot bullets and nearly 1,000 tribals (Bhils) fell.
- Tejawat was shot at twice, but was taken to safety by the villagers on a camel. He later "returned to the spot to christen it 'Veerbhumi'.

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-was-the-pal-dadhvav-massacre-whose-centenary-the-gujarat-govt-is-observing-7807499/
2. https://www.opindia.com/2022/01/100-years-of-palchitaria-massacre/

AFR Facility

Kudankulam Village Panchayat adopts resolution against the construction of the 'Away From Reactor' (AFR) facility at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) site for storing nuclear waste.

- All nuclear power stations in operation in India and other countries had facilities to store new as well as spent (used) fuel.
- The scheme for the storage of spent fuel in a nuclear power plant was two-fold
    1. One facility is located within the reactor building/service building, generally known as the spent fuel storage pool/bay, and

2. The other facility is located away from the reactor, called the Away From Reactor (AFR) Facility, but within the plant's premises.

- The spent fuel storage pool inside the reactor building has a limited capacity and is used for immediate storage of the spent fuel removed from the reactor during refuelling.
- The ATR facility will be used to **permanently store** the highly radioactive spent nuclear fuel waste.
- This highly radioactive waste was buried 15 metres below the ground level.
- This waste would seriously jeopardise the environment of this region.
- The people fear that the radioactivity would spread, spoiling the groundwater, the drinking water being supplied through pipes and the water being used for irrigation.

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