UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 06-03-2025

Shingles Disease

Why in News?

A new global study finds that 56.6% of Indian participants aged 50 and above know little to nothing about shingles, even though more than 90% of persons over 50 have this virus in their body and are vulnerable.

- **Conducted by** – Ipsos, on behalf of GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
- **Key Findings** - The survey findings highlight limited awareness of age-related health risks, particularly among individuals with pre-existing health conditions.
- The worldwide online survey involved 8,400 adults aged between 50 years and 60 years, including 500 respondents from India.
- However, only 49.8% express significant concern about developing shingles.
- Globally, only 44% of respondents had some familiarity with shingles.
- On a global level, 54% of participants had chronic conditions, but only 13% expressed significant concern about shingles.
- While anyone who has had chickenpox can get shingles, it becomes more common as one age, ***especially after 50.***
- Several factors can increase the risk of developing shingles, including a weakened immune system, which can be caused by chronic health conditions.
- In Karnataka, there is no data available on shingles, as 463 cases of chickenpox have been reported from January till February 27 this year. Last year, the State had reported 1,607 chickenpox cases.
- **Contributing Factors in Karnataka -** stress work culture, erratic sleep patterns, and rising cases of lifestyle-related immunosuppression.
- Bengaluru's climate with fluctuating temperatures and high humidity can trigger viral reactivation in susceptible individuals.

Shingles Awareness Week (February 24 – March 2, 2025) observed recently.

Shingles Disease

• Shingles is a ***painful disease*** that can have serious and long-lasting complications.
• **Caused by -** The reactivation of the ***varicella-zoster virus (VZV)***, the same virus that causes chickenpox.
• **High risk groups –** Adults aged 50 and above.
• By age 50, most adults will have the VZV dormant in their nervous system, and may reactivate with advancing age.
• As people age increases, the strength of the immune response to infection decreases, increasing the risk of developing shingles.
• **Symptoms -** Shingles rashes often flared up as blisters, very similar to chicken pox and could occur in a *linear distribution* on one side of the body.
• The pain is often described as aching, burning, stabbing or shock-like.
• Following the rash, a person can also experience ***post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN)***, a long-lasting nerve pain that can last weeks or months and can occasionally persist for several years.
• PHN is the most common complication of shingles, occurring in 5-30% of all shingles cases depending on the individual's age.
• **Prevention** - A safe and effective vaccine is available to prevent shingles and its complications.
• **Treatment** - Antiviral medications can reduce the severity and duration of shingles, especially if started early.

Reference

The Hindu | shingles disease

Lankamala Shaivite Centre (16th century) in Andhra Pradesh

Why in News?

A team of researchers at the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Mysore, has uncovered ancient inscriptions and prehistoric rock art in Andhra Pradesh.

- **Pilgrimage Centre -** The findings, dating from the 4th to 16th century Common Era (CE), indicate that Lankamala was a major Shaivite pilgrimage centre visited by North Indian devotees.
- The presence of North Indian names like Sri Vishishta Kankanadhadi, Yedharmaja, and Chandrahasa confirms that pilgrims travelled long distances to visit the temples of Lankamala.
- Researchers also traced an *ancient pilgrimage route* between two Shaivite temples, reinforcing the site's religious significance.
- It discovered rock inscriptions and carvings in the Siddavatam, Madduru, Konduru, and Rolabodu forest areas.
- **Inscriptions -** In Gopalaswami Konda, at an altitude of 3,200 feet, they documented 12 label inscriptions written in ***Siddhamatrika, Shankha script, and Devanagari.***
    - The inscriptions, believed to be from the 6th century CE, showcase ***Kushan-era craftsmanship*** and were carved using a unique *thumb-engraving technique.*
- The team identified 15 additional label inscriptions, including 14 in the rare Shankha script and one in Brahmi.
- This marks the 1st discovery of Shankha script inscriptions in the Rayalaseema region.

- A significant find was *2 inscriptions on the same rock from different periods*,
    - One in Brahmi from the 4th century and
    - Another in Shankha script from the 6th century, providing insights into the evolution of writing styles in South India.
- They persevered and identified a total of 28 inscriptions, confirming human presence in the region from the 4th to 16th centuries.
- It is the first time in 140 years that label inscriptions have been discovered inside a wildlife sanctuary.
- **Rock Shelters -** The team uncovered 3 rock shelters, one containing prehistoric rock paintings.
- The artwork, depicting animals, geometric patterns, and human figures, was created using ***Red Ochre, Kaolin, animal fat, and crushed bones***, enabling the pigments to last for millennia.
- The site is believed to date back to the Megalithic (Iron Age) and Early Historic periods (2500 BCE - 2nd century CE).

Reference

New Indian Express | Shaivite centre in Lankamala

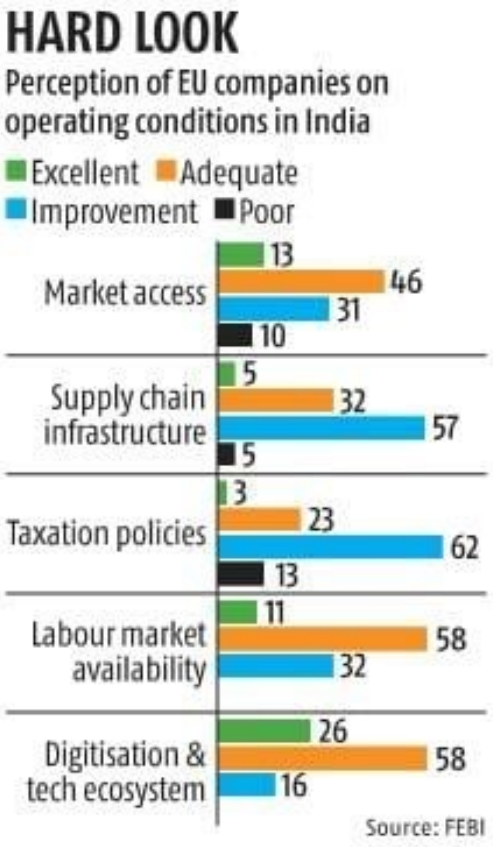
Business Sentiment Survey, 2025

Why in News?

European Union (EU) companies operating in India want New Delhi to streamline or remove non-tariff barriers.

- The Survey provides an outlook and overview of evolving EU-India bilateral trade and investment ties as well as offers an insight into the opportunities and challenges faced by European businesses.
- The survey done ahead of resumption of negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) between both the sides scheduled to be concluded by year-end.
- The survey was conducted among 51 FEBI member companies across 11 sectors.
- **Conducted by –** The Federation of European Business in India (FEBI).
- **Key Findings -** The EU-India FTA is expected to create a favorable business environment with 92% of respondents anticipating a positive impact.
- Among them, 72% plan to increase their investment in India within the next 2 years, demonstrating strong confidence in the agreement's success.
- EU investors are expected to increase their presence, particularly in technology-driven and sustainable industries, as India continues to enhance its business environment and trade policies.
- While 22% EU companies plan to maintain their current investment levels, 76% of EU firms surveyed aim to increase their investments compared to pre-2025 levels.
- EU businesses increasingly see India as a key driver of overall growth, with
    - 80% viewing it as an expanding sales market,
    - 61% recognizing it as an emerging hub for production, and
    - 49% seeing it as a location to manufacture for exports.
- **Confidence creating factors -** Investment decisions are driven by India's strong

political stability (66%), position amid evolving global geopolitics (60%), and the availability of a skilled workforce (60%).
- Most respondents (59%) find the *ease of doing business in India* increasingly favorable, reflecting confidence in the country's business environment.
- 83% of respondents rated India's digital and technology ecosystem as excellent or adequate, highlighting the country's advancements in digital infrastructure, e-governance, and tech-driven services.
- 69% expressed confidence in the availability of skilled labour, recognizing the country's strong talent pool, particularly in engineering, IT, and manufacturing.



EU is India's largest trading partner, accounting for 12.2% of India's goods trade in 2023 while India is the EU's 9th -largest trading partner, accounting for 2.2% of total EU trade in goods during the same year.

- **Streamlining non-tariff barriers -** European Union (EU) companies operating in India want New Delhi to streamline or remove ***non-tariff barriers*** such as
  - Quality Control Orders (qcos),
  - Complex Customs procedures;
  - Simplify labelling, testing, and import procedures; and
  - Facilitate cross-border digital transactions without data localisation constraints.
- **Challenging areas -** Even amid favorable investment plans, EU businesses in India encounter multiple challenges, with taxes and tariffs being the most significant, affecting 51% of respondents.
- However, India's supply chain infrastructure and taxation policies remain two challenging areas for EU businesses in India.

- More than 60% of respondents expressed the need for improvements in the supply chain and around 75% in taxation.
- **Risk Factors -** Complex visa and work permit processes hinder talent mobility, affecting workforce availability.
- Weak intellectual property enforcement, the prevalence of counterfeit goods, and insufficient protection of confidential data add to the risks faced by EU businesses.

Reference

Business Standard | Business Sentiment Survey, 2025

New species of jumping spiders

Why in News?

A collaborative research involving the University of Kerala has reported the discovery of two new species of jumping spiders belonging to the genus Epidelaxia from the Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary.

- The new species of jumping spiders discovered in ***Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary in Kollam, Kerala.***
- **New species -** Epidelaxia falciformis sp. nov. and Epidelaxia palustris sp. Nov.
- **Genus –** Epidelaxia, 1st time the genus has been ***recorded from India***, was previously considered endemic to Sri Lanka.
- **Distinction -** Characterised by their striking physical features, which include a prominent yellow triangular-shaped mark on the prosoma (the front part of the body) of females and
    - Unique traits of the copulatory organs in both males and females.
- **Appearance** - Males of E. falciformis have a brown carapace with a yellow-brown stripe, while males of E. palustris feature a pale brown band along the side of their bodies.
- The females exhibit similar colouration, with the added feature of white orbital setae around their eyes.
- **Size -** The species vary slightly in size, with E. falciformis measuring 4.39 mm.
- E. palustris measures 4.57 mm in males and 3.69 mm in females.
- **Habitat -** These spiders have been described as ***highly adapted to their environment,*** inhabiting the dense foliage of the Western Ghats.



Reference

The Hindu | New species of jumping spiders

Revised Livestock Health and Disease Control Program (LHDCP)

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has today approved the Revision of Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP).

Livestock Health and Disease Control Program (LHDCP)
• **Launched in -** 2022 • **Aim -** To assist in disease control, boost vaccination coverage, entail more mobile vet units and ensure affordable medicines for animals. • **Developed by -** Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying. • **Nodal Ministry -** Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying. • **Funding -** It is a ***centrally sponsored*** scheme. • **Diseases Covered -** Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Brucellosis, Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), Classical Swine Fever (CSF), Lumpy Skin Disease, Anthrax, Rabies, and others. • **Components -** The scheme has 3 components namely - National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP), - Livestock Health and Disease Control (LH&DC) and - Pashu Aushadhi. • **LH&DC** – It has 3 sub-components - Critical Animal Disease Control Programme (CADCP), - Establishment and Strengthening of existing Veterinary Hospitals and Dispensaries - Mobile Veterinary Unit **(**ESVHD-MVU) and - Assistance to States for Control of Animal Diseases (ASCAD).

- **Pashu Aushadhi Kendras –** It is a new component added to the LHDCP scheme.
    - **Run by -** Cooperative societies and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samriddhi Kendras (PMKSK).
- To provide good quality and affordable generic veterinary medicine and incentive for sale of medicines under Pashu Aushadhi component.
- It will also sell ethnoveterinary medicines, based on traditional beliefs and indigenous knowledge and practices, to treat animal diseases.
- The Scheme also supports
    - Door-step delivery of livestock health care through the subcomponents of Mobile Veterinary Units (ESVHD-MVU) and
    - Improving availability of generic veterinary medicine- Pashu Aushadhi through network of PM-Kisan Samriddhi Kendra and Cooperative Societies.

References

1. The Indian Express | Pashu Aushadhi Kendras
2. The Hindu | Pashu Aushadhi Kendras

One Liners 06-03-2025

History, Art and Culture

Kedarnath

• **Location** – Kedarnath, in Uttarakhand.
• **Hosts** – One of the 12 Jyotirlingas, revered as Lord Shiva's sacred Himalayan shrine.

Hemkund Sahib

• **Location** – Hemkund, Uttarakhand, it is a high-altitude Sikh Gurudwara in Uttarakhand.
• **Associated with** - Guru Gobind Singh's meditation.
• **Recent Development** - Centre has approved ₹7,000 crore ropeway projects for Kedarnath and Hemkund Sahib to ease pilgrim access.

Polity & Governance

Pashu Aushadhi

A new component added to Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme scheme.
• **Provides** - Affordable generic veterinary medicines to farmers.
• It enhances livestock health via PM-Kisan Samriddhi Kendras.
• **Aims** - To reduce farmers' losses by improving access to quality animal healthcare.

Samaveshi Aajeevika Yojana

Empowers rural women with business training and financial aid under DAY-NRLM.
• **Launched with J-PAL South Asia** - It adapts the Graduation Approach to lift rural households from poverty.
• The scheme targets self-sufficiency for women, aligning with India's women-led development vision.

Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats

• **Model Panchayats** – One Model Gram Panchayat to be developed in each District.
• **Real-Time Dashboard Launched** - For Monitoring Women-Friendly Panchayats' Progress.
• **Crucial for** - Success of Health Initiatives in Villages.
• **Aims** -To Spearhead Implementation of Central Government Schemes in Gram Panchayats.

International Relations and Issues

Reciprocal tariffs on India

U.S. plans reciprocal tariffs from April 2, 2025, matching India's 9.5% on U.S. goods.
• **Reciprocal Tariffs**- Is a trade policy where a country imposes import duties equal to the tariffs charged on its exports by other nations.
• **Objective** - To counter trade imbalances & discourage unfair tariff policies by foreign governments.
• **India's $50 billion trade surplus** - With the U.S. in 2023 may face higher tariffs, impacting exports like pharmaceuticals.
• **Trump's policy aims** - To reduce U.S. trade deficits, targeting nations like India and China with high tariffs.

Environment

Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle (Pelochelys cantorii)

• **Habitat:** Inhabits inland, slow-moving freshwater rivers, lakes, streams, and estuaries across Southeast Asia.
• **Conservation Status:** Critically Endangered due to habitat destruction and overharvesting.
• **Notable Characteristics:** Spends most of its life buried and motionless, surfacing only twice a day to breathe and capture prey.

Global Plastic Treaty

The 5th round (INC-5) in Busan, December 2024, failed to finalize a global plastic treaty.

• **Disagreements over production caps** - chemical management, and funding stalled progress at INC-5.

• **U.N scheduled** - An extra session (INC 5.2) to finalize the treaty in 2025, in Geneva, Switzerland.

Eurasian Otter

• **Habitat -** Found along the Tamirabharani River in Tamil Nadu; prefers clean freshwater rivers and lakes.

• **Conservation Status**- Listed as Near Threatened by the IUCN.

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering