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Noble Prize for Medicine or Physiology

- Americans Harvey J Alter and Charles M Rice, and British scientist Michael Houghton were awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine or Physiology, 2020 for the discovery of the Hepatitis C Virus.
- The discovery helped in finding a cure for the disease, and effective anti-viral drugs are now available.
- Tests have also been developed to identify blood containing this virus, so that infected blood is not given to any patient.
- The Nobel award comes with a gold medal and prize money of 10 million Swedish kronor (over USD 1,118,000) and was created by Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel.

Hepatitis C

- Hepatitis refers to an inflammatory condition of the liver.
- It's commonly caused by a viral infection, but there are other possible causes of hepatitis like autoimmune responses, medications, drugs, toxins, and alcohol.
- There are 5 main hepatitis viruses, referred to as types A, B, C, D, and E.
- The Hepatitis C virus was discovered in 1982 by screening millions of DNA samples.
- Hepatitis C is caused by the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).
- It is transmitted through direct contact with infected body fluids, typically through injection drug use and sexual contact.
- According to the World Health Organization, about 71 million people in the world have chronic infection with the Hepatitis C virus, which is also a major cause of liver cancer.
- A vaccine for the disease has still not been developed but it can be treated with the help of anti-viral drugs.

Nobel Prize for Physics

- The Nobel Prize in Physics for the year 2020 was awarded to three astrophysicists Roger Penrose from the UK, Reinhard Genzel from Germany, and Andrea Ghez from the USA.

- Einstein's General Theory of Relativity explains gravity, as objects try to follow a straight line through a universe whose geometry is warped by matter and energy.
- As a result, planets, as well as light beams, follow curving paths.
- Roger Penrose received half of this year's prize for the discovery that a black hole formation is a robust prediction of the general theory of relativity.
- Dr Penrose proved that if too much mass accumulated in too small a place, collapse into a black hole was inevitable.
- At the boundary of a black hole, called the event horizon, one would have to go faster than the speed of light to escape it, which is impossible.
- At the center of a black hole, where the density became infinite, the laws of physics, would no longer apply.
- Genzel and Ghez (fourth woman to win the Nobel Prize in Physics) received the second half of the prize for the discovery of a supermassive black hole at the centre of the Milkyway galaxy, now known to be the Sagittarius A*.

Jurisdiction of River Management Boards

- Whenever the riparian states are not able to reach amicable agreements on their own in sharing of an interstate river waters, section 4 of IRWD Act provides dispute resolution process in the form of Tribunal.
- As per the Act, the tribunal shall not only adjudicate but also investigate the matters referred to it by the central government and forward a report setting out the facts with its decisions.
- It implies that the tribunal responsibility is not limited to adjudication of issues raised by the concerned states and also investigation of other aspects which are in public domain such as

1. Water pollution,
2. Salt export requirement,
3. Water quality deterioration,
4. Flood control,
5. Sustainability of river basin productivity & its ecology,
6. Environmental flow requirements,
7. Climate change effects,

- When the tribunal final verdict issued based on the deliberations on the draft verdict is accepted by the central government and notified in the official gazette, the verdict becomes law and binding on the states and union government for implementation.

- When pronounced in the ambit of IRWD Act and the Indian constitution, the tribunal's verdict after its publication in the official gazette is equivalent to Supreme Court verdict as per section 6 of IRWD Act.
- He was speaking after convening an apex council meeting involving the Centre, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the second since 2016.
- The meeting is primarily to resolve the conflict between the two States over executing irrigation projects and sharing water from the Krishna and Godavari rivers.
- Recently Union Water Resources Ministry announced that it will determine the jurisdictions of the Krishna and Godavari river management boards (KRMB and GRMB)
- The headquarters of the KRMB would be located in Andhra Pradesh

Monetary Policy Committee

- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 was amended by Finance Act (India), 2016 to constitute MPC.
- Monetary Policy Committee is responsible for fixing the benchmark interest rate in India.
- The meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee are held at least 4 times a year (specifically, at least once every quarter) and it publishes its decisions after each such meeting.
- The committee comprises six members - three officials of the Reserve Bank of India and three external members nominated by the Government of India.
- The committee is answerable to the Government of India if the inflation exceeds the range prescribed for three consecutive quarters.
- They need to observe a "silent period" seven days before and after the rate decision for "utmost confidentiality".
- The Governor of Reserve Bank of India is the chairperson ex officio of the committee.
- Decisions are taken by majority with the Governor having the casting vote in case of a tie.
- The current mandate of the committee is to maintain 4% annual inflation until 31 March 2021 with an upper tolerance of 6% and a lower tolerance of 2%.
- The government has recently appointed three economists namely Ashima Goyal, Shashanka Bhide and Jayanth Varma as new members of the RBI’s monetary policy committee (MPC).
- The new members nominated have been given a four-year term.

DD Kisan

- DD Kisan is an Indian agriculture channel owned by Doordarshan launched in 2015.
- The channel is dedicated to agriculture and related sectors, which disseminates real-time inputs to farmers on new farming techniques, water conservation and organic farming among other information.
- Recently Prasar Bharati and Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) have signed a MoU to broadcast and promote new agriculture technology and innovations.
- According to the agreement, DD Kisan will broadcast various innovative techniques being adopted in agriculture field in easy language through 30 minutes program series for the benefit of farmers.
- It will also help to achieve the target of doubling the income of farmers by 2022.

IFFCO

- Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) is one of India's biggest cooperative society which is wholly owned by Indian Cooperatives.
- It is founded in 1967, its Core business is manufacturing and selling fertilizers.
- The Marketing Division of IFFCO has been providing fertilizers to the corners of India.
- IFFCO has diversified business interests ranging from General Insurance to Rural Telecom apart from our core business of manufacturing and selling fertilizers.

Sitwe Port

- Sittwe Port is situated at the mouth of the Kaladan River.
- The project will link Kolkata to Sittwe in Myanmar and then from Myanmar’s Kaladan river to India’s north-east.
- It is being financed by India as a part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, a collaboration between India and Myanmar.
- The project is aimed at developing transport infrastructure in southwestern Myanmar and north-eastern India.
- Recently India announced a grant of two million US Dollars for the construction of the border Haat Bridge at Byanyu/Sarsichauk in Chin State.
- India and Myanmar have agreed to work towards the operationalization of the Sittwe port in the Rakhine state in the first quarter of 2021.

Source: The Hindu, AIR News, TOI

