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Saviour Sibling Experiment

- Thalassemia is a disorder where the haemoglobin count is low in blood and such persons require frequent blood transfusions.
- Thalassemia major is the most severe form of beta thalassemia.
- It develops when beta globin genes are missing.
- The symptoms of thalassemia major generally appear before a child's second birthday.
- The severe anaemia related to this condition can be life-threatening.
- The only way to save a patient with Thalassemia major is through a bone marrow transplant, from a human leukocyte antigen HLA-identical donor.
- India recently carried out a ‘saviour sibling’ experiment, in which baby’s bone marrow was used to save another child.
- A one-year-old sibling has saved her brother’s life by donating her bone marrow.

Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting

- The 20th Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM) would usually take place alongside the United Nations General Assembly.
- During recent meeting Ministers discussed Commonwealth responses to the COVID19 pandemic and mutual aid and support in dealing with its impact.
- In the meeting India and Pakistan sparred at a Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministerial meeting.
- This is after Pakistan raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and accused India of “targeting” its religious minorities.

Commonwealth Nations

- Commonwealth, is a political association of 54 member states, nearly all former territories of the British Empire.
- The chief institutions of the organisation are the

1. Commonwealth Secretariat - It focuses on intergovernmental aspects.
2. Commonwealth Foundation - It focuses on non-governmental relations

between member states.

- The Commonwealth dates back to the first half of the 20th century with the decolonisation of the British Empire through increased self-governance of its territories.
- It was originally created as the British Commonwealth of Nations through the Balfour Declaration at the 1926 Imperial Conference.
- The current Commonwealth of Nations was formally constituted by the London Declaration in 1949, which modernised the community and established the member states as "free and equal".

STARS Project

- Recently Union Cabinet has approved World Bank supported Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States -STARS project.
- The STARS programme is partly funded by the World Bank.
- Its objectives are

1. Aims to carry out a reform agenda in the governance of school education,
2. Improve data and assessment systems at the national level,
3. Improve teaching and learning outcomes in six States, especially for early childhood and vocational education.

- The project includes an emergency response component to help the government respond to disaster situations which lead to school closures and loss of learning.
- The project will have a total project cost of ₹5,718 crore, with the World Bank's support amounting to about ₹3,700 crore ($500 million).
- The other major initiative at the national level is to strengthen the Education Ministry's data systems to capture information on the retention, transition and completion rates of students.
- At the State level, the project seeks to improve education outcomes and school-to-work transition strategies for better labour market outcomes in Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha.
- A similar project to be funded by the Asian Development Bank will cover Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Assam and every State will partner with one other State to share best practices, said the statement.

PARAKH

- A major component of the STARS project is the establishment of PARAKH

(Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) as a National Assessment Centre.
- It is Included in the National Education Policy 2020.
- This autonomous institution will comes under the Union Education Ministry.
- It will set norms for student assessment and evaluation for all school boards across the country, most of which currently follow norms set by State governments.
- It will also guide standardised testing to monitor learning outcomes at the State and national levels, according to the NEP.

Gupkar Declaration

- Gupkar Declaration, is a pact to fight for the restoration of J&K's special status.
- The Declaration was signed by six political parties, including Congress and regional parties of the state, on August 4, 2019, just a day before the abrogation of J&K's special status.
- It called for a joint fight to "safeguard J&K's special status, Article 370 and 35A".

Judgement on Elephant Corridors

- Elephant corridors allow elephants to continue their nomadic mode of survival, despite shrinking forest cover, by facilitating travel between distinct forest habitats.
- These corridors play a crucial role in sustaining wildlife by reducing the impact of habitat isolation.
- The Supreme Court recently upheld the Tamil Nadu government's authority to notify an 'elephant corridor' and protect the migratory path of the animals through the Nilgiri biosphere reserve.
- Nilgiri biosphere reserve is the largest protected forest area in India, spanning across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.
- SC's judgement said its State's duty to protect a "keystone species" like elephants, which are immensely important to the environment.
- The corridor is situated in the ecologically fragile Sigur plateau, which connects the Western and the Eastern Ghats and sustains elephant populations and their genetic diversity.
- It has the Nilgiri hills on its south-western side and the Moyar river valley on its north-eastern side.
- The elephants cross the plateau in search of food and water depending on

the monsoon.

High Court’s stand on Elephant Corridor

- In 2011, the High Court had held that the government was authorised by the Centre's ‘Project Elephant’ to earmark the corridor since there was no impediment in the Wildlife Protection Act.
- It had held that the State government’s action to identify the corridor was in complete obligation to its duties under Article 51-A(g) of the Constitution.
- It said it was the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including wildlife.

UNHRC

- The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world.
- The UNHRC has 47 members elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis.
- The headquarters of UNHRC is in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The UNHRC investigates allegations of breaches of human rights in United Nations member states, and addresses important thematic human rights issues.
- UNHRC shall consist of 47 Member States, which shall be elected directly and individually by secret ballot by the majority of the members of the General Assembly.
- The membership shall be based on equitable geographical distribution, and seats shall be distributed as follows among regional groups:

1. Group of African States (13)
2. Group of Asia-Pacific States (13)
3. Group of Eastern European States (6)
4. Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (8)
5. Group of Western European and other States (7)

- The members of the Council shall serve for a period of three years and shall not be eligible for immediate re-election after two consecutive terms.
- Recently Pakistan has been re-elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) with an overwhelming majority securing 169 votes in the 193-member UN General Assembly.

Source: The Hindu

