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Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)

- Special bulletin on Maternal Mortality in India 2016-18 is released by the *Office of the Registrar General's Sample Registration System (SRS).*
- MMR is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births.
- According to recent report MMR in India has declined to *113 in 2016-18 from 122 in 2015-17 and 130 in 2014-2016.*
- Northern states registered a higher MMR: Assam (215), Bihar (149), Madhya Pradesh (173), Chhattisgarh (159), Odisha (150), Rajasthan (164), Uttar Pradesh (197) and Uttarakhand (99).
- The southern states registered a lower MMR: Andhra Pradesh (65), Telangana (63), Karnataka (92), Kerala (43), and Tamil Nadu (60).
- The target 3.1 of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) aims to reduce the *global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 1,00,000 live births.*
- As per the WHO, maternal death is the *death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy*, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management.

Sample Registration System

- The SRS is a demographic survey for providing reliable annual estimates of infant mortality rate, birth rate, death rate and other fertility and mortality indicators at the national and sub-national levels.
- Initiated on a pilot basis by the Registrar General of India in a few states in 1964-65, *it became fully operational during 1969-70.*
- The field investigation consists of a continuous enumeration of births and deaths in selected sample units by

1. Resident part-time enumerators, generally Anganwadi workers and teachers.
2. An independent retrospective survey every six months by SRS supervisors.

- The data obtained by these two independent functionaries are matched.

Bio-Markers

- A biomarker is a characteristic that is objectively measured and evaluated as an indicator of *normal biological processes, pathogenic processes or pharmacological responses to a therapeutic intervention.*
- Biomarkers may be used alone or in combination to assess the health or disease state of an individual.
- Researchers at the Cancer Institute (WIA) have identified a panel of five protein markers in the blood that can help with an early diagnosis of a common and lethal form of ovarian cancer.
- Combination of five markers - CA125, IGFBP2, SPP1, TSP1 and ADI were used for the study.

Ovarian Cancer

- Ovarian cancer affects the female organs that produce eggs (ovaries).
- Ovarian cancer often goes undetected until it has spread within the pelvis and stomach.
- At this late stage, ovarian cancer is more difficult to treat and can be fatal.
- Ovarian cancer often has *no symptoms in the early stages.*
- Later stages are associated with symptoms, but they can be non-specific, such as loss of appetite and weight loss.
- The symptoms of this cancer tend to *mimic other gastrointestinal conditions acidity, ascites or a bloated feeling.*
- Surgery and chemotherapy are generally used to treat ovarian cancer.
- The crude incidence rate for ovarian cancer in India is 5 to 6 per 1,00,000. Stage IIIC cancers account for nearly 75%, with *survival among them being around 30-40%.*

Farzad-B Gas Field

- The Farzad B gas field is an Iranian natural gas field that was discovered in 2012.
- It began production in 2013 and produces natural gas and condensates.
- ONGC had originally signed an agreement for exploration in 2002, investing approximately $100 million.
- India had proposed to invest approximately $6 billion in the Farzad-B gas field project.
- However, In January 2020, India was informed that in the immediate

future, Iran would develop the field on its own and it would like to involve India appropriately at a later stage.
- Iranian government had recently decided to keep ONGC's foreign arm OVL out of the Farzad-B gas field exploration project.
- For the funding part, Iran has been decided that it will proceed without India's assistance, instead, it will be using approximately $400 million from the Iranian National Development Fund.



Anti Defection Law

- Through the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1985, the 10th Schedule of the Constitution, which contains the anti-defection law, was added to the Constitution.
- Under this "If any question arises as to whether a member of a House has become subject to disqualification under this Schedule, the question shall be referred for the decision of the Chairman or, as the case may be, the Speaker of such House and his decision shall be final."
- There are two grounds on which a member of a legislature can be disqualified.

1. If the member voluntarily gives up the membership of the party: *Voluntarily giving up the membership is not the same as resigning from a party.*

   > Even without resigning, a legislator can be disqualified if by his conduct the Speaker/Chairman of the concerned House draws a reasonable inference that the member has voluntarily given up the membership of his party.

2. *If a legislator votes in the House against the direction of his party* and his action is not condoned by his party, he can be disqualified.

Kihoto Hollohan Judgment

- The petitioners in Hollohan Case, 1992) argued whether it was fair that the Speaker should have such broad powers provided by the 10th schedule and 52nd Amendment, given that there is always a reasonable likelihood of bias.
- The majority judgment said the Speakers/Chairmen hold a pivotal position in the scheme of Parliamentary democracy and *are guardians of the rights and privileges of the House.*

- They are expected to and do take *far reaching decisions in Parliamentary democracy.*
- Thus Constitutional courts *cannot judicially review disqualification proceedings under the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law)* of the Constitution until the Speaker or Chairman makes a final decision on merits.

US-India Business Council (USIBC)

- The U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) was formed in 1975 as a *business advocacy organization* to enlighten and encourage the private sectors of both India and United States to enhance investment flows.
- The organization serves as a direct link between business and Government leaders, resulting in *increased trade and investment to strengthen ties between the two nations.*
- USIBC partners with the major trade associations in India, including

1. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII),
2. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI),
3. The American Chamber of Commerce in India (AmCham India),
4. National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM),
5. The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE),
6. The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC).

- In 2017, U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) announced a collaborative initiative titled *Women for Women Innovators, Social Leaders, & Entrepreneurs (WISE).*

Postal Ballot System

- Under Postal Ballot system, ballot papers are distributed electronically to electors and are returned to the election officers via post.
- Recently, Union Law Ministry has reduced the age limit for senior citizens who opt for postal ballot in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.
- By this voters aged above 65 years or a Covid-19 suspect can opt for postal ballot.
- Recently, Election Commission said that option of postal ballots for electors above the age of 65 in the Bihar Assembly elections cannot be implemented due to logistic issues.
- Earlier, in 2019, the Law Ministry had amended the Conduct of Election Rules to allow persons with disabilities and those who are 80 years of age or above to opt for postal ballot during Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

- Currently, only the following voters are allowed to cast their votes through postal ballot:

1. Service voters (armed forces, the armed police force of a state and government servants posted abroad),
2. Voters on election duty,
3. Voters above 80 years of age or Persons with Disabilities (PwD),
4. Voters under preventive detention.

- The exception to the above-mentioned category of voters is provided under *Section 60 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.*

Source: The Hindu, Economic Times, Business Standard

