UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 28-02-2025

Influenza & VaxiFlu-4

Why in News?

Zydus Lifesciences recently introduced India's First Flu Vaccine for New Influenza Strains.

- Influenza, or the flu, is a ***contagious viral infection*** that affects the respiratory system.
- **Types -** A, B, C, and D. Only influenza A, B, and C affect humans.
- Influenza viruses are constantly changing, with new strains appearing often.
- **Symptoms –** Fever, Runny nose, Sore throat, Muscle pain, Headache, Coughing, Fatigue, Diarrhea and vomiting (especially in children).
- **Transmission** - Spreads through droplets from coughs, sneezes, or talking.
- Can also spread by touching something with the virus on it and then touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.
- It causes illnesses that range in severity and at times lead to hospitalization or even death, mainly in high-risk groups.
- **High-risk groups -** Under-5 children, the elderly, and people with immunosuppressive and chronic medical conditions.

According to the World Health Organization, seasonal influenza results in 2.9 lakh to 6.5 lakh deaths every year.

- **Treatment**
  - Flu is primarily treated with rest and fluid intake to allow the body to fight the infection on its own.
  - Drink plenty of fluids, like water, juice, and warm soups
  - Rest and get more sleep
  - Antiviral drugs can help shorten the duration of the illness and prevent complications.

Prevention (VaxiFlu-4)

- **VaxiFlu-4** - It is a ***Quadrivalent Inactivated Influenza*** virus vaccine made as per World Health Organization (WHO) recommended composition.
- **Developed by** – Zydus's Vaccine Technology Centre (VTC) in Ahmedabad

A quadrivalent influenza (flu) vaccine is designed to protect against four different flu viruses, including two influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses.

- The vaccine has been cleared by the Central Drug Laboratory (CDL).

References

1. The Hindu | VaxiFlu-4
2. The Hindu Business Line | VaxiFlu-4

Lokpal's order on complaint against High Court judge

Why in News?

Supreme Court recently stayed a Lokpal order that took cognizance of a corruption complaint against an unnamed High Court judge.

- **Lokpal -** The Lokpal is an independent statutory, an anti-corruption authority or body of ombudsman.
- **Aim -** It investigates and prosecutes corruption against public officials in India.
- **Established under** - The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act of 2013.
- **Members** - Chairperson and 8 members, including 4 judicial members.
- Chairperson is usually a *former Chief Justice of India* or a *former Supreme Court Judge.*
- Lokpal has jurisdiction over central government officials, members of parliament, and former and current prime ministers.
- The Lokpal can order search and seizure operations.
- The Lokpal presents an annual report to the President, which is then laid in both Houses of Parliament.
- **The recent case before lokpal -** Two complaints against a High Court judge were filed, alleging he influenced an Additional District Judge and another High Court judge.
- The Lokpal order focused on the power to hear a case against a High Court judge, not the complaint's merits.
- The Lokayukta Act defines "public servant" as
    - Anyone who has been a chairperson, member, officer, or employee in an autonomous body established by an ***Act of Parliament or financed by the Central Government.***
- The Lokpal ruled that High Court judges do not share the same status as Supreme Court judges, as they were established under the High Courts Act, 1861, and the Government of India Act, 1935.
- The Lokpal ruled that further proceedings would involve a probe into allegations against a High Court Judge.
- Before conducting an enquiry, the Lokpal advised forwarding the complaint to the ***Chief Justice of India (CJI)*** for guidance.
- **Existing provisions -** Lokpal bench, led by former SC judge A M Khanwilkar, can hear corruption complaints against former judges under the Lokpal Act, 2013.
- Section 77 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 prohibits charges related to a judge's official duties.

- Section 15 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 reproduces this provision.
- **K Veeraswami vs Union of India (1991) -** President must sanction criminal cases against a judge after consulting the CJI to prevent frivolous prosecution and unnecessary harassment.

Reference

The Indian Express | Lokpal order on an HC judge

Cholanaikkan Tribes

Why in News?

Education department recently prepares exclusive talking texts for bed-ridden tribal girl in Kerala under the Samagra Shiksha Kerala' program.

- They are one of the most isolated tribes inhabits the forests in the ***Nilambur Valley*** of Malappuram district of ***Kerala.***
- **Nomenclature** - They call themselves as Malanaikan or Sholanaikan.
- Cholanaikkans (coolanaaykkan) are called the Cavemen of Kerala.
- Shola or chola means deep thicket in the forest and naikan means king.
- They are the ***only cave dwelling community*** in India.
- **Population -** They are small tribe with a total population of less than 400 persons, they ***are diminishing*** recently.
- **Groups -** They are divided into smaller groups called Jenmam. They have no fixed dwellings but prefer to live close to water sources.
- They are found in groups consisting of ***2 to 7*** primary families. Each group is called a Chemmam.
- **Diet -** The community lives essentially by scavenging the forest.They do not cultivate due to the problem of elephants trampling over their produce.
- **Habitat -** A fraction of whom live in caves, the rest in temporary self-built structures.
- Their forest area is completely protected and outsiders are not even allowed to scavenge for forest produce or contact the tribal communities.
- They live in a protected forest with elephants and other wild animals including occasional sighting of tigers. Antelopes are very common.
- **Language -** They speak a language which is weakly called Dravidian but it is not directly related to any of the modern Dravidian languages.
- Their names also suggest local words and do not carry any names from Hindu mythologies or other more prevalent names suggesting long period of isolation.
- **Classification Status -** They are classified as ***Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).***

References

1. The Hindu | Cholanaikkan tribe
2. PTI News | Cholanaikkan tribe

Delimitation Exercise

Why in News?

Home Minister recently asserted that delimitation will not lose any Parliamentary seat to the Southern states.

Constitutional provisions

- Election Commission defines delimitation as the process of drawing constituency boundaries for elected bodies based on the ***population in the most recent Census.***
- **Article 82** - It states that after every Census is completed, the allocation of Lok Sabha seats to each state must be adjusted based on population changes.
- **Article 81** – It states there can be ***no more than 550 members*** in the Lok Sabha, 530 from states and 20 from Union Territories.
- It also says that the ratio between (the number of seats) and the population of the state is, so far as practicable, the same for all states.
- So, each constituency across the country should ideally have the same population.
- **Purpose -** The main purpose of undertaking the delimitation exercise is to rationalize the structure and composition of the electoral constituencies.
- It adheres to the principle of ***One Vote One value*** to provide representation to different sections of the population and remove gross inequalities in the population size of constituencies.
- Delimitation has taken place 4 times - 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002, with the number of seats fixed and readjusted during the first 3 exercises.

Related Amendments

- In 1976, the ***42nd Amendment*** to the Constitution froze the number of Lok Sabha seats and put off delimitation for 25 years until the 2001 Census under Article 82.
- ***84th Amendment*** further delayed delimitation for another 25 years.
- Delimitation is expected to be held after the new Census exercise, which is much-delayed.
- As per the delimitation calendar set earlier, this was to happen by 2026.

Delimitation Commission

• The Constitution has provided for an independent Delimitation Commission every decade to reapportion seats among states.
• The Commission is appointed by the ***President of India.***
• It comprises
  - A retired judge of the Supreme Court or a high court,
  - The Chief Election Commissioner, and
  - The State Election Commissioner.
• The Commission examines the changes in the population to redraw the constituencies or redraw a new one where it is necessary.
• The draft report is published in the Gazette of India which is open for public feedback.
• The final report is published after accounting for the public feedback.
• Once published, the Commission's orders are final and, as per the ***Delimitation Commission Act 1952 and Article 329A*** of the Constitution.

Reference

India Today | Delimitation

Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)

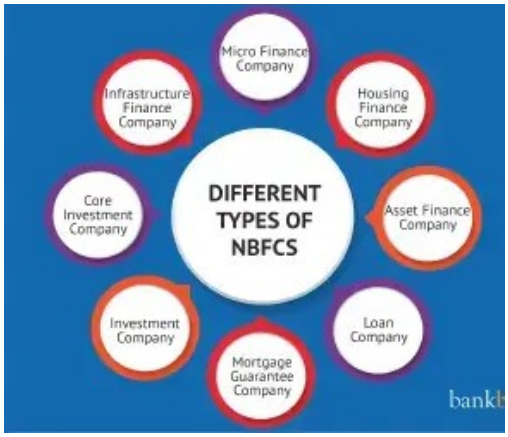
Why in News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has significantly eased lending restrictions for Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs) recently.

- **Recent provisions -** RBI reduced the risk weights applied to bank loans given to NBFCs by 25% points.
- It is expected to encourage banks to lend more readily to NBFCs.
- The reduction in risk weight will be based on the credit rating of each NBFC, with higher rated NBFCs likely to benefit more.
- This move is expected to improve the liquidity situation for NBFCs, allowing them to access more credit from banks and potentially leading to increased lending to the retail segment.
- By facilitating easier credit flow to NBFCs, the RBI aims to stimulate economic growth by enhancing credit availability to the retail sector.
- **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) -** Also known as nonbank financial institutions (NBFIs), are financial institutions that offer various banking services but do not have a banking license.
- They are ***not subject*** to banking regulations.
- **Registered under -** The Companies Act, 1956.
- **Eligibility**
  - It should be a company registered under ***Section 3*** of the companies Act, 1956.
  - It should have a minimum net owned fund of at least ***Rs. 10 crores.***
- It does not include any institution whose principal business is agriculture activity, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods or providing any services and of immovable property.

Financial activity as principal business is when a company's financial assets constitute more than 50% of the total assets and income from financial assets constitute more than 50% of the gross income.

- A company that has
  - The principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or
  - In instalments by way of contributions or in any other manner and is also a non-banking financial company (Residuary Non-banking Company).
- **Features - Lending** - Provide credit to sectors where there's a gap in credit.
- **Investment**- Invest in shares, stocks, bonds, and other securities.
- **Insurance**- Underwrite economic risks like illness, death, and damage.
- **Leasing**- Finance assets like vehicles, machinery, and equipment.
- **Hire purchase**- Help individuals and businesses acquire assets without upfront payment.
- **Asset management**-Help individuals and institutions invest in assets like equities, debt, and real estate.
- **Venture capital**-Provide funding to early-stage and high-growth potential businesses.



- NBFC ***cannot accept*** demand deposits.
- NBFCs ***do not form*** part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself.
- Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is ***not available*** to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in case of banks.

References

1. The Indian Express | Non-banking finance companies (NBFCs)
2. The Hindu | RBI lowers risk weight to NBFCs

One Liners 28-02-2025

History, Art and Culture

Jahan-e-Khusrau

It's an international festival of Sufi music, poetry & dance held in Delhi.

• **Festival Commemorates** - Legacy of Amir Khusrau.
• **Organized by** - Rumi Foundation.
• **Significance-** It brings together artists from various parts of the world, fostering cultural exchange and promoting the spirit of Sufism.
• It has become a well-known cultural event.

Geography

Mount Fentale

Scientists recently observed extraordinary methane emissions from Mount Fentale, Ethiopia.

• **Volcano type**- Stratovolcano
• **Emissions peaked at** - 58 metric tonnes per hour. This is significantly higher than typical volcanic emissions, dominated by carbon dioxide Methane & sulphur dioxide.
• **Methane is a** - Potent greenhouse gas, 28 times more effective at trapping heat than carbon dioxide.
• **Features of Stratovolcano type -** Known for its steep, cone-shaped structure built up from layers of lava, ash, and rock.
  - **Summit Caldera** - A large, bowl-shaped depression at the top, formed by past eruptions.

Polity & Governance

Delimitation

• **Aims to** - Fix the number of seats and defines constituency boundaries. It ensures proportional representation based on population.
• Articles- 82 , 170
• **Determines** - Reserved seats for SCs & ST.
• **Delimitation Commission is** - Established under an act of Parliament.
• **Nature**- It is a high powered body, and its orders cannot be challenged in court.
  - The Election Commission assists in the process.
• **Delimitation Commission Members** - Retired SC judge serves as Chairperson.
  - The Chief Election Commissioner or a nominated Election Commissioner is a member.
  - State Election Commissioners of respective states.

International Relations and Issues

Golden Visa

US is set to reintroduce its EB-5 visa program as the "Gold Card" visa,

• **Benefit**- provides residency or citizenship in a foreign country.
• **Achieved through** - Substantial financial investments, unlocking **long term** - Residency, tax benefits, and business prospects.
• **Investment Eligibility -** Generally ranging from $200,000 to $5 million.
• **Eligible investments** - Encompass real estate, business capital, government bonds, and economic development funds, with potential minimum stay requirements.
• **Example of -** United Arab Emirates Golden Visa Offers a 10-year residency visa for a minimum investment of AED 2 million.
• **Portugal's Investment Program -** Requires a €500,000 investment in qualified funds or job creation, excluding real estate options.
• Program aims to boost the country's economy through diversified investments.

Environment

Chinese alligator, *Alligator sinensis*,
IUCN Status- Critically endangered
• **Native to** - Eastern China.
• **Facing threat due to** - Human activities & limited public awareness.
• **Habitat Range -** Historically, it inhabited the middle and lower Yangtze and Yellow River basins' freshwater wetlands.
• **Current Status** - Today, only about 200 individuals remain in fragmented habitats within southeastern Anhui Province.

Science

National Science Day (NSD)

This event commemorates the 'Raman Effect' discovery by C.V Raman
• **Discovered on** - February 28, 1928.
• **NSD Celebrated Since** - February 28, 1987
• **Theme of 2025 - Youth and Viksit Bharat**
• **Nodal Agency** - National Council for Science & Technology Communication, under the Department of Science & Technology.
• **Purpose to** - Spread awareness about the importance of science in daily life.
- To encourage students and young people to pursue careers in science.
- To promote scientific temper and innovation.

Why Mars is Red

• **Mars' red hue** - Due to ferrihydrite, not just dry-formed iron oxides.
• **Old Beliefs** - Previously, hematite, formed in dry conditions, was thought to cause Mars' red color.
• **New research** - Indicates a more complex, wetter past for the planet which had a water-rich history.
• **Key Findings of the Study** - Ferrihydrite better explains Mars' red dust than hematite.
- Ferrihydrite forms quickly in cool, wet environments.
- Suggests Mars had liquid water on its surface earlier than previously believed.
- Research included creating synthetic Martian dust in the lab to match spacecraft observations.

National Geospatial Policy 2022

• **Citizen focused initiative Using**- Geospatial technology.
• **Aims to** - Bolster the geospatial sector for national development and economic growth.
• **High-Resolution Mapping by 2030** - The policy targets high-resolution topographical surveys and mapping.
- It seeks a high-accuracy Digital Elevation Model (DEM) by 2030.
• **Global Geospatial Vision** - Positions India as a global leader in the geospatial domain. It aims to create a top-tier ecosystem for innovation.

Miscellaneous

National Institute of Design (NID) Ahmedabad's

• **Establishment Year -**1961
• **Status -** Autonomous Institute
• **Governing Ministry -** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
• **Core Mandate - Design Education and Awareness:**
- To offer world-class design education.
- To promote design awareness for improving quality of life.

9th National Summit in Puri

• **Host**- The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
• **Showcase** - Innovative public healthcare practices from States and Union Territories.
• **Summit's Goal**: The summit aims to promote knowledge sharing and strengthen India's public healthcare system.
- It will foster collaboration and innovation for improved health outcomes.

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