UPSC Daily Current Affairs| Prelim Bits 28-12-2024

Reforms initiated by Manmohan Singh

Why in News?

The architect of India's economic liberalisation Dr Manmohan Singh breathed his last recently.

- He is known for heralding the era of market economy in India.

> *Manmohan Singh served as finance minister from 1991- 96 and as the prime minister from 2004 to 2014.*

Fiscal Reforms
• **Fiscal Discipline** - The government set the target of bringing down *fiscal deficit to 3-4% in the medium- term.* • It set the target of bringing the fiscal deficit target of 1992-93 to 5%, down from 6.2% in the previous year. • **Rationalising government spending** - Through *major cuts in subsidies and non-planned expenditures*. • Thus, the government announced major tax reforms to boost its tax revenue.
Trade Policy Reforms
• **Rupee Devaluation** - Rupee was *devalued 18%* to make Indian exports competitive. • **Import reforms** – Import restrictions for exporters were reduced. • Import of capital goods was allowed without the need of government permission. • **Export reforms** - Exports trading houses were allowed to have 51% foreign equity. • The government rationalised tariff structure and removed of quantitative restrictions on imports.
Monetary Policy Reforms
• **Banking reforms** – Setting of interest rates by lenders were deregulated, *new private bank licences issued*. • *Public listing of banks* and moving to a new framework of recognition of accounts and introduction of capital adequacy norms *recommended by Narasimham committee*. • **Tighter policies** - Tighter monetary and credit policy was envisaged to contain the current account deficit and to reduce non-discretionary imports. • **Introduced new monetary tools** – *364-day T-bills, 10 and 15-year securities* were introduced for the government to borrow from the market.
Industrial Policy Reforms

• **Licensing reforms** – *Industrial licensing was abolished* for all industries except 18 environmentally-risky sectors • **Amended Monopolies & Restrictive Trade Practices** - MRTP Act was repealed to eliminate the need for prior approval for capacity expansion by companies. • **Increased Private role**– Greater private sector participation was allowed in core and basic industries. • **Decreased Government control** – Number of industries reserved for the public sector was *reduced to 8 from 17*. • Small-scale enterprises were allowed to sell 44% equity to large companies.
FDI Policy reforms
• The limit for *foreign equity holding raised from 40% to 51*% in priority sector industries • *Foreign Investment Promotion Board* was established to streamline the process of approval of FDI.
Telecom Policy reforms
• Introduced a unified access licensing regime for telecom services across the country in his tenure as PM between 2004-14.

Reference

The Indian Express| Top Reforms initiated by Manmohan Singh

Matsya Seva Kendras (MSKs)

Why in News?

The need for strengthening last-mile fisheries and aquaculture extension services is highlighted recently by the Government of India.

- It is a *fisheries extension and support services*.
- **Launched in** – ***2020.***
- **Aim** – To provide a *one-stop solution for fishers and fish farmers* through a range of extension services provided by trained aquaculture professionals.
- **Umbrella Scheme** – Pradhan Mantri Matsya Samapada Yojana (PMMSY).
- **Nodal Ministry** – Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying.
- **Government assistance** – Upto 60% covers women and weaker sections.
- **Fund dispersal** - Funds have been provided *to State governments and Union Territories* for operationalising ***102 such Kendras***.
- Functions – It establishes lab for *water, soil, and microbial analysis* to conduct request-based disease tests.
- It focuses on *capacity building* for fishers/fish farmers on varied seed/feed inputs backed with the required technology infusion.
- **Future proposals** – Government advises MSKs to mobilise start-ups, cooperatives, fish farmers' producer organisations, joint liability groups, and self-help groups to share best practices.

Other initiatives of Fisheries Extension Services

- **Sagar Mitras** – They are deployed in coastal States and U.T.s as a vital *interface between the government and sea-borne fishers*.

Compile Information on	Disemminate Information on
• Daily marine catch • Price fluctuations • Marketing needs at fish landing centres/harbours	• Local regulations • Weather forecasts • Natural calamities • Hygienic fish handling • Potential fishing zones in the seas.

- **National Fisheries Digital Paltform** – It is a platform *to formalize the fisheries sector*.
- **AquaBazaar** – It is a *nationwide virtual learning platform*, initiated by National Fisheries Development Board.
- It enables experts to clarify basic concepts and provide practical demonstrations to fishers on breeding/seed production of commercially important fish.

India's Fisheries Sector
• **National Fish Production** – It has witnessed an 83% since 2013-14, that stands at a record 175 lakh tons in 2022-23. • With 75% of this coming from inland fisheries. • India is the ***2nd largest fish and aquaculture producer*** globally.

Reference

The Hindu| Matsya Seva Kendras (MSKs)

Increased Risk H5N1 Virus in Humans

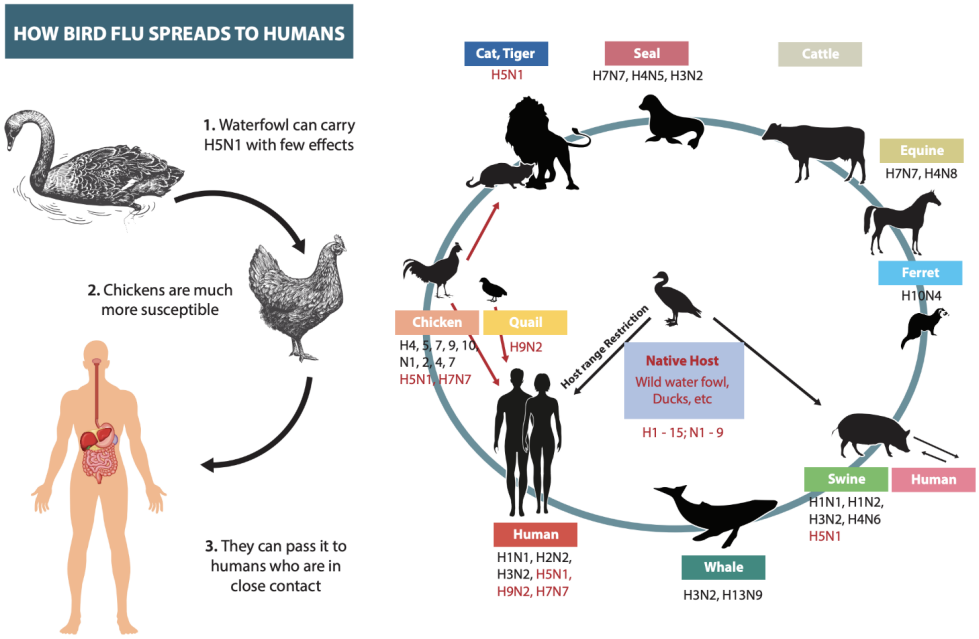
Why in News?

Recently, the researchers found that circulating the H5N1 clade virus attached better in the human respiratory tract.

- **Avian influenza** – It is highly contagious and spreads through direct contact with infected birds or their secretions, including saliva, feathers, and faeces.

  Avian influenza *is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can spread from animals to humans.*

- **H5N1** – It is a subtype of Avian Influenza A, was 1st detected in geese, China on 1996 and causing outbreaks in birds since then.
- **Key causes of spread**
  - Wildlife spillover
  - Large-scale poultry farming and poor biosecurity measures
  - Improper cooking practices



H5N1 Clade	
Clade 2.3.2.1a	• *Detected in a child* traveler returning to Australia from India, 2024.
Clade 2.3.4.4b	• Identified in dead migratory birds in China, November 2021. • It is *affecting wild and domestic birds and mammals* worldwide. • Since 2020, it led to an unprecedented number of deaths in wild birds and poultry in many countries. • In 2021, spread to North America and in 2022 to Central and South America.

> ***A clade**, in biology, is a group of organisms that consists of a common ancestor and all of its descendants.*

H5N1 in Humans

- **H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b** – Influenza A virus *cross the species barrier and infect humans* and spread from one person to another.
- It ***infect the cells in the respiratory epithelium*** of the upper respiratory tract.
- It is endowed with the ability to attach to and replicate in the upper respiratory tract lead to infection and transmission of the virus.
- The ability to attach to cells in the lower respiratory tract is associated with its ability to cause severe respiratory disease.
- **Increased risk** – The receptor binding repertoire of H5N1 virus has expanded to attach to receptors in the human upper and lower respiratory tracts.
    - There have been *64 confirmed human cases* of H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b in the U.S. as of December 2024.

> *The H5N1 virus has now established its presence in 108 countries across 5 continents, impacting even endangered species like the California condor and polar bears. Alarmingly, bird flu was detected in gentoo and King penguins in*

Antarctica for the first time in January 2024.

References

1. The Hindu| H5N1 Infection on human
2. WHO| Avian influenza A(H5N1) virus

Parker Solar Probe

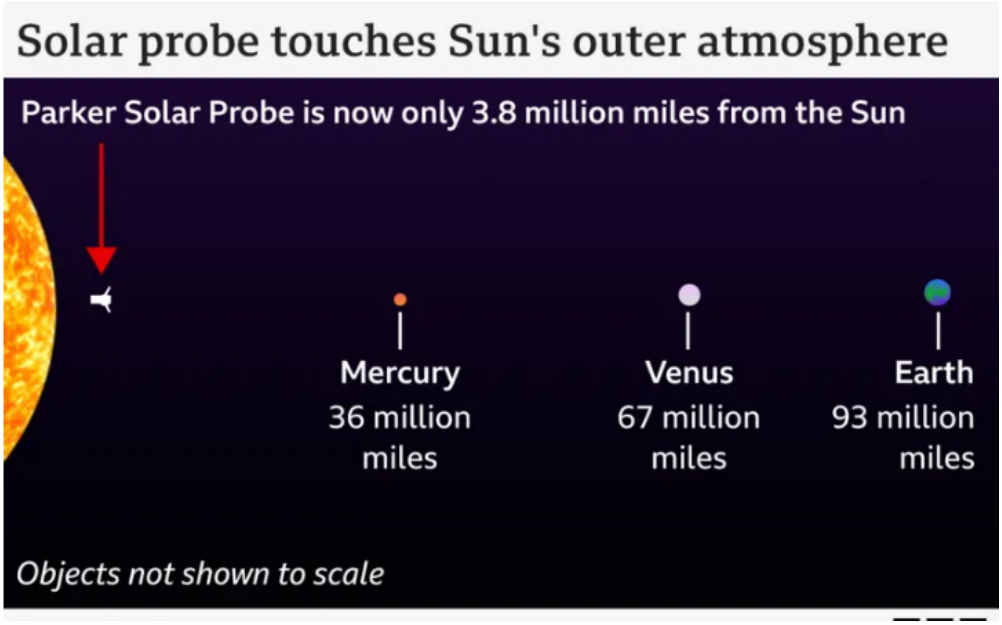
Why in News?

Recently, Parker Solar Probe made history by surviving the closest-ever approach to the Sun.

- **Launched in -** *2018*.
- **Launched by** – NASA.
- **Mission** – To "Touch the Sun".
- It is designed to fly *within about 4 million miles* (6.5 million kilometers) of the Sun's surface.
- **Aim** – To make observations of the ***outer corona of the Sun***.

It became the 1st spacecraft to fly through the corona, the Sun's upper atmosphere in 2021.

- **Study objectives –** To *trace the energy flow*, to study magnetic fields, plasma, energetic particles, and to image the solar wind.
- **Movement** – It gradually circling closer towards the sun, using flybys of Venus to gravitationally pull it into a tighter orbit with the sun.
- Every orbit bringing it closer, the probe faces brutal heat and radiation.
- **4 Instruments**
  - Fields Experiment (FIELDS)
  - Integrated Science Investigation of the Sun (ISIS)
  - Wide Field Imager for Solar Probe (WISPR)
  - Solar Wind Electrons Alphas and Protons (SWEAP)
- **Thermal protector** – An 11.5cm thick carbon-composite shield protect from temperatures of nearly 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **Speed** – It moves *faster than any human-made object*, up to 430,000 mph.
- **Significance** – It flies more than 7 times closer to the Sun than any spacecraft and over 7 years, it will complete 24 orbits around the Sun.



References

1. The Hindu| Parker Solar Probe Makes History
2. NASA| Parker Solar Probe

One Liners 28-12-2024

History, Art and Culture

Urs Festival

• Countdown for 813th Urs begins.
• It is an *annual festival* held *at Ajmer, Rajasthan*.
• **Commemoration** – For the death anniversary of Sufi saint Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.
• **Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti –** He arrived along with Sultan Illtuttmish and promulgated the *Chishtiyya Order* of Sufism.
• He is also *known as Garib Nawaz*.

Geography

Three Gorges Dam

• **Located in** - China's Hubei Province.
• **Built on** - Yangtze River.
• It is *world's largest Dam*.

International Relations and Issues

India-china Trans-border River Sharing

• India and China *don't have any agreements*.
• **2002 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** – For sharing hydrological information on the Brahmaputra River during the flood seasons.
• In the aftermath of the 2013 Doklam standoff, Beijing suspended data sharing, which resumed only in 2018.

Operation Poseidon Archer

• It is a sustained *bombing campaign to degrade Houthi* military capabilities in Yemen.
• **Launched by** – United States, United Kingdom, and their allies.
• **Supplements** – *Operation Prosperity Guardian*, a maritime security operation begun in December 2023 to protect shipping in the Red Sea from attacks by the militants.

Agriculture

Rambhog Paddy

• **Features** – *Sweet smell*, and taste which makes it to differentiate from other paddy varieties.
• It is grown in Kanpur Dehat and Kanpur Nagar districts, located in the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh.

Environment

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement

• **Paris Agreement** – At COP 21 of UNFCCC in 2015.
• **Article 6** – It sets out how countries can pursue voluntary cooperation to reach their climate targets.
• It facilitates emission reduction through 3 pathways
  - Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes
  - UN-regulated global carbon market
  - Non-market approaches.

The Bald Eagle

• It is a key symbol of the United States, has been officially named the national bird.
• **Morphology** – White head, yellow beak, and brown feathers.
• **Historical Importance** - since 1782, it symbolizes freedom and bravery in USA.
• It has appeared on the Great Seal of the United States since its final design was approved.

Science

Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD)

• It is the updated term for *non-alcoholic fatty liver disease*.
• It has connections to metabolic health, heart health, and cancer risk.
• **Causes** – It is *strongly linked to metabolic syndrome*, which includes obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and dyslipidemia.
• A *diet high in carbohydrates*, particularly refined sugars and starches, results in elevated insulin levels.
• Chronically high insulin levels lead to insulin resistance, resulting in the conversion of excess glucose into fatty acids that accumulate in the liver.

Miscellaneous

INS Sarvekshak (J22)

• Indian Navy Ship, INS Sarvekshak, arrived at *Port Louis in Mauritius* for undertaking *Hydrographic Surveys*.

• **Fitted with survey equipment** – Deep Sea Multi beam echo sounder system, Side Scan Sonars and a fully automated digital surveying and processing system.

Quality Council of India

• **Formed in** – 1997.

• **Formed by** – Government of India and major industry groups like ASSOCHAM, CII, and FICCI.

• **1st chairman** – Mr. Ratan Tata.

• It is a national body for accreditation and is a non-profit organization under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.

