

# UPSC Daily Current Affairs 18 May 2021

## 1. West Bengal government decides to set up a Legislative Council

(Topic- GS Paper II–Polity, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently the state cabinet of West Bengal Government has decided to set up a Legislative Council, or a Vidhan Parishad.
- The State had an Upper House till 1969.

### About the Legislative Councils

- The LC or Vidhan Parishad is the upper house in those states that have a bicameral legislature; the lower house being the State Legislative Assembly.
- Under Article 169 of the constitution, Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a state if the Legislative Assembly of that state passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.

### Abolition or Creation - Article 169

- The Parliament can abolish a legislative council (where it already exists) or create it (where it does not exist) by a simple majority, that is, a majority of the members of each House present and voting, if the legislative assembly of the concerned state, by a special majority, passes a resolution to that effect.
- This Act of Parliament is not to be deemed as an amendment of the Constitution for the purposes of Article 368 and is passed like an ordinary piece of legislation (i.e. by simple majority).

### Strength of the House

- As per article 171 clause (1) of the Indian Constitution, the total number of members in the legislative council of a state shall not exceed one third of the total number of the members in the legislative Assembly.
- The maximum strength of the council is fixed at one-third of the total strength of the assembly and the minimum strength is fixed at 406.
- Though the Constitution has fixed the maximum and the minimum limits, the actual strength of a Council is fixed by Parliament.

Note:

- At present (2019), only six states have two Houses (bicameral).
- These are Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council was abolished by the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.

## 2. Creating a new district

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## (Topic- GS Paper II–Governance, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently the Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh declared Malerkotla the 23rd district of the State.

### How are new districts carved?

- The power to create new districts or alter or abolish existing districts rests with the State governments.
- This can either be done through an executive order or by passing a law in the State Assembly.
- Section 5 of the Punjab Land Revenue Act, 1887 says the “State government may, by notification, vary the limits and alter the numbers of tehsils, districts and divisions into which the State is divided”.
- Many States prefer the executive route by simply issuing a notification in the official gazette.

### How does it help?

- States argue that smaller districts lead to better administration and governance.
- For example, in 2016, the Assam government issued a notification to upgrade the Majuli sub-division to Majuli district for “administrative expediency”.

### Are there any exceptions?

- The State government has been vested with unfettered powers under Section 5 of the Punjab Land Revenue Act, 1887 to create new districts.
- This power is generally held temporarily in abeyance only during active census operations or during the delimitation exercise of Lok Sabha/Vidhan Sabha constituencies.

### Role of Central Government

- The Centre has no role to play in the alteration of districts or creation of new ones.
- States are free to decide.
- The Home Ministry comes into the picture when a State wants to change the name of a district or a railway station.
- The State government’s request is sent to other departments and agencies such as the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Posts, Geographical Survey of India Sciences and the Railway Ministry seeking clearance.
- A no-objection certificate may be issued after examining their replies.

### Previous Trend

- According to the 2011 Census, there were 593 districts in the country.
- The Census results showed that between 2001-2011, as many as 46 districts were created by States.
- Though the 2021 Census is yet to happen, Know India, a website run by the Government of India, says currently there are 718 districts in the country.

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- The surge in number is also due to bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh into A.P. and Telangana in 2014.
- Telangana at present has 33 districts and A.P. has 13 districts.

### 3. Farzad B gas field

(Topic- GS Paper II–International Realtion, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news ?

- Recently, Iran gave the Farzad B gas field to Petropars, a domestic gas producer which is a setback for India’s energy ties with Iran as ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) had discovered the gas field in 2000 and has been part of the ongoing cooperation on that front.

## TIMELINE: CHABAHAR AND FARZAD-B

**Dec 25, 2002:** A consortium of ONGC Videsh, IOC and Oil India signs contract for carrying out exploration at Farzad-B block

**Jan 25, 2003:** Former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee and then Iran president Seyyed Mohammad Khatami sign a deal to develop Chabahar port complex and Chabahar–Fahranj-Bam railway link

**June, 2009:** Farzad-B contract expires

**May 6, 2015:** Union minister Nitin Gadkari signs an MoU with Iran

**May 22, 2016:** PM Narendra Modi visits Tehran; discusses Chabahar and Farzad with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani

**Dec 3, 2017:** Rouhani inaugurates first phase of port

**Jan 2018:** Iran and India sign pact worth \$2 bn for cooperation in rail

**Feb 10, 2018:** Iran signs agreement to lease the operational control of Chabahar port

**Jul 2020:** Iran shows the door to India in both Chabahar and Farzad-B projects

#### About Farzad B gas field

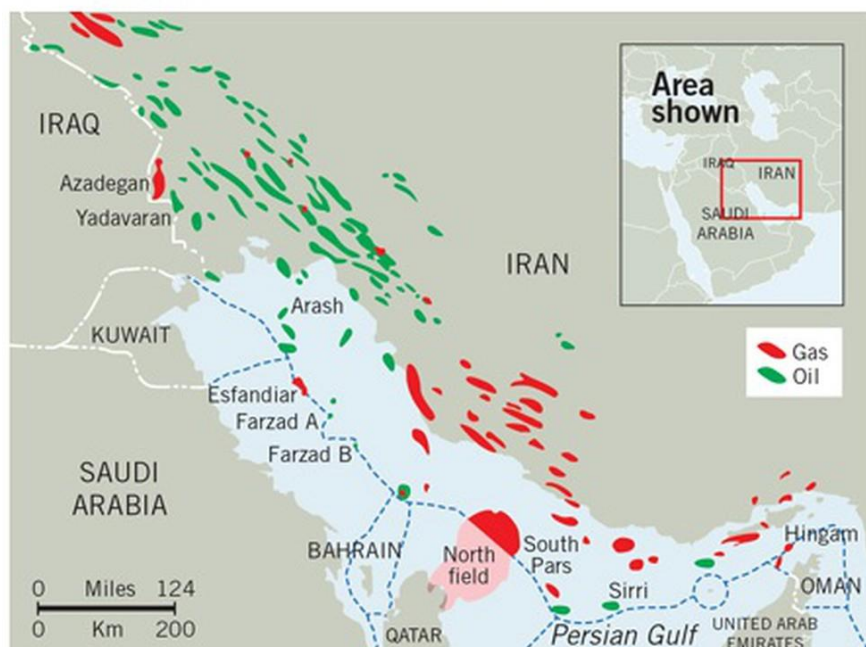
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## IRAN'S SHARED PERSIAN GULF OIL, GAS FIELDS

FIG.



- It is located in Persian Gulf (Iran).
- The contract for exploration of the field was signed in 2002 by Indian consortium comprising ONGC Videsh, Indian Oil Corporation and Oil India.
- The contract expired in 2009 after declaration of commerciality of the field, based on the gas discovery.
- It has gas reserves of more than 19 trillion cubic feet.

### 4. China bars foreign curriculum and foreign ownership in private schools

(Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- China's State Council has recently announced tough new laws halting the teaching of foreign curriculum in schools from kindergarten to grade nine (K-9) and prohibiting the ownership or control of any private K-9 schools by foreign entities.
- The new laws, which come into effect on September 1 2021.
- China currently has private K-9 schools that teach local and foreign curricula.

#### More on the news

- The K-9 schools will no longer be able to organize entrance tests or recruit in advance.
- Also, public K-9 schools will be barred from establishing private schools or converting themselves into private schools.
- As per media reports, China is framing tough new rules for its booming private tutoring industry, aiming both to ease pressure on schoolchildren and to boost the country's birth rate by lowering family living costs.

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#### 4. Thromboembolic events after Covishield jab

(Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

##### Why in the news?

- Recently National AEFI (Adverse Event Following Immunization) Committee has submitted a report which showed the adverse event following Immunisation data in India.
- The report showed that there is a minuscule but definitive risk of thromboembolic events after administration of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine (Covishield in India).

##### More on the news

- The reporting rate of these events in India is around 0.61 per million doses, which is much lower than the 4 cases per million reported by UK's regulator Medical and Health Regulatory Authority (MHRA).
- Germany has reported 10 events per million doses.
- There were no potential thromboembolic events reported following administration of Covaxin vaccine.

##### Significance of the National AEFI committee

- The National AEFI committee is expected to review all these serious adverse events (SAEs) including the deaths, to assess whether they are linked to the vaccines being used.
- So far, the committee has received complete documentation of only 236 (38.3%) of the over 600 SAEs reported across the country.
- The committee is expected to study the documentation, including the person's medical history and/or post-mortem reports, verbal autopsy, hospital reports and documents from investigations of the immunisation site.
- It is crucial for this information to be properly gathered at district level.

##### Note:

- World Health Organisation has also established a Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety.

#### 6. ICMR drops plasma therapy from COVID treatment norms

(Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

##### Why in the news?

- According to the recent advisory from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the use of convalescent plasma has been dropped from the recommended treatment guidelines for COVID-19.

##### Recent Study

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- Though a trial by the ICMR on 400 patients last year — called the PLACID trial — had found no significant benefit from the use of plasma, it continued to find a place in the recommended guidelines.
- Some experts have said the use of such plasma may have even played a role in facilitating new worrisome mutations to the virus.
- The most recent study published in the British medical journal The Lancet on May 14 reported that in a double blinded trial involving about 5,000 patients who got the treatment in the U.K., again no benefit was found in reducing mortality, or on improving patient outcomes.
- The ICMR guidelines still recommend Ivermerctin and hydroxychloroquine for mild disease but have underlined “low certainty of evidence”.

### About Plasma Therapy

- Plasma is the liquid part of the blood.
- Convalescent plasma, extracted from the blood of patients recovering from an infection, is a source of antibodies against the infection.
- The therapy involves using their plasma to help others recover.
- For Covid-19, this has been one of the treatment options.
- The donor would have to be a documented case of Covid-19 and healthy for 28 days since the last symptoms.

## 7. WPI inflation hits high of 10.5%

(Topic- GS Paper III–Economics, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Inflation as measured by the Wholesale Price Index quickened to a record high of 10.5% in April, from 7.4% in March and 4.8% recorded in February.

### More on the news

- The base effect from last April which recorded a negative inflation of 1.57%, and a surge in fuel, food and manufactured goods’ prices.
- Wholesale inflation in fuel and power more than doubled to 20.94% in April 2021 from 10.25% in March 2021, while manufactured goods recorded inflation of 9%, prompting industry to urge the government to rationalise fuel prices and try to rein in high commodity prices.

### Key Highlights

- Food prices also hardened to record 7.6% inflation in April from 3.6% in February and 5.3% in March.
- Retail inflation for April had moderated to a three-month low of 4.29% from over 5.5% in March, helped by cooling food prices, but economists had expected the WPI to harden during the month.

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- The high inflation in fuel and power is significantly raising input costs of Indian industry.
- The headline WPI inflation surge was sharper than expected and could rise further to 13%-13.5% in May before winding down.
- However, core WPI inflation may continue to rise over the next three months to a peak of about 10.5% from 8.4% in April.
- The likely trajectory of WPI inflation supports our view that there is no space for rate cuts to support the faltering growth momentum, even as we expect the monetary stance to remain accommodative.

## 8. 'Mice rain' in eastern Australia

(Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Government of New South Wales (NSW) in Australia is facing one of the worst mouse plagues.
- In some affected areas, mice are falling out from rooftops causing “mice rain”.

### More on the news

- The government of New South Wales (NSW) in Australia has extended a support package of \$50 million to farmers to deal with a devastating mouse plague that has affected farmers, community members and residents.
- To control the plague, the government has now authorised the use of an otherwise outlawed poison called bromadiolone.

### When did the plague begin?

- The current plague is being called one of the worst plagues in decades and started being reported around mid-March in Australia’s eastern states.

### How does a plague of this scale affect people?

- As per Victoria’s health department there are 2,200 species of rodents and Australia has more than 60 native rodent species and three introduced pest species.
- Rodents are capable of destroying food grains and can cause widespread damage to domestic households, commercial businesses, farms, manufacturers and livestock.
- Further, rodents can not only gnaw through materials but can also ruin supplies by excreting on them.
- **Rodents can also cause diseases such as leptospirosis and typhus fever.**
- They can also carry fleas or ticks that can harm pets and humans.

## 9. Protein–Antibody Conjugates or PACs



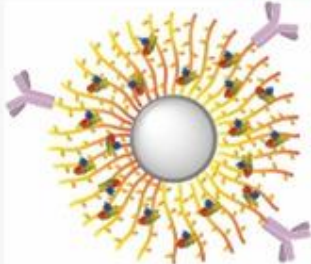
(Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

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## Why in the news?

- A team of researchers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Institute for Applied Life Sciences has developed a nanoparticle which is known as Protein–Antibody Conjugates or PACs

## About Protein–Antibody Conjugates or PACs

Biologics	Antibody-Drug Conjugates (ADCs)
 <p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Remarkable specificity for targets</li> <li>✓ Directly addresses genetic deficiencies</li> <li>✓ Protein replacement therapy possible</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Membrane impermeable</li> <li>○ Restricted to extracellular targets</li> <li>○ Susceptible to proteases degradation</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Targeted delivery of therapeutics</li> <li>✓ Minimal off-target toxicities</li> <li>✓ Expands maximum tolerated dose</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Low drug to antibody ratio</li> <li>○ Complex linker requirements</li> <li>○ Drug exposed during circulation</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Protein-Antibody Conjugates (PACs) – this work</b></p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Combines the advantages of biologics and ADCs</li> <li>✓ Targeted intracellular protein delivery</li> <li>✓ Higher protein to antibody ratio</li> <li>✓ Compatibility with diverse protein cargo</li> <li>✓ Enhanced stability of encapsulated protein</li> <li>✓ Linkers for drug conjugation is obviated</li> </ul> </div> </div>	

- It is a combine's concept of biologics and antibody–drug conjugates to produce protein–antibody conjugates that can be used for targeted drug delivery – in the case of pancreatic cancer cells.
- One is biologics, where the idea is to target a defective protein in the system by delivering proteins to it.

## An example of this is the case of insulin treatment.

- If a person is short of insulin, which is a protein, they are given a shot of this protein which balances the system.

## What are Antibody Drug Conjugates?

- Antibody-drug conjugates or ADCs are a class of biopharmaceutical drugs designed as a targeted therapy for treating diseases like cancer.
- Unlike chemotherapy, ADCs are intended to target and kill tumour cells while sparing healthy cells.

## 10. DRDO's drug launched for emergency use

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**(Topic- GS Paper III–Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)**

**Why in the news?**

- The first batch of the adjunct COVID therapy drug, 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) has been released for emergency use.

**About 2-DG**

- It has been developed by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), New Delhi, a lab of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in collaboration with Hyderabad-based pharma company Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL).
- The 2-DG drug comes in powder form in the sachet, which is taken orally by dissolving it in water.
- 2-DG accumulates in virus-infected cells, and prevents the growth of the virus by stopping viral synthesis and energy production.
- **Its selective accumulation in virally infected cells makes this drug unique.**

**How 2-DG reduces dependence on oxygen?**

- The 2-DG drug, like glucose, spreads through the body, reaches the virus-infected cells and prevents virus growth by stopping viral synthesis and destroys the protein's energy production.
- The drug also works on virus infection spread into lungs which help us to decrease patient's dependability on oxygen.

