

## UPSC Daily Current Affairs 26 May 2021

### 1. Why Bay of Bengal is warmer by 2 degree ?

(Topic- GS Paper I – Geography, Source- The Hindu)

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, Climate scientists said that the Bay of Bengal, where Cyclone ‘Yaas’ has formed, is at least two degrees warmer than what is normal for this time of the year.
- The north Bay of Bengal is exceptionally warm with temperatures up to 32 degrees Celsius.

#### More on the news

- Cyclones in the Bay of Bengal are not unexpected in May and result from increased ocean surface temperatures.
- The formation of storms in this period is favourable for drawing in the monsoon into the Andamans and subsequently to the Kerala coast.
- Researchers have pointed to trends that suggest a relative decrease in the number of cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and a rise in the Arabian Sea.
- Tropical cyclones in the Indian neighbourhood begin as depressions or a gradual build-up of warm air and pockets of low pressure.
- About 35% of such formations intensify to cyclones and only 7% intensify to very severe cyclones.

#### Reasons Behind this temperature Increase

- Sea surface temperatures and humidity both directly correlate with chances of cyclone formation; the Bay of Bengal is a more likely target because it gets higher rainfall, and because the sluggish winds around it keep temperatures relatively high.
- Warm air currents enhance this surface temperature and aid the formation of cyclones.

#### About Cyclone Yaas

- This cyclone is the second to form in 2021 and the first over **the Bay of Bengal this year.**
- **Cyclone Yaas name has been given by Oman.**

#### Previous Cyclone in West Bengal

##### Fani

- Cyclone Fani was a super cyclone that ravaged Odisha coast in 2019.
- It is not just a severe cyclone but an “extremely severe cyclone” which was the first severe, cyclonic storm to have formed in April in India’s oceanic neighbourhood since 1976.

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## Amphan

- Amphan was a super cyclone that ravaged West Bengal in March 2020.
- It was the strongest storm that hit India's eastern coast since the super cyclone of 1999, which struck Paradip, Odisha.

## 2. 17+1 cooperation forum

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

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Lithuania was quitting China's 17+1 cooperation forum with central and eastern European states that includes other EU members, calling it "divisive".

### About 17+1 cooperation forum:

- It is a China-led initiative founded in the year 2012.
- The format was founded in 2012 in Warsaw to push for the cooperation of the "17+1" (the 17 CEE countries and China).

### Aim

- To expand cooperation between China and the Central and Eastern European (CEE) member countries.
- This is done through investments and trade for the development of the CEE region.
- The initiative also focuses on infrastructure projects such as bridges, motorways, railway lines and the modernisation of ports in the member states

### Members

- The countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

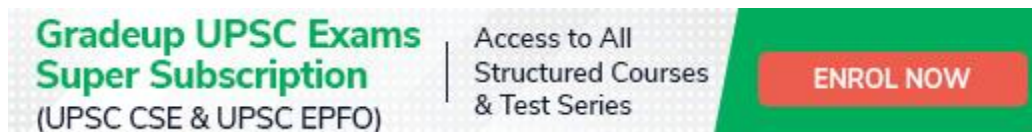
### Significance

- The initiative is largely seen as an extension of China's flagship Belt and Road initiative (BRI).

### Recent Development

- The Baltic country urged fellow EU members to pursue "a much more effective 27+1 approach and communication with China."

### About Lithuania



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- Lithuania, officially the Republic of Lithuania is a country in the Baltic region of Europe.
- It is one of the Baltic States.
- It lies on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, to the southeast of Sweden and the east of Denmark, with Latvia to the north, Belarus to the east and south, Poland to the south, and Kaliningrad Oblast of Russia to the southwest.
- **Its capital and largest city is Vilnius.**

### 3. Panel to define offences of speech, expression

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

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, a panel has been constituted by the Union Home Ministry to suggest reforms to the British-era Indian Penal Code (IPC) are likely to propose a separate Section on “offences relating to speech and expression.
- As there is no clear definition of what constitutes a “**hate speech**” in the IPC, the Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws is attempting for the first time to define such speech.

#### Bureau’s definition of Speech

- The Bureau of Police Research and Development recently published a manual for investigating agencies on cyber harassment cases that defined hate speech **as a “language that denigrates, insults, threatens or targets an individual based on their identity and other traits (such as sexual orientation or disability or religion etc.)”**
- Earlier in 2018, the Home Ministry had written to the Law Commission to prepare a distinct law for online “**hate speech**” **acting on a report by Viswanathan committee headed by former Lok Sabha Secretary General** who recommended stricter laws.
- The committee was formed in the wake of **Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000**, that provided punishment for sending offensive messages through communication services being scrapped by the Supreme Court in 2015.

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- In 2019, however, the Ministry decided to overhaul the IPC, **framed in 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)** after seeking suggestions from States, the Supreme Court, High Courts, the Bar Council of India, Bar Councils of States, universities and law institutes on comprehensive amendments to criminal laws.

#### **4. FB will comply with new IT rules**

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

##### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, the new stricter rules for social media intermediaries such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Google. Twitter and Telegram, come into effect.
- The majority of platforms are yet to fully comply with ‘The Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021’.

##### **About The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**

- The rule were notified on February 25, 2021 under the Information Technology Act, 2000 which replace the Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules, 2011.
- **The Act provides for the regulation of electronic transactions and cybercrime.**

##### **Due diligence by intermediaries**

- Intermediaries are entities that store or transmit data on behalf of other persons.
- Intermediaries include internet or telecom service providers, online marketplaces, and social media platforms.

The due diligence to be observed by intermediaries includes:

- a. informing users about rules and regulations, privacy policy, and terms and conditions for usage of its services,
- b. blocking access to unlawful information within 36 hours upon an order from the Court, or the government, and
- c. retaining information collected for the registration of a user for 180 days after cancellation or withdrawal of registration.

Intermediaries are required to report cybersecurity incidents and share related information with the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team.

##### **Significant social media intermediaries**

- A social media intermediary with registered users in India above a threshold (to be notified) will be classified as Significant Social Media Intermediaries.
- Intermediaries which provide messaging as a primary service must enable the identification of the first originator of the information on its platform.

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- This originator must be disclosed if required by an order from the Court or the government. Such order will be passed for specified purposes including investigation of offences related to sovereignty and security of the state, public order, or sexual violence.
- No such order will be passed if less intrusive means are effective in identifying the originator of the information.
- The intermediary will not be required to disclose the contents of any communication.
- If the first originator is located outside India, the first originator of that information within India will be deemed to be the first originator.

### **Code of Ethics for Digital Media Publishers (IT Act new rules 2021):**

The Rules prescribe the code of ethics to be observed by publishers of digital media including:

- **News and current affairs content providers, and**
- **Online curated content providers (also known as OTT platforms).**

### **For news and current affairs, the following existing codes will apply:**

- Norms of journalistic conduct formulated by the Press Council of India,
- Programme code under the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act, 1995.

### **For OTT platforms, the requirements include:**

- Classifying content in age-appropriate categories as specified,
- Implementing an age verification mechanism for access to adult content, and access control measures such as parental controls, and
- Improving accessibility of content for disabled persons.

This enables a level playing field between the offline as well as the digital media.

## **5. WHO nod for Covaxin likely in July-September**

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

### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, the Bharat Biotech expects to receive regulatory approvals from the World Health Organization (WHO) for Covaxin in the July-September quarter.
- It had already submitted an application to the WHO seeking Emergency Use Listing for the vaccine.

### **Regular procedure for drug approval:**

Vaccines and medicines, and even diagnostic tests and medical devices, require the approval of a regulatory authority before they can be administered.

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1. In India, the regulatory authority is the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).
2. For vaccines and medicines, approval is granted after an assessment of their safety and effectiveness, based on data from trials.

### **When can emergency use authorisation (EUA) be granted?**

- In the US, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) grants EUA only after it has been determined that the “known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine” (or medicine).
- This means that a EUA application can be considered only after sufficient efficacy data from phase 3 trials had been generated.
- A EUA cannot be granted solely on the basis of data from phase 1 or phase 2 trials.

### **What is an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA)?**

- An Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) is a mechanism to facilitate the availability and use of medical countermeasures, including vaccines, during public health emergencies, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- Under an EUA, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may allow the use of unapproved medical products, or unapproved uses of approved medical products in an emergency to diagnose, treat, or prevent serious or life-threatening diseases or conditions when certain statutory criteria have been met, including that there are no adequate, approved, and available alternatives.
- Taking into consideration input from the FDA, manufacturers decide whether and when to submit an EUA request to FDA.
- Once submitted, FDA will evaluate an EUA request and determine whether the relevant statutory criteria are met, taking into account the totality of the scientific evidence about the vaccine that is available to FDA.

## **6. Cheetah to be re-introduced in India from Africa in November**

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

### **Why in the news?**

- Recently, Cheetah is expected to be re-introduced into the country in November 2021 at the **Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh**.

### **Cheetah Scenario in India**

- Cheetah, the world’s fastest land animal which was declared extinct in India in 1952.
- The country’s last spotted cheetah died in Chhattisgarh in 1947.

### **Background**

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- The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) some years back prepared a cheetah re-introduction project.
- The Supreme Court had earlier given its approval to introduce African cheetahs from **Namibia** into a suitable habitat in India on an experimental basis.
- The Supreme Court had also set up a three-member committee to guide the NTCA on the cheetah re-introduction project.
- The panel has asked the WII to carry out a technical evaluation of all possible sites for the re-introduction of cheetah in the country.

### Conservation Status

- According to the United Nations, Cheetahs are listed as “Vulnerable” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.
- In North Africa and Asia, they are considered to be “**Critically Endangered.**”

### CITES status

- Both the **Cheetah African as well as Asian** are listed in the **Appendix-I.**

## 7. NASA Earth System Observatory

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

### Why in the news?

- NASA will recently design a new set of Earth-focused missions to provide key information to guide efforts related to climate change, disaster mitigation, fighting forest fires, and improving real-time agricultural processes.

### About the NASA Earth System Observatory

- It is a program by US Space Agency, NASA consisting of series of artificial satellite missions and scientific instruments in Earth orbit.
- It is designed for long-term global observations biosphere, land surface, atmosphere, and oceans.
- Satellite component of this program was launched in 1997.
- The observatory follows recommendations from the 2017 Earth Science Decadal Survey by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, which lays out ambitious but critically necessary research and observation guidance.

### Purpose

- With the Earth System Observatory, each satellite will be uniquely designed to complement the others, working in tandem to create a 3D, holistic view of Earth, from bedrock to atmosphere.

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- The observatory will provide drought assessment and forecasting, associated planning for water use for agriculture, as well as supporting natural hazard response.
- It will also help in understanding climate changes that impact food and agriculture, habitation, and natural resources, by answering open questions about the fluxes of carbon, water, nutrients, and energy within and between ecosystems and the atmosphere, the ocean, and the Earth.
- NASA's new Earth System Observatory will expand that work, providing the world with an unprecedented understanding of our Earth's climate system, arming us with next-generation data critical to mitigating climate change, and protecting our communities in the face of natural disasters."

## 8. National Mission on use of Biomass in coal based thermal power plants

(Topic- GS Paper III – Environment, Source- PIB)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Ministry of Power has decided to set up a National Mission on use of Biomass in coal based thermal power plants.

### Objective

The "National Mission on use of biomass in thermal power plants" will have the following objectives;

- To increase the level of co-firing from present 5% to higher levels to have a larger share of carbon neutral power generation from the thermal power plants.
- To take up R&D activity in boiler design to handle the higher amount of silica, alkalis in the biomass pellets.
- To facilitate overcoming the constraints in supply chain of bio mass pellets and agro- residue and its transport upto to the power plants.
- To consider regulatory issues in biomass co-firing.

### Duration

- The duration of proposed National Mission would be a minimum 5 years.

### Significance

- The proposed National Mission on biomass will also contribute in the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

### Note:

- **The Sub-Groups are also proposed to be formed under the Mission.**

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## 9. Kyasanur forest disease

(Topic- GS Paper III – Science and Technology, Source- Indian Express)

### Why in the news?

- Recently, ICMR-NIV, Pune, collaborated with Molbio Diagnostics Pvt Ltd, Goa, which has developed the microchip-based Truenat™ KFD Point of Care Test (PoCT) for Kyasanur forest disease (KFD), also known as monkey fever.

### About point-of-care test

- The point-of-care test would be useful in quick patient management and controlling further spread of the virus.
- The point-of-care test includes a battery-operated PCR analyser, which is a portable, lightweight and universal cartridge-based sample pre-treatment kit and nucleic acid extraction device that aid in sample processing at the point of care.
- The PoCT was found to be highly sensitive, specific with a limit of detection of up to 10 copies of KFD viral RNA.
- Results on screening of human, monkey and tick specimens demonstrated 100 per cent concordant with the compared assays.

### About Kyasanur forest disease

- It is caused by Kyasanur Forest disease Virus (KFDV).
- It was first identified in 1957 in a sick monkey from the Kyasanur Forest in Karnataka.
- It is endemic to the Indian state of Karnataka.

### Transmission

- To humans, it may occur after a tick bite or contact with an infected animal (a sick or recently dead monkey).

### Treatment and Prevention

- There is no specific treatment for KFD although a vaccine is available.