

## UPSC Daily Current Affairs 7 May 2021

### 1. Dahla Dam

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Taliban has captured Afghanistan's second-biggest dam called **Dahla Dam** after months of fierce fighting in its former bastion of Kandahar.

About Dahla Dam



- It is also known as Arghandab Dam.
- It is located in the Shah Wali Kot District of Kandahar Province in Afghanistan.
- It is said to be the second largest dam in Afghanistan.
- The Dahla Dam is built on the **Arghandab River**.
- It provides irrigation to farmers via a network of canals as well as drinking water for the provincial capital.

### 2. Only President can pick backward classes, says SC, upholds 102nd amendment

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Supreme Court by a majority declared that only the President (read the Centre) can take decisions on declaring socially and educationally backward communities for

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granting reservation and upheld the 102nd constitutional amendment denuding the power of states in this regard.

- A five-judge Constitution bench was unanimous on the validity of the 102nd constitutional amendment but differed on its implication for recognising socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs).

### Observation of Court

- State governments have been expanding the list of SEBCs, the official jargon for “OBC status”, which entitles the recipient community to quota benefits, and the verdict means states will now be restricted to making recommendations to the Centre in favour of the “aspiring” backwards.
- The response of the Centre to the verdict could be interesting.
- It had said the power to identify SEBCs lies with Parliament only with reference to the central list and states can have separate lists.
- “By introduction of Articles 366 (26C) and 342A through the 102nd amendment, the President alone, to the exclusion of all other authorities, is empowered to identify SEBCs.
- It also included them in a list to be published under Article 342A (1), which shall be deemed to include SEBCs in relation to each state and Union territory for the purposes of the Constitution.
- The states can, through their existing mechanisms, or even statutory commissions, only make suggestions to the President or the Commission under Article 338B, for inclusion, exclusion or modification of castes or communities.
- The 102nd amendment was brought to give constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes and Article 366(26C) and 342-A was introduced as per which the President can notify a class as SEBC.

**For More Information Refer DCA - 06-05-2021**

### 3. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) defense initiative.

**(Topic- GS Paper II–International relation, Source- Indian Express)**

#### Why in the news?

- Recently, the Council of the European Union has approved inviting the United States, Canada and Norway to participate in the bloc's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) defense initiative.
- Canada, Norway and the United States of America will be the first third states to be invited to participate in a PESCO project.

#### About Permanent Structured Cooperation

- The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in the area of security and defence policy was established by a Council decision on 11 December 2017, with 25 EU Member States.

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- It offers a legal framework to jointly plan, develop and invest in shared capability projects, and enhance the operational readiness and contribution of armed forces.

### Aims

- The participating Member States' aim is to collaboratively develop a coherent full spectrum force package and make the capabilities available to the following Member States for national and multinational (EU CSDP, NATO, UN, etc.) missions and operations.

### Secretariat

- **European Defence Agency (EDA)** is part of the PESCO secretariat (together with the European External Action Service, including the European Union Military Staff)

### Funding

- PESCO projects are eligible for co-funding from the EU's budget – through the European Defence Fund (EDF) which serves as an incentive for cooperation.

### Significance

- It serves as a platform where PESCO participating Member States nations can identify, assess and consolidate possible projects to make sure they respond to capability gaps and priorities identified in the Capability Development Plan (CDP).
- **European Defence Agency** also facilitates and supports the PESCO project implementation, at the request of Member States, and ensures there is no duplication of efforts, including with NATO.
- Furthermore, it plays a leading role in the annual assessment of PESCO nations' contributions and respect of the binding commitments.

## 4. Union Cabinet approves India-UK migration and mobility partnership

(Topic- GS Paper II–International relation, Source- Hindustan Times)

### Why in the news?

- The Union Cabinet has recently approved memorandum of understanding (MoU) between India and the United Kingdom on migration and mobility partnership.

### Key highlights

- The MoU is aimed at liberalising issuance of visas promoting mobility of students, researchers and skilled professionals and strengthen cooperation on issues related to irregular migration and human trafficking between the two sides, read an official release.

- It would benefit Indian students, academics, and researchers, migrants for professional and economic reasons and those willing to contribute through various projects to the economic development of both countries.
- It can support the innovation ecosystem in both countries by facilitating free flow of talent.

### **Increase Employment**

- The new migration partnership will see both countries benefit from a new scheme for young Indian and British professionals to live and work in one another's countries, thereby boosting work visas for Indian nationals and enhancing migration cooperation between the two nations.
- The agreement will allow thousands of those aged between 18 and 30 years old in India and the UK to work and live in each other's country for up to two years.

## **5. Global Report on Food Crises**

**(Topic- GS Paper II–Social Issue ( Important Report), Source- Indian Express)**

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

- Recently, the United Nation has released the report of **Global Report on Food Crises**.

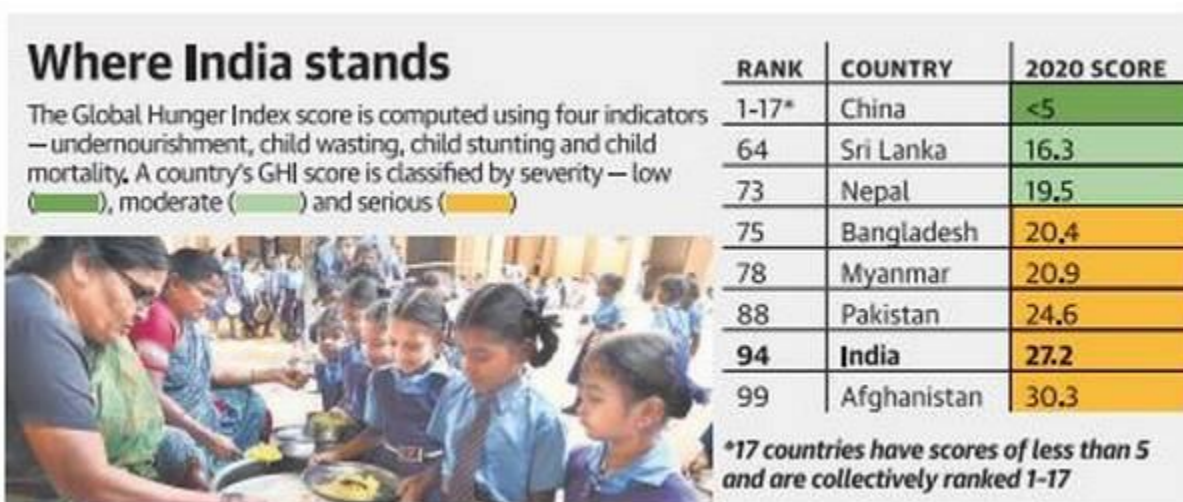
### **Key findings**

- The report focuses on 55 countries that account for 97% of humanitarian assistance, said the magnitude and severity of food crises last year worsened as a result of protracted conflicts, the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, and weather extremes that exacerbated pre-existing fragilities.
- At least 155 million people faced acute hunger in 2020, including 133,000 that needed urgent food to prevent widespread death from starvation -- and the outlook for 2021 is equally grim or worse.
- According to the report, two-thirds of the people in those crisis levels were in 10 countries -- Congo, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, northern Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe and Haiti.
- The 133,000 facing starvation, death and destitution were in Burkina Faso, South Sudan and Yemen.
- **In terms of the prevalence of people facing crisis, emergency or famine levels of food needs**, the report said Central African Republic, South Sudan and Syria had more than half their analyzed populations at the crisis level or worse.
- The five countries -- Afghanistan, Haiti, Lesotho, Yemen and Zimbabwe -- had between 40% and 45% of their populations at those levels.
- According to the report, 40.5 million people in 17 countries faced acute food insecurity last year because of economic shocks including the fallout from the pandemic.

- **Dominique Burgeon, director of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's office in Geneva, said 60% to 80% of the 155 million people facing acute food insecurity depend on agriculture, but last year FAO was able to assist only about 30%.**
- The report presented some other grim statistics from 2020: 75.2 million children under 5 years old living in the 55 countries were stunted in their growth and 15.8 million were wasted, or underweight for their height.

### **India and Global Hunger Index 2020**

- India has the highest prevalence of wasted children under five years in the world, which reflects acute undernutrition.
- India ranks 94 out of 107 countries in the Index, lower than her neighbours such as Bangladesh (75) and Pakistan (88).



- **In 2019 Indian ranked 102 Global Hunger Index**
- The report put India under serious category with the score of 27.2.
- The child stunting rate in India was 37.4 %.
- The child wasting was at 17.3 %.
- The undernourishment rate of India was at 14% and child mortality at 3.7 %.

### **Note:**

- SDG 2 deals with End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

### **6. For Anamalai tribes, it's still an urban blight**

**(Topic- GS Paper II–Social Issue, Source- the Hindu)**

**Why in the news?**



- Recently, the residents of two tribal settlements within the limits of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR), around 100 km from Coimbatore city, were gearing up for the annual festival of their local deity, Vairapattan.

### More on the news

- The Kattupatti and Kuzhipatti settlements of the Pulayar community, together having 150 families, have barely heard of COVID-19.
- But residents are aware that people living outside the forests, especially in cities, have been affected by a disease called “corona”.
- Though the tribal families live a secluded life, the fear of the pandemic has gripped them, too.

### Concern for the Tribal People

- The residents of remote tribal settlements lack awareness about COVID-19.
- Lack of healthcare facilities and testing kits.
- Food Insecurity, Loss of livelihood and Unemployment.
- Loss of livelihoods from Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and Non Timber Forest Produce.
- Tenurial insecurity and non-recognition of forest rights.

### Related Information

- In 2020, six members of two Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (Bondas and Didiayis) in Odisha contracted Covid-19; the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes had sought a report from the state government and has termed it a “matter of grave concern”.
- Also, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) from Andaman contracted Covid-19

### About Anamalai Tiger Reserve

- It is earlier known as Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park and previously as Aanaimalai Wildlife Sanctuary.
- It is a protected area located in the Aanaimalai Hills of Pollachi and Valparai taluks of Coimbatore District and Udumalaipettai taluk in Tiruppur District, Tamil Nadu.
- Major reservoirs like Parambikulam Reservoir, Aliyar Reservoir, Thirumurthi Reservoir, Upper Aliyar Reservoir, Kadambarai, Sholayar Dam and Amaravathi Dam are fed by the perennial rivers which originate from the Sanctuary.
- The tribes are the Kadars, Malasars, Malaimalasar s, Pulaiyars, Muduvars and the Eravallan (Eravalar).

## 7. China shuts down channel for diplomatic dialogue in ongoing row with Australia

(Topic- GS Paper II–International Relations, Source- the Hindu)

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### Why in the news?

- China has recently cut off a channel for diplomatic and trade talks with Australia in a largely symbolic act of fury, following clashes over a wide range of issues including human rights, espionage and the origins of Covid-19.

### More on the news

- Recently, some Australian Commonwealth Government officials launched a series of measures to disrupt the normal exchanges and cooperation between China and Australia out of Cold War mindset and ideological discrimination.
- **Canberra has previously described the China-Australia Strategic Economic Dialogue as one of the "premier bilateral economic meetings with China".**
- China had previously already informally stopped ministerial-level communication between the two countries.

### China and Australia Trade

- According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, China is Australia's biggest trading partner, accounting for 29 per cent of Australia's trade with the world in 2019.
- Chinese investment in Australia plummeted 61% in 2020, the lowest number in six years, according to the Australian National University's Chinese Investment in Australia Database.
- China -- Australia's biggest trading partner -- has already imposed tariffs or disrupted more than a dozen key industries, including wine, barley and coal, decimating exports.
- In the latest volley, the China-Australia Strategic Economic Dialogue was pulled "based on the current attitude" of the Australian government.

## 8. Intellectual property waiver for Covid-19 vaccines

(Topic- GS Paper III–Economics, Source- Indian Express)

### Why in the news?

- The United States recently announced support for waiving intellectual property protection for Covid-19 vaccines.
- United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai said the US will pursue “**text-based negotiations**” on the waiver at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

### Significance

- The IP waiver might open up space for production of Covid vaccines with emergency use authorisations (EUA) — such as those developed by Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Novavax, Johnson & Johnson and Bharat Biotech — on a larger scale in middle-income countries.

- Most production is currently concentrated in high-income countries; production by middle-income countries has been happening through licensing or technology transfer agreements.

### **Earlier proposal from India and South Africa**

- In October 2020, India and South Africa had asked the WTO to waive certain conditions of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement that could impede timely access to affordable medical products to combat Covid-19.
- The countries had asked the TRIPS Council to recommend, “as early as possible”, a waiver on the implementation, application and enforcement of four sections in the second part of the agreement.
- These sections — 1, 4, 5, and 7 — pertain to copyright and related rights, industrial designs, patents, and the protection of undisclosed information.
- The proposal had said that developing countries “especially”, may face institutional and legal difficulties when using flexibilities available in the TRIPS Agreement.

### **India and Patent**

- India moved from product patenting to process patenting in the 1970s, which enabled India to become a significant producer of generic drugs at global scale, and allowed companies like Cipla to provide Africa with anti-HIV drugs in the 1990s.
- But due to obligations arising out of the TRIPS Agreement, India had to amend the Patents Act in 2005, and switch to a product patents regime across the pharma, chemicals, and biotech sectors.

### **Related Information**

#### **About text-based negotiations**

- Text-based negotiations involve negotiators exchanging texts with their preferred wording and then thrashing out a consensus on the working — a fairly long-drawn affair. Negotiations are expected in a mix of virtual and in-person meetings.
- They “will take time given the consensus-based nature of the institution and the complexity of the issues involved.

#### **About Patents and IP rights**

- A patent represents a powerful intellectual property right, and is an exclusive monopoly granted by a government to an inventor for a limited, pre-specified time.
- It provides an enforceable legal right to prevent others from copying the invention.
- Patents can be either process patents or product patents.
- A product patent ensures that the rights to the final product is protected, and anyone other than the patent holder can be restrained from manufacturing it during a specified period, - even if they were to use a different process.
- A process patent enables any person other than the patent holder to manufacture the patented product by modifying certain processes in the manufacturing exercise.



## 9. Russia approves one-dose 'Sputnik Light'

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

### Why in the news?

- Recently, Russia has authorised Sputnik Light, a single dose vaccine against COVID-19, for use.

### About Sputnik Light Vaccine

- It is the first component — recombinant human adenovirus serotype number 26 (rAd26) — of Sputnik V vaccine that has been approved by over 60 countries, including India.
- It will also be effective on new strains of coronavirus”.

### Efficacy

- The Sputnik Light demonstrated 79.4% efficacy.

### Related Information

#### About the 'Sputnik V' vaccine



- Russia named the newly approved vaccine "Sputnik V," in reference to Sputnik 1, the world's first artificial satellite, launched in 1957 during the space race.
- It uses two strains of adenovirus that typically cause mild colds in humans.

### Developed by

- The vaccine has been developed by Moscow's Gamaleya Institute in collaboration with the Russia's defence ministry.

### Efficacy

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- The efficacy of Sputnik V was 92%.

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