

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 02 Jun 2021

1. Gender gap in vaccination

(Topic- GS Paper II – Social Issues, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Recently, as per states report shortage of Covid-19 jabs and people make a mad rush to book vaccination slots; gender divide in the vaccination drive is quite visible across states.

More on the news

- Only four states Kerala, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh have vaccinated more women than men so far.
- As per official data, the gender gap in vaccination is over 4 per cent nationally but high-Covid burden states like Delhi and Uttar Pradesh have over 10 per cent difference in male-female vaccination ratio.

Vaccinations in India by Gender as of May 26, 2021

Male 83,071,923

Female 73,073,573

Others 23,499

State having vaccination more than men

- Two high-burden states Kerala and Karnataka have vaccinated more women than men.
- Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are also in this list.

Widest difference

- Nagaland at 14.3 per cent tops the list with widest gender divide followed by Jammu and Kashmir with 13.76 per cent.
- **States like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh has male-female vaccine difference between 10-13 per cent.**
- The figure is around 11 per cent for Chandigarh.

Reasons behind this Gender Gap

Digital illiteracy

- Due to digital illiteracy, women in many cases do not know how to register for the vaccination on the CoWIN platform.
- They are dependent on the more tech savvy males to do the needful.
- The patriarchal ecosystem that persists in rural areas further amplifies this gap.

Vaccine hesitancy

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- Vaccine hesitancy is also aggravated amongst women due to myths and rumours related to its impact on menstruation and fertility.
- Pregnant and lactating women are hesitant to take the shots due to the lack of information and effective communication advocacy.

Lower Mobility

- Lower mobility and decision-making capacity amongst women may make them less accepting of the vaccine.
- Socio cultural factors that are deeply entrenched in the rural landscape will make it worse.

Way forward

- Gender-related barriers must be adequately addressed in the planning and rollout of vaccines.
- We need to channel our paramedical staff like ASHA and anganwadi workers, midwives, nurses who are thankfully, mostly women.
- These health workers need to be given more incentives so that they can motivate women at the grassroots.
- Larger representation of women at the panchayat level also makes them effective opinion leaders who can mobilise the women to participate in health communication strategies.
- Innovative practices conducted in some states during International Women's Day by organising vaccination melas to make the women feel special are the need of the hour.
- **Mobile vaccination** centers need to be encouraged.

2. Kerala's "Bell of Faith Scheme" for elderly

(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Kerala's 'Bell of Faith' scheme will be recently expanded to the villages to reach senior citizens staying alone.
- Earlier, the scheme was successfully implemented in a number of urban households in Kerala.

About Bell of Faith Scheme:

- It was launched by the Kerala Police in 2018.

Aims

- It aims to provide security to senior citizens staying alone as part of Kerala's Community Policing Scheme.
- Under the Scheme, police have installed a bell in the senior citizens' houses.
- The neighbor will get an alert with an alarm when the senior citizen rings the bell during an emergency.
- The neighbour can immediately rush to the house or contact the police or hospital.

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3. WHO named COVID-19 variants based on Greek alphabets

(Topic- GS Paper III – Health, Source- CNBC 18)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) in February 2020 had officially announced COVID-19 as the name for the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

The Naming of Covid-19 Viruses

- The WHO came up with a name according to the 2015 guidelines between WHO, the World Organization for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- The WHO named it COVID-19 breaking the words coronavirus disease. So, the 'CO' in COVID stands for corona, while 'VI' is for virus and 'D' is for disease.
- The number 19 stands for the year 2019.

Why Greek Alphabets ?

- The WHO, after much deliberation has decided to use Greek alphabets instead of the scientific numerals to identify the variants.
- According to WHO deploying letters like Alpha, Beta and Gamma -- instead of B.1.1.7, B.1.351 and P.1 -- to refer to the variants will make it "easier and more practical" to discuss them with non-scientific audiences."
- Henceforth, the B.1.617.1 and B.1.617.2 variants of the COVID-19, first identified in India in October **2020 will be known as 'Kappa' and 'Delta.'**
- While naming a disease, the WHO has listed out the terms to ensure that geographic locations, people's names, species of animal or food, references to culture, population, industry or occupation, and terms that incite undue fear, are not included.

Variants of Concern

NEW WHO LABEL	PANGO LINEAGE	EARLIEST SAMPLE
Alpha	B.1.1.7	UK (September 2020)
Beta	B.1.351	South Africa (May 2020)
Gamma	P.1	Brazil (November 2020)
Delta	B.1.617.2	India (October 2020)

Variants of Interest

NEW WHO LABEL	PANGO LINEAGE	EARLIEST SAMPLE
Epsilon	B.1.427/B.1.429	US (March 2020)
Zeta	P.2	Brazil (April 2020)
Eta	B.1.525	Many Countries (December 2020)
Theta	P.3	Philippines (January 2021)
Iota	B.1.526	US (November 2020)
Kappa	B.1.617.1	India (October 2020)

The virus got other names too

- Donald Trump, the former president of the United State, had called the virus, 'China Virus.'
- When a new strain was discovered in Brazil, it was called the Brazil variant, followed by the UK variant, South Africa variant and now the Indian variant.
- All this, even as scientists assigned difficult configurations of numbers to the variants, which were understandably quite confusing for the layperson.
- For example, the UK variant, which was discovered in September 2020, was named B.1.1.7.
- The entire purpose of the guidelines would have been defeated if these names had stuck.

4. India receives record FDI in FY21

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

Why in the news?

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recently released a report that India managed to rake in the highest ever foreign direct investment during financial year 2020-21 at \$81.72 billion.
- This happens to be 10 per cent higher than \$74.39 billion in the previous fiscal.

Measures Taken by Government

- Investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country.

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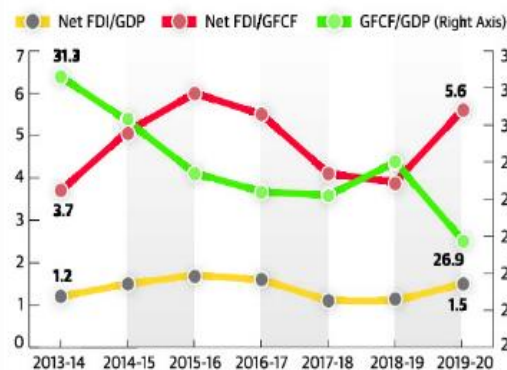
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Foreign investment into India

Item No	No Investment category	2019-20	2020-21	Growth rate (%)
1	Gross inflows/Gross Investments (Items 3+5)	74,390	81,721	9.9
2	Foreign Investment Inflow (Items 4+7)	44,417	80,209	80.6
3	Direct investment to India (items 4+6)	56,006	54,665	-2.4
4	Net Foreign direct investment (Items 3-6)	43,013	43,366	0.8
5	Repatriation/Disinvestment	18,384	27,056	47.2
6	FDI by India (Outward FDI)	12,993	11,299	-13.0
7	Net Portfolio investment	1,403	36,843	2526.0
7.1	(of which) Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs)	552	38,097	6801.6

Source: Reserve Bank of India Bulletin, May 2021, Table No. 34

Net FDI as ratios of GDP and fixed investment



Source: RBI Handbook on Indian Economy, 2020. Note: All figures are at current prices, as in the current series of National Accounts.

What accounts for gross inflow?

- Gross inflows/gross investment” in the RBI report is the same as “total FDI inflow” in the press release, identical to the Commerce Ministry’s estimate.
- The gross inflow consists of -
 - direct investment to India
 - repatriation/disinvestment
- The disaggregation shows that “direct investment to India” has declined by 2.4%.
- Hence, an increase of 47% in “repatriation/disinvestment” entirely accounts for the rise in the gross inflows.

What is repatriation? Why is it so significant?

- FDI inflow increasingly consists of private equity funds, which are usually disinvested after 3-5 years to book profits (per its business model).
- In principle, private equity funds do not make long-term Greenfield investment.
- Similarly, measured on a net basis (that is, “direct investment to India” net of “FDI by India” or, outward FDI from India), direct investment to India has barely risen (0.8%) in 2020-21 over the last year.

Modest contribution

- The surge in total FDI inflow during the pandemic year is entirely explained by booming short-term FIIs in the capital market - and not adding to fixed investment and employment creation.
- For years now, the government has showcased the rise in gross FDI inflows as a badge of the success of its economic policies to counter the widespread criticisms of output and investment slowdown and rising unemployment rates (especially during the last year).
- Between 2013-14 and 2019-20, the ratio of net FDI to GDP has remained just over 1% (left-hand scale), with no discernible rising trend in it.
- Likewise, the proportion of net FDI to gross fixed capital formation (fixed investment) is range-bound between 4% and 6% (left-hand scale).

- These stagnant trends are evident when the economy's fixed investment rate - gross fixed capital formation to GDP ratio - has plummeted from 31.3% in 2013-14 to 26.9% in 2019-20 (right-hand scale).
- Thus, FDI inflow's contribution to domestic output and investment remains modest.

Key highlights of the report

- Singapore was the biggest investor in India last fiscal, accounting for 29 per cent FDI, followed by the United States at 23 per cent and Mauritius at 9 per cent.

Top Investors

- Out of top 10 countries, Saudi Arabia was the top investor in terms of percentage increase during FY21. It invested \$2,816.08 million in comparison to \$89.93 million reported in the previous financial year.

FDI among states

- Gujarat received the highest FDI at 37 per cent of the total equity inflows.
- Maharashtra and Karnataka had the second and third highest flow at 27 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively.

Sectors

- Computer software and hardware segment received the most FDI in FY21, accounting for 44 per cent of total FDI equity inflow.
- Under computer software and hardware segment, the major recipient states during the fiscal under review were Gujarat at 78 per cent, Karnataka at 9 per cent and Delhi at 5 per cent.
- Construction (infrastructure) activities and services sector followed with 13 per cent and 8 per cent share, respectively.
- The major sectors, namely construction (infrastructure) activities, computer software and hardware, rubber goods, retail trading, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and electrical equipment, have recorded more than 100 per cent jump in equity during the FY21 as compared to the previous year.

5. China reports first human case of H10N3 bird flu

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

Why in the news?

- According to the China's National Health Commission, a 41-year-old man in China's eastern province of Jiangsu has been confirmed as the first human case of infection with the H10N3 strain of bird flu.

About H10N3

- It is a low pathogenic or relatively less severe, strain of the virus in poultry.

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- The risk of it spreading on a large scale was very low, the NHC added.
- No other cases of human infection with H10N3 have previously been reported globally.

Related Information

H7N9 bird flu outbreak

- H7N9 bird flu strain had killed around 300 people during 2016-2017.
- The first human case of the H7N9 virus was reported in China in March 2013.
- Following these human cases of the flu continued to be reported throughout April and then dropped to only a few cases during the summer months.

About G4 wine flu virus

- Recently Scientists from China have identified a “recently emerged” strain of influenza virus named G4, that is infecting Chinese pigs and that has the potential of triggering a pandemic.

About G4 Swine flu virus

- The G4 swine flu strain has genes similar to those in the virus that caused the 2009 flu pandemic.
- The G4 strain has the capability of binding to human-type receptors (like, the SARS-CoV-2 virus binds to ACE2 receptors in humans).
- It was able to copy itself in human airway epithelial cells, and it showed effective infectivity and aerosol transmission in ferrets.
- Pigs are intermediate hosts for the generation of pandemic influenza virus.

Background

The 2009 swine flu pandemic

- The WHO declared the outbreak of type A H1N1 influenza virus a pandemic in 2009 when there were around 30,000 cases globally.
- The 2009 pandemic was caused by a strain of the swine flu called the H1N1 virus, which was transmitted from human to human.
- **The symptoms of swine flu include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue.**

6. World Neglected Tropical Diseases

(Topic- GS Paper III – Health, Source- DTE)

Why in the news ?

- Recently, the ongoing 74th World Health Assembly declared January 30 as ‘**World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day**’.
- The proposal to recognise the day was floated by the United Arab Emirates.
- The first World NTD Day was celebrated informally in 2020.

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Related Information

- India has recently joined the world to **Light up Qutub Minar** as a sign of unity to combat the Neglected Tropical Diseases on the second annual World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day.



Why are some tropical diseases called "neglected"?

- The people who are most affected by these diseases are often the poorest populations, living in remote, rural areas, urban slums or conflict zones.
- Neglected tropical diseases persist under conditions of poverty and are concentrated almost exclusively in impoverished populations in the developing world.
- Lacking a strong political voice, people affected by these tropical diseases have a low profile and status in public health priorities.
- Lack of reliable statistics and unpronounceable names of diseases have all hampered efforts to bring them out of the shadows.
- They diseases include dengue, rabies, blinding trachoma, Buruli ulcer, endemic treponematoses (yaws), leprosy (Hansen disease), Chagas disease, human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), leishmaniasis, cysticercosis, dracunculiasis (guinea-worm disease), echinococcosis, foodborne trematode infections, lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis (river blindness), schistosomiasis (bilharziasis), soil-transmitted helminthiases (intestinal worms).

Kills billion of people

- Neglected tropical diseases affect more than 1 billion people, primarily poor populations living in tropical and subtropical climates.

Caused by

- Infections are caused by unsafe water, poor housing conditions and poor sanitation.

London Declaration on NTDs:

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- It was adopted on 30th January, 2012 to recognise the global burden of NTDs.

India and Neglected Tropical Diseases

- India is home to the world's largest absolute burden of at least 11 of this major neglected tropical disease, including dengue, hookworm disease and rabies.
- These diseases debilitate, disfigure, and can even be fatal to those affected.
- India has successfully eliminated certain infectious diseases—such as guinea worm, trachoma, and yaws—in recent year

Recent policies on neglected diseases research in India

- **The National Health Policy (2017)** sets an ambition to stimulate innovation to meet health needs and ensure that new drugs are affordable for those who need them most, but it does not specifically tackle neglected diseases
- **The National Policy on Treatment of Rare Diseases (2018)** includes infectious tropical diseases and identifies a need to support research on treatments for rare diseases.
- It has not yet prioritised diseases and areas for research funding or how innovation would be supported.
- **The Draft National Pharmaceutical Policy (2017)** states that one of its objectives is to create an enabling environment to develop and produce innovator drugs, but the policy does not mention drugs for neglected tropical diseases.
- **The National Biotechnology Development Plan (2015-2020)** seeks to encourage the preclinical and clinical development of vaccines against rotavirus, cholera, typhoid, rabies (human (DNA) based), malaria, dengue, tuberculosis, and Japanese encephalitis.

7. BIS SDO Recognition Scheme

(Topic- GS Paper II – Governance, Source- PIB)

Why in the news?

- Recently, RDSO (Research Design & Standards Organization) of Indian Railways has become the FIRST Institution to be declared SDO under “One Nation One Standard” mission.

About BIS SDO Recognition Scheme

- To attain “Nation One Standard” vision of Govt. of India, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the National Standards Body, has launched a scheme which provides for “Recognition of SDO”.
- It aims at aggregating and integrating the existing capabilities and dedicated domain specific expertise available with various organizations in the country engaged in standards development in their specific sectors, and enables convergence of all standard development activities in the country resulting in “One National Standard for One Subject”.
- The initiative set to usher in faster transition from development of technology & innovation stage to actual use on ground.

About Research Design & Standards Organization

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- It is the sole R&D Wing of Ministry of Railways and one of India's leading Standard formulating Body undertaking standardization work for railway sector.
- It is situated at Lucknow.

Also in news

WHO gives nod to China's Sinovac jab

- The World Health Organization has recently approved the Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use.
- Last month **Sinopharm became the first Chinese vaccine** to be approved by the WHO.
- The WHO has also given emergency use listing to vaccines being made by Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and the AstraZeneca jab being produced in India, South Korea and the EU, which it counts separately.

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