

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 15 Jun 2021

1. Tulu Language

(Topic- GS Paper I –Art and Culture, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Recently various organisations initiated a Twitter campaign demanding official language status to Tulu in Karnataka and Kerala and received an overwhelming response.

About Tulu

- Tulu is a textbook example of linguistic discrimination.
- Tulu is a Dravidian language whose speakers are concentrated in two coastal districts of Karnataka and in Kasaragod district of Kerala.
- The present-day Tulu linguistic majority area is confined to the region of Tulu Nadu, which comprises the districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi in Karnataka and the northern part of Kasaragod district of Kerala up to the river Payaswani, or Chandragiri.
- The cities of Mangaluru, Udupi and Kasaragod are the epicentres of Tulu culture.
- The Tulu-speaking people are larger in number than speakers of Manipuri and Sanskrit, which have the Eighth Schedule status.

Census

- As per the 2011 Census report, there are 18,46,427 Tulu-speaking people in India

Tulu in Education

- The Karnataka government introduced Tulu as a language in schools a few years ago. According to the state education department, in the year 2020, a total of 956 children from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts wrote Tulu as the **third optional language in SSLC (Class 10) examination**.
- In 2014-15, 18 students chose the language as the third optional when it was introduced.
- Last year, 'Jai Tulunad' conducted an online campaign demanding to include Tulu in the new National Education Policy (NEP).

Demands of languages for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule

- At present, there are demands for inclusion of 38 more languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.
- These are:- (1) Angika, (2) Banjara, (3) Bazika, (4) Bhojpuri, (5) Bhoti, (6) Bhotia, (7) Bundelkhandi (8) Chhattisgarhi, (9) Dhatki, (10) English, (11) Garhwali (Pahari), (12) Gondi, (13) Gujjar/Gujjari (14) Ho, (15) Kachachhi, (16) Kamtapuri, (17) Karbi, (18) Khasi, (19) Kodava (Coorg), (20) Kok Barak, (21) Kumaoni (Pahari), (22) Kurak, (23) Kurmali, (24) Lepcha, (25) Limbu, (26) Mizo (Lushai), (27) Magahi, (28) Mundari, (29)

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Nagpuri, (30) Nicobarese, (31) Pahari (Himachali), (32) Pali, (33) Rajasthani, (34) Sambalpuri/Kosali, (35) Shaurseni (Prakrit), (36) Siraiki, (37) Tenyidi and (38) Tulu.

About Eighth Schedule of the Constitution

- As per Articles 344(1) and 351 of the Indian Constitution the Eighth Schedule to the Indian Constitution contains a list of 22 scheduled languages.
- These are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Sindhi (added by 21st Amendment Act, 1967), Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali (added by 71st Amendment Act, 1992), Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Santal (added by 92nd Amendment 2003).
- The list had originally 14 languages only but subsequently, through amendments 8 new languages were added.
- Article 29 of the Constitution provides that a section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture have the right to conserve the same.

Note:

- **Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), in his book, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Or South-Indian Family of Languages**, called Tulu as “one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family”

2. G7 accommodates Indian stand on need for Internet curbs

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, India’s tough negotiations on the joint communique issued by G7 and Guest Countries at the session on Open Societies had ensured that the original language criticising “Internet hutdowns” was amended to include New Delhi’s concerns.

More on the news

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Global worry

The statement from the G7 and Guest Countries indirectly addresses Internet blackouts in various parts of the world, including India

■ "We are at a critical juncture, facing threats to freedom and democracy from rising authoritarianism, electoral interference, corruption, economic coercion, manipulation of information, including disinformation, online harms and cyber attacks, politically motivated Internet shutdowns, human rights violations and abuses, terrorism and violent extremism."



- The explanation came after the ‘**G7 and Guest Countries: 2021 Open Societies Statement**’ referred to “politically motivated Internet shutdowns”, which indirectly addresses Internet blackouts in various parts of the world including India.
- Communication shutdowns were also witnessed in other parts of the world, including Hong Kong where a protest against Chinese security laws intensified during 2019

Internet Blackout in India

- Kashmir has experienced Internet and mobile telephony shutdown since Article 370 was amended on August 5, 2019.
- Similar communication shutdowns were witnessed in Delhi and Assam during the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act during 2019-2020 and the farmer’s protest.

Loss of Economy

- A UK-based digital privacy and security research group, Top10VPN, noted in its report titled Global Cost of Internet Shutdowns that in 2020, internet shutdowns in India cost the economy \$2.8 billion, almost double compared with 2019.
- India restricted internet use more than any other nation, with 8,927 hours of blacked out or curbed bandwidth access during the year, Bloomberg reported, citing the report.

Freedom House Index ratings

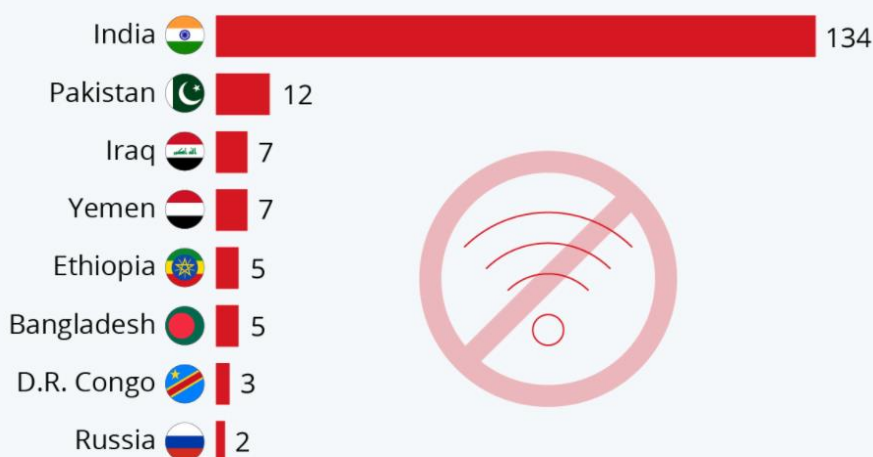
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The Countries Shutting Down The Internet The Most

Number of internet shutdowns by country in 2018*



* An internet shutdown occurs when someone (usually the government) intentionally disrupts the internet or mobile apps to control what people say or do.

Source: Access Now



statista

- In terms of internet freedom worldwide, Iceland ranked first with 95 index points, according to the Freedom House Index's report titled Internet freedom in selected countries in 2020.
- China occupied the last place, scoring only ten index points based on various factors including obstacles to access, limits on content and violations of user rights.
- In 2019, according to Freedom House Index ratings, India was labelled a partially free democracy with a score of 55 points out of 100 on the freedom of internet parameters.

Laws pertaining to Internet Shutdown

- Home Affairs Departments in the states are mostly the authorities that enforce shutdowns, drawing powers from the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017.
- Powers have now been given to the Secretary of the Union Government, Secretary of the state government, to issue orders related to Internet shutdown.
- Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 has enabled many of the shutdowns in the recent past, especially until the time the telecom suspension Rules came into force in 2017.
- The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, allows central and state governments to prevent the transmission of messaging during a "public emergency or in the interest of public safety", or "in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state".

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- The Information Technology Act (India's principal information technology sector law), has provided limited power to the government to issue individual web content blocking orders, instead of a larger suspension of interest itself.

3. IMD, ICMR launch expert committee to eliminate malaria in India

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, Malaria No More, a non-governmental organisation, in collaboration with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is creating an India Interagency Expert Committee on Malaria and Climate (IEC) to explore and advance climate-based solutions for accelerating malaria elimination in India.
- The IEC's launch is part of a global initiative - Forecasting Healthy Futures - to develop weather data-informed strategies and policies to improve health outcomes and accelerate progress against malaria and other deadly mosquito-borne diseases.

Significance of the Committee

- They will define and operationalise sophisticated climate-based malaria prediction tools that will be tailored to the Indian context to further propel progress toward the 2030 goal.
- By combining meteorological information with the information from the health sector, we can examine micro-trends and predict malaria patterns, and accelerate our national progress towards its elimination.
- The Interagency Expert Committee announced today will function as a highly effective platform to accomplish this objective."

Forecasting model for Malaria

- The e IEC will focus on improving models like the one '**Malaria No More**' developed in **Odisha state**, which uses a multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary approach to identify and prioritise areas of scalable and sustainable impact to improve malaria control and prevention.
- **Malaria No More's weather-based prediction model** is designed to produce data-driven solutions to guide planning of national malaria prevention campaigns, test and treatment interventions, advanced positioning of medical products, and the deployment of community health workers.
- The forecasting model uses advanced weather data, health information, and deep learning algorithms, and produces practical visualisation outputs for local decision-making in the pilot districts of Koraput and Malkangiri in Odisha.

About Malaria

- It is caused by Plasmodium parasites.
- The parasites are spread to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes, called "malaria vectors",

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- **The World Malaria Day is observed on 25th April.**

4. Indian labs widen net for a mutant form of Delta variant

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

Why in the news ?

- Recently, an emerging form of the Delta variant called AY1 or B.1.617.2.1. has been found in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka.

About AY1

- It is also called B.1.617.2.1 with a mutation called K417N.
- It has previously been identified in the Beta variant — first identified in South Africa.
- **It is a variant of Delta (B.1.617.2).**
- This is an international Variant of Concern (VOC), marked by being highly infectious and significantly able to reduce the potency of vaccines.
- The Delta variant is now regarded as the most prevalent variant in India, comprising nearly 31% of the 21,000 community samples processed until late May.

5. India begins 'Extension of Hospitals' project to fight Covid

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

Why in the news?

- India has recently started project 'Extension of Hospitals' in various states to plug a major health infrastructure gap in India's fight against Covid-19, especially in rural areas and smaller towns.

Key highlights

- Modular hospitals are an extension of hospital infrastructure and can be built adjacent to an existing hospital building.

Need of the 'Extension of Hospitals' project

- As Covid-19 cases surged in different parts of the country, infrastructure in hospitals was under immense pressure.
- Keeping in view of the need, innovative modular hospitals came as a huge relief amidst the crisis.
- It has been implemented by the office of Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA)
- He invited private sector companies, donor organizations, and individuals to support the initiative along with various other projects of national importance.
- The PSA office identified requirements of close to 50 hospitals in states where the highest numbers of Covid-19 cases were reported.

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- The office of PSA has been actively working towards securing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) support to implement these projects in different areas across the nation.

Related Information

MediCAB hospitals

- The Modulus Housing, a start-up incubated at Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) developed the MediCAB hospitals.
- This enables building a 100-bedded extension facility in 3-weeks' time.
- MediCAB hospitals are designed with a dedicated zone of Intensive Care Units (ICUs) that can accommodate various life-support equipment and medical devices.
- These rapidly deployable hospitals will plug a major health infrastructure gap in India's fight against Covid-19, especially in rural areas and smaller towns.
- The first batch of 100 bedded hospitals is being commissioned at Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh); Amravati, Pune, and Jalna (Maharashtra); Mohali (Punjab), and a 20-bed hospital at Raipur (Chhattisgarh). Bengaluru (Karnataka) will have one each of 20, 50, and 100-beds in the first phase.

6. China, India, Pak. expanding nuclear arsenal'

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

Why in the news?

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2021 has been recently published.

Key highlights of the Year book

- China is in the middle of a significant modernisation and expansion of its nuclear weapon inventory, and India and Pakistan also appear to be expanding their nuclear arsenals.
- According to the yearbook, India possessed an estimated 156 nuclear warheads at the start of 2021, compared with 150 at the start of last year, while Pakistan had 165 warheads, up from 160 in 2020.
- China's nuclear arsenal consisted of 350 warheads, up from 320 at the start of 2020.
- The nine nuclear armed states - the U.S., Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea - together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons at the start of 2021.
- Russia and the U.S. together possessed over 90% of global nuclear weapons.

Related Information

- According to a recent report by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) India's arms imports came down by a third (about 33%) between 2011-2015 and 2016-2020.
- India remains the second highest importer, only behind Saudi Arabia.

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Arms Suppliers to India

- Russia is the largest arms supplier to India in both periods (2011-2015 and 2016-2020).
- However, Russia's share of Indian arms imports fell from 70% to 49%.
- France and Israel were the second and third largest arms suppliers in 2016–20. India's arms imports from France increased by 709% while those from Israel rose by 82%.
- The USA became the fourth largest supplier for the period 2016-20. It was the second largest arms supplier to India in 2011–15.

About Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

- It is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- It was established in 1966 at Stockholm (Sweden).
- It provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

7. Consumer inflation quickens to 6.3%

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, rising fuel and edible oil costs sent India's wholesale prices inflation soaring to a record 12.94% in May, up from 10.5% in April, and nudged retail inflation to a six-month high of 6.3%, going past the central bank's tolerance threshold of 6%.

Key points

- Consumers experienced an inflation of 11.58% for the '**fuel and light**' category in May, with urban India bearing a bigger hit of 14.24% on the same account.
- Food inflation reheated to 5.1% from just 1.96% in April.
- Overall retail prices, however, saw a sharper spurt in rural areas from 3.75% in April to 6.5% in May, while it was less pronounced in urban India at a little more than 6% from 4.7% in April, as per the National Statistical Office.
- At the wholesale level, fuel and power inflation nearly quadrupled to 37.6% from the 9.75% recorded in March this year, and is significantly higher than the 20.94% mark obtained in April.
- Manufactured products' inflation rose to 10.83% from 9% in April.

Reason for high inflation

- The high rate of inflation in May 2021 is primarily due to low base effect and rise in prices of crude petroleum, mineral oils viz. petrol, diesel, naphtha, furnace oil etc. and manufactured products when compared with the corresponding month of the previous year

Related Information

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About Inflation

- Inflation refers to the rise in the prices of most goods and services of daily or common use, such as food, clothing, housing, recreation, transport, consumer staples, etc.
- It is an indicative of the decrease in the purchasing power of a unit of a country's currency which could ultimately lead to a deceleration in economic growth.
- However, a moderate level of inflation is required in the economy to ensure that production is promoted.

Who measures Inflation in India?

- Inflation is measured by a central government authority, which is in charge of adopting measures to ensure the smooth running of the economy.
- In India, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation measures inflation.
- In India, inflation is primarily measured by two main indices –
 - a. WPI (Wholesale Price Index)
 - b. CPI (Consumer Price Index)

Inflation and RBI

- To control the price rise, the Centre in 2016 gave a mandate to the RBI to keep the retail inflation at 4% with a margin of 2% on either side for a five-year period ending 31st March, 2021.
- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) tracks the change in retail prices of goods and services which households purchase for their daily consumption.
- The inflation target for the period 1st April, 2021 to 31st March, 2026 under the Reserve Bank of India Act 1934 has been kept at the same level as was for previous 5 years.

Background

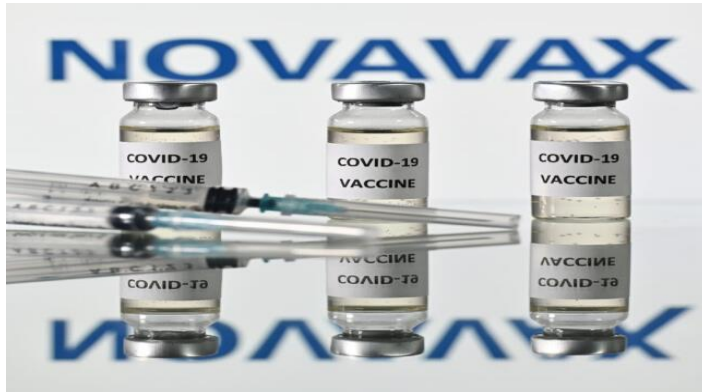
- The central bank and the government agreed in 2015 on a policy framework that stipulated a primary objective of ensuring price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth.

Flexible Inflation Target

- **The Flexible Inflation Target (FIT) was adopted in 2016.**
- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 was amended to provide a statutory basis for a FIT framework.
- The amended Act provides for the inflation target to be set by the Government, in consultation with the RBI, once every five years.
- Trend inflation had fallen from above 9% before flexible-inflation targeting (FIT) to a range of 3.8-4.3 % during FIT, indicating that 4% is the appropriate level of the inflation target.

Also in news

Novavax COVID-19 Vaccine



- Recently, U.S. vaccine manufacturer Novavax said its COVID-19 vaccine had shown an overall efficacy of 90.4% in trials in the U.S. and Mexico.
- It will be another vaccine to the world's arsenal against the disease, which has killed close to 4 million people.
- Trials have already occurred in the U.K. and South Africa.
- **In India, the vaccine is slated to be produced in partnership with the Serum Institute of India (SII), under the name Covavax.**
- Earlier in June, the Drugs Controller General of India had given permission to SII to go ahead with Phase 2/3 trials.