



CURRENT AFFAIRS

06 TO 11
MAY



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ANTI-DUMPING DUTIES

- In the three years there has been a noticeable rise, in anti-dumping duties **imposed** by the **Finance Ministry** in India. More than a third of these duties were aimed at products made by either one producer or two producers mainly in the chemical sector. A significant portion of these duties 60% were imposed on goods originating from China while 26% targeted products from China and at least one other country.
- The **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)** suggested dumping duties in 92 cases with about 33% of these involving products made by a single domestic producer or at most two producers. Interestingly the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) approved recommendations for dumping duties in half of these cases.
- The Finance Ministry has been more open, to accepting ADD recommendations with an acceptance rate of 86% in FY24 from 42% in previous years despite concerns about how it may affect other industries.
- Anti-Dumping Duties (ADD) are **tariffs imposed by a government on imported goods that are being sold at a price lower than their fair market value, a practice known as "dumping."** The purpose of anti-dumping duties is to **protect domestic industries from unfair competition** by ensuring that **imported goods are not sold at artificially low prices**, which could harm domestic producers. These duties are typically levied by the importing country's government following an investigation by relevant authorities to determine if dumping has occurred and if it is causing or threatening to cause material injury to the domestic industry.

- The reason for implementing ADDs is to **combat dumping**, which when **goods are exported at prices below their value—a practice deemed unfair**. DGTR investigates cases. Suggests ADDs if there's proof of significant harm to local industries. CBIC has **three months** to either **approve** or **reject** DGTRs recommendations.



GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST)



Recently Finance Minister discussed the advantages of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India highlighting its focus on helping the stimulating economic activity. She credited the rise, in GST collections to a boost in engagement. Pointed out reductions in GST rates for essentials like hair oil, soaps, electrical appliances and movie tickets since its inception. It is noted a decrease in the weighted average GST rate from 14.4% in 2017 to 11.6% in 2019 due to ongoing tax rate adjustments.

Also acknowledged the National Anti Authority's role in ensuring that consumers benefit from tax savings.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a type of sales tax indirectly imposed on goods and services. Companies incorporate the GST into the product price. Customers pay for the item inclusive of the tax. The portion collected as GST is then sent to the government. In India GST has replaced taxes, like excise duty, VAT and services tax. It is a tax system that applies at stages based on destination ensuring a unified taxation structure, across the country.

Moreover various essential goods and services have been exempted under the GST framework aiding sectors such as healthcare, education and agriculture. The minister praised the business processes and reduced compliance burden for MSMEs brought about by the tax system. The implementation of GST has facilitated integration of India's markets by improving state trade and cutting logistics costs through initiatives like e invoicing and E way bills. Also highlighted that the consolidation of taxes and cesses, under GST was part of efforts led by Prime Minister to streamline taxation systems and drive economic progress.





WEST NILE FEVER

The Kerala government raised a warning, about West Nile fever following news of a fatality. Around eight cases in Kozhikode, Malappuram and Thrissur districts has been registered. Cases have been sporadically reported in these regions since 2011 with incidents prompting increased vigilance.

West Nile fever

- West Nile Virus (WNV) is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes. It is caused by a flavivirus, which is related to viruses that also cause diseases, like St. Louis encephalitis, Japanese encephalitis and yellow fever. It is commonly found in regions such as Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America and West Asia where mosquito populations active. Temperatures are favourable for the virus to spread.

Indian Scenario:

- In India, cases of WNV have been recorded in states since 1952 in Mumbai. The virus has been identified in both mosquitoes and humans across areas indicating its presence and potential for transmission.

Transmission:

- Mosquitoes are the carriers of WNV with birds serving as hosts for the virus. Infected mosquitoes spread the virus to humans and animals through bites.

Symptoms:

- It can vary from flu symptoms to severe neurological conditions like encephalitis or meningitis. While most cases show no symptoms severe cases can be deadly for people with weakened systems.

Preventive measures:

- It include monitoring systems to identify cases in animals warning systems for public health authorities and deferral or testing of blood donors in affected regions. At present there is no treatment or vaccine, for WNV; therefore supportive care remains crucial in managing severe cases.



LPG PRICE HIKE AND SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS IN INDIA

09/05/2024

Background and Government Initiatives:

Based on the 2014-2015 ACCESS survey conducted by Council of Energy, Environment and Water, it was noted that LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) emerged as the preferred fuel source. However its high cost has hindered its adoption in many areas. In response, to this challenge the Indian government launched initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and Pahal scheme. These programs aim to boost LPG usage while reducing reliance on fuels like wood and dung which pose health and environmental risks. The focus of these efforts is on assisting 10 million households by offering subsidies and incentives to facilitate a transition, towards LPG use.

Current Situation and Challenges:

With these attempts the increase in prices for LPG poses a challenge to its widespread use. India stands out with the price of ₹300 per litre among 54 countries surveyed making it harder for people to afford and sustain its usage. This especially affects regions like Jalpaiguri, where many rely on paying jobs in tea estates. A study conducted by Neeraj and Chhetri in West Bengal revealed that due to the cost of LPG people are now turning back to using firewood which has negative impacts, on both the environment and the economy.

Local Dependencies and Ecological Impact:

Relying heavily on firewood not only puts stress on the environment but also poses threats, to wildlife leads to deforestation and puts individuals at risk of dangerous encounters with animals. The piece highlights the importance of exploring options that are both financially sound and environmentally friendly like strategically planting more shade trees in tea farms and promoting collaborative efforts among various stakeholders, for improved management of resources.

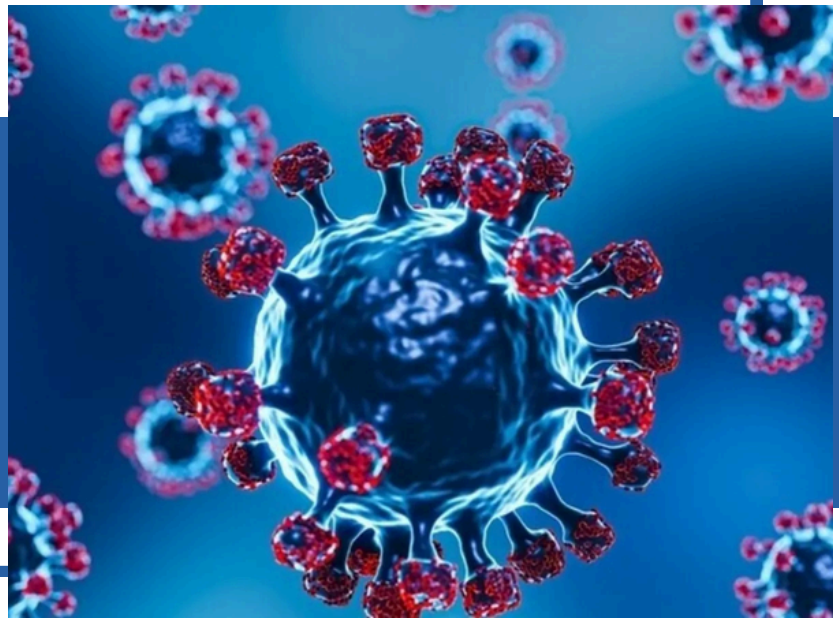
Future Directions:

The article recommends government intervention to stabilize the costs of LPG and investigate eco options to replace firewood. This involves encouraging the adoption of fuel technologies and implementing environmental preservation measures to address the social and economic consequences of expensive LPG prices and environmental harm.



10/05/2024

UNDERSTANDING THE FLiRT COVID-19 VARIANTS



A New Challenge in the Pandemic Cycle

The recent surge in COVID-19 cases due to the emergence of new variants, specifically KP.2 and KP1.1, known as the FLiRT variants, has signaled a shift in the pandemic's behavior. These variants, descendants of the Omicron JN.1, have been identified in the U.S., U.K., South Korea, New Zealand, and India, raising concerns about another wave of infections. The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) reported 238 cases of KP.2 and 30 cases of KP1.1 in India.

The FLiRT variants, particularly KP.2, demonstrate a higher resistance to immunity from vaccines and previous infections. Unlike endemic diseases that remain stable, COVID-19 is proving to be a cyclical disease with periodic spikes. The KP.2 variant, more prevalent in countries like the U.S. and U.K., is noted for its profound immune evasion capabilities. Preliminary research from Japan showed that KP.2 could bypass immunity from the latest vaccines and prior infections with JN.1, its ancestor.

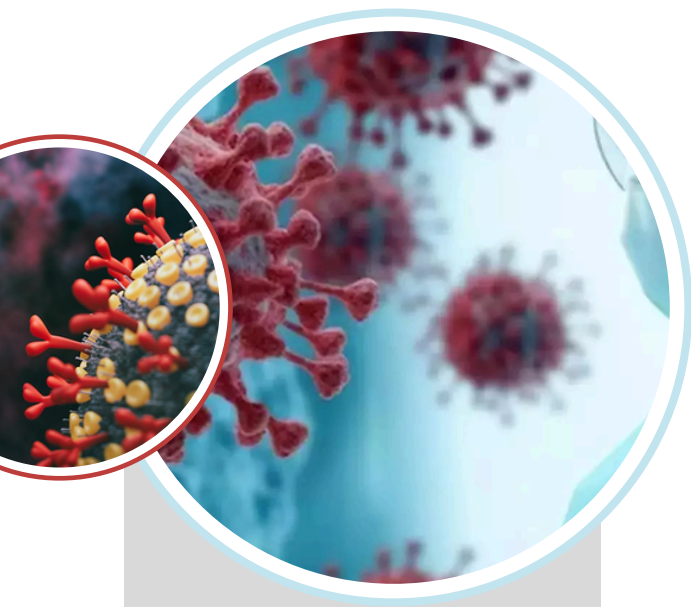
Way Forward

Despite the challenges posed by these variants, current vaccines continue to offer protection against severe COVID-19 illness. However, the rapid mutation of the virus necessitates updates in vaccine formulations. Interestingly, AstraZeneca announced the withdrawal of its COVID-19 vaccine due to a surplus of updated vaccines and concerns over rare side effects.

In India, a resurgence in COVID-19 cases was observed in April, with a significant positivity rate compared to March. While it's too early to attribute all new cases to the FLiRT variants, the consistent rise in infections highlights the ongoing risk, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Given this backdrop, the approach to managing COVID-19 involves maintaining standard precautions like hygiene, masking in crowded areas, and vaccination. The challenge is not just the direct impact of COVID-19 but the broader health implications, including Long COVID symptoms like brain fog and fatigue. In conclusion,

the emergence of the FLiRT variants marks a new phase in the COVID-19 pandemic, demanding vigilance and adaptation in public health strategies to mitigate the impact of these recurrent waves.



Inter-Services **Organisations** (Command, Control and **Discipline) Bill, 2023**



Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill, 2023

The Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill, 2023, is a pivotal step towards enhancing the operational efficacy and administrative efficiency of India's defence forces. Introduced by the Minister of State for Defence, during the Budget Session, this Bill addresses significant challenges in the disciplinary and administrative management of personnel across the Army, Air Force, and Navy within joint services organizations like the National Defence Academy (NDA), National Defence College (NDC), and the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC).

- **Current Challenges and Rationale for the Bill:** Currently, disciplinary actions for service personnel are governed by the Air Force Act, 1950, the Army Act, 1950, and the Navy Act, 1957, limiting the power of officers from one service to discipline personnel of another. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies, including financial costs and delays in disciplinary proceedings when personnel from different services are involved in the same incident. The Bill aims to unify command and control, thus streamlining proceedings and fostering a disciplined environment.

Key Provisions of the Bill:

- The Bill empowers the central government to establish new inter-services organisations and gives the commander-in-chief or the officer-in-command disciplinary and administrative powers over all attached personnel.

- It ensures that personnel remain governed by their respective service Acts even while serving in inter-services organisations.
- The central government retains the authority to issue directives on matters of national security or general administration, enhancing central oversight and coordination.

Impact: The introduction of this Bill is concurrent with discussions on the theatre command system, which aims to integrate the capabilities of the three services under a unified operational command for specific geographical regions. By standardizing disciplinary procedures and command structures, the Bill will facilitate the effective management of these theatre commands, ensuring unified action and decision-making.

Potential Concerns:

While the Bill streamlines command and control, disparities in the rules of the service Acts for similar offences could still pose challenges. Uniformity in disciplinary actions across services needs careful consideration to avoid any perception of unfair treatment among personnel.

Overall, the **Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill, 2023**, is expected to yield tangible benefits, including quicker case resolutions and enhanced integration among the armed forces, contributing to more effective national defense and security operations.