

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Edition: International | Table of Contents

<p>Page 01 Syllabus : GS 2 : Governance</p>	<p>Centre plans to take caste count during Census</p>
<p>Page 03 Syllabus : Prelims Fact</p>	<p>First batch of elephants begins journey to Mysuru to take part in Dasara festivities</p>
<p>Page 04 Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations</p>	<p>PM begins Poland visit, says it will help forge more vibrant relations</p>
<p>Page 06 Syllabus : GS 3 : Governance and Social Justice</p>	<p>'WHO investigating suspected new polio strain in Meghalaya'</p>
<p>Location In News</p>	<p>Banni Grasslands of Kachchh</p>
<p>Page 09 : Editorial Analysis: Syllabus : GS 3 : Social Justice – Health</p>	<p>Imports weaken Indian pharma</p>
<p>International Organizations</p>	<p>Topic: Arctic Council</p>

The Union government is considering whether to include caste enumeration in the next Census amid demands from political parties.

- ▶ While a caste-wise population count hasn't been conducted since independence, past attempts, like the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census, were found to be inaccurate, delaying the Census further.

Centre plans to take caste count during Census

A column on caste in the survey form is being considered, says a top government source; move comes amid persistent demands from Congress and other parties; the Census, last held in 2011 and scheduled to be completed in two phases, remains indefinitely delayed; demand to conduct caste census one of the reasons for the delay, says the source

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union government is yet to take a call on conducting the next Census, but active discussion is on to expand the data collection to include caste enumeration, a top government source told *The Hindu*.

"Discussions are on to include a column to record the caste of people during the next Census exercise. No decision has been taken yet," the source said.

The move comes amid persistent demands by the Congress and other political parties, including partners in the ruling National Democratic Alliance, to record caste.

"One of the reasons that has indefinitely delayed the Census is also the demand by political parties to conduct a caste census. Any wrong narrative can upset the whole exercise," the source said.

Other than enumerating the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), a caste-wise count of population as part of the Census has not been done in Independent India.

In 2011, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) conducted the first-ever caste count, separate from the Census exercise, but the findings were never made public.

In 2021, the Union government submitted an affidavit in the Supreme

Past attempts

Other than enumeration of SCs and STs, the caste-wise count of population as part of the Census has not been done in Independent India

- In 2011, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) conducted the first-ever caste count, separate from the Census exercise, but the findings were never made public



- In 2015, the Congress government in Karnataka commissioned a caste census, the report of which has not been made public

Court that the caste data enumerated in the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 was fraught with "mistakes and inaccuracies".

The total number of

castes, according to the 1931 Census, was 4,147 and the SECC compiled more than 46 lakh castes, sub-castes and names.

"Assuming that some castes may bifurcate into

sub-castes, the total number cannot be exponentially high to this extent," the affidavit read, adding that the data cannot be relied on for reservation in education, employment or elections to local authorities.

The Census, last held in 2011, was scheduled to be undertaken in two phases: houselisting and housing schedule in 2020 and population enumeration in 2021, but it was indefinitely delayed, initially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Population Register (NPR) is also to be updated simultaneously with the first phase of the Census.

The next Census will also be the first digital Cen-

sus where respondents will have the option to fill the questionnaire on their own.

Lapsed deadline

The deadline to freeze administrative boundaries of districts, tehsils, towns and municipal bodies, among others, lapsed on June 30 this year. The order to freeze the boundaries, usually issued three months before the first phase of Census, has been extended 10 times since 2019.

Bihar was one of the first States to conduct and publish a caste census report in 2023. Collected in offline and digital modes, the enumerators were given a list of 215 categories,

from which people had to choose their caste.

Earlier in 2015, the Congress government in Karnataka commissioned a caste census, the report of which has not been made public so far.

The 31 questions for the first phase – houselisting and housing schedule – were notified on January 9, 2020.

As many as 28 questions have been finalised for the second phase – population enumeration – but are yet to be notified. The final set of questions for both the phases were asked during a pre-test exercise in 2019 in 76 districts in 36 States and Union Territories, covering a population of more than 26 lakh.

Ongoing Discussions for Caste Enumeration in Census

- ▶ The Union government is actively discussing whether to include caste enumeration in the next Census.
- ▶ The demand for a caste census is being raised by various political parties, including those in the ruling alliance.
- ▶ No final decision has been made yet regarding caste data inclusion in the Census.

Historical Context and Previous Efforts

- ▶ India has not conducted a caste-wise population count, except for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), since independence.
- ▶ A separate caste census was carried out in 2011 but was never published, and the data was found to be inaccurate.
- ▶ The 1931 Census recorded 4,147 castes, while the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) identified more than 46 lakh castes and sub-castes.

Challenges and Concerns

- ▶ Concerns about errors in caste data led the government to declare the 2011 caste enumeration unreliable.
- ▶ Political parties' demands for a caste census have contributed to the delay of the Census.

Digital and Delayed Census

- ▶ The upcoming Census, scheduled originally for 2021, was delayed due to the pandemic and other factors.
- ▶ It will be India's first digital Census, allowing respondents to fill the questionnaire online.
- ▶ The boundary freeze deadline for administrative divisions lapsed on June 30, 2024, after being extended multiple times.

Caste Census Initiatives in States

- ▶ Bihar completed and published its caste census in 2023.
- ▶ Other states like Karnataka also conducted caste censuses, but their reports remain unpublished.

Benefits and Challenges associated with caste census:

- ▶ **Potential Benefits of Caste Census Informed Policy Making:** Provides accurate data for targeted policies and programs aimed at reducing inequalities.
 - **Enhanced Affirmative Action:** Facilitates better planning of reservation quotas and resource allocation for marginalised communities.
 - **Social Welfare Programs:** Helps tailor welfare schemes to specific needs of various caste groups, improving their effectiveness.
 - **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Enables evidence-based decisions for socio-economic development and social justice.
 - **Challenges Associated Data Accuracy:** Risks of inaccuracies and misclassification in caste data, leading to unreliable statistics.
 - **Political Sensitivity:** Potential for caste data to be misused for political gain or to fuel caste-based divisions.
 - **Administrative Complexity:** Increased administrative burden and cost of collecting and managing detailed caste data.
 - **Resistance from Some Groups:** Opposition from groups that believe caste enumeration may exacerbate social divides.

The first batch of nine caparisoned elephants that will take part in the Mysuru Dasara festivities in October began their journey from the Veeranahosahalli gate on the outskirts of the Nagarahole Tiger Reserve to the city on Wednesday.

First batch of elephants begins journey to Mysuru to take part in Dasara festivities

The Hindu Bureau

MYSURU

The first batch of nine caparisoned elephants that will take part in the Mysuru Dasara festivities in October began their journey from the Veeranahosahalli gate on the outskirts of the Nagarahole Tiger Reserve to the city on Wednesday.

Signalling the countdown to the Dasara celebrations, the elephants led by 58-year-old tusker Abhimanyu, who is slated to carry the golden howdah during the *Jamboo Savari*, embarked on 'Gajapayana' - the stately march from the jungle camps to the city of palaces.

The event where the elephants were accorded ce-



Traditional ceremony: Elephants start from Veeranahosahalli gate in Nagarahole Tiger Reserve. PTI

remonial reception was witnessed by a large number of people, as the occasion set the ball rolling for the celebrations that commence from October 3.

With the mahouts on their back, the elephants marched a distance before boarding separate trucks for Mysuru.

All nine jumbos arrived

here traversing a distance of 70 km and are camping at the Aranya Bhavan campus.

The elephants will enter the palace on August 23.

About Mysore Dasara

- Mysore Dasara or Mysuru Dasara is a 10 day festival celebrated in the state of Karnataka by Hindus. The festival signifies the victory of truth over evil. The legend behind the festival is that a Hindu Goddess namely Durga (Chamundeeswari / Chamundeshwari) defeated the demon Mahishasur or Mahishasuran on the 10th day of the festival which is called Vijaydashmi.
- This 10 day festival, which comes to an end on the tenth day i.e. Vijaydashmi (Vijayadashami), marks the successful conclusion of the preceding 9 days. The preceding nine days of the festival are called "Navratri" (9 Nights), each of these days is dedicated to one form of the goddess Durga.

Daily News Analysis

Day	Goddess Name
First	Shailputri
Second	Brahmacharini
Third	Chandraghanta
Fourth	Kushmanda
Fifth	Skandmata
Sixth	Katyayani
Seventh	Kaalratri
Eighth	Mahagauri
Ninth	Siddhidatri

- The tenth day witnesses a spectacularly grand procession being held starting from the Mysore Palace and concluding at Bannimantap.
- Mysuru Dasara is also called as Nadahabba or Nada Habba, and is recognised as a state festival in Karnataka. The major celebrations are organised by the royal family of Mysore. During the period of Mysore Dasara, the whole city is decorated, and illuminated.
- The festival also witnesses the conduct of various interesting cultural programs, the prominent among it are as follows:
 - Wrestling,
 - Poet's meet,
 - Food Festival,
 - Sports,
 - Film Festival, etc.
- Fairs and exhibitions are also conducted which lasts up to several months around the festival and attains its peak time on the day of the Dasara. The Karnataka Exhibition Authority organises the festival where in many businesses, government departments, public/private sector industries take part to promote their business by setting up stalls.
- Mysore Dasara is just an another version of the festival which is celebrated all over the country in slightly different ways. The Navratri of Gujarat and Durga Pooja of West Bengal are also the other famous versions of this Hindu festival.

UPSC Mains PYQ : 2017

Ques : Consider the following pairs:

Traditions	-	Communities
1. Chaliha Sahib Festival	-	Sindhis
2. Nanda Raj Jaat Yatra	-	Gonds
3. Wari-Warkari	-	Santhals

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) None of the above

Ans : a)

It is the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 45 years; Modi interacts with the Indian diaspora in Warsaw; pays homage to Jam Saheb of Nawanagar at his memorial and to Indian and Polish soldiers who fought in the Second World War.

PM begins Poland visit, says it will help forge more vibrant relations

It is the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in 45 years; Modi interacts with the Indian diaspora in Warsaw; pays homage to Jam Saheb of Nawanagar at his memorial and to Indian and Polish soldiers who fought in the Second World War

Dinakar Peri
WARSAW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Warsaw on Wednesday, the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Poland in 45 years.

Mr. Modi expressed confidence that the visit will serve as a “natural continuation of extensive contacts” between the two countries and help create the foundation for stronger and more vibrant relations in the years ahead. He will visit Ukraine next.

“My visit to Poland comes as we mark 70 years of our diplomatic relations. Poland is a key economic partner in Central Europe. Our mutual commitment to democracy and pluralism further reinforces our relationship. I look forward to meeting my friend Prime Minister Donald Tusk and President Andrzej Duda to further advance our partnership. I will also engage with the members of the vibrant Indian community in Poland,” Mr. Modi said in a statement before he embarked for Poland.



Warm welcome: Prime Minister Narendra Modi being received by Poland's Deputy Foreign Minister Władysław T. Bartoszewski on his arrival in Warsaw on Wednesday. ANI

Mr. Modi landed in Warsaw around 2 p.m. and was welcomed by members of the Indian community as he arrived at the hotel. There was a *Garbha* performance by an Indo-Polish group. One community member, Sahiba Patni, an entrepreneur based in London, flew down just to see Mr. Modi.

In his first engagement, Mr. Modi laid a wreath at the memorial to Jam Saheb

Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja of Nawanagar, Gujarat who provided sanctuary to over 1,000 Polish students in the 1940s. In his honour, a square in the heart of Warsaw has been named “Dobrego Maharadzy” or “Good Maharaja Square”.

Mr. Modi later paid homage at the monument for the Battle of Monte Cassino. The monument honours Indian and Polish

soldiers who fought in the battle that took place in Italy between January and May 1944 and was one of the defining battles of the Second World War.

Mr. Modi also laid a wreath at the Kolhapur memorial at the same location and also interacted with those who found shelter in India in the 1940s and their family members.

The Battle of Monte Cassino was one of the major

battles fought and won by the Polish forces (as part of the larger Allied powers) in Italy against the Axis forces, said Krzysztof Iwanek, an Indologist and Asia Coordinator at the Warsaw-based Foundation Institute for Eastern Studies.

“It is remembered as one of the glorious moments in the history of Polish military. Altogether, I think it is a good place for India's PM to pay his respects,” he told *The Hindu*.

On the significance of Mr. Modi's visit to Poland, Mr. Iwanek observed that this visit, as he understands, will have main two angles. “New Delhi's balancing act between the West and Russia (as PM Modi visited Russia recently and will visit Ukraine after Poland),” he said.

“As far as the second aspect is concerned, I would hope that opportunities for deepening trade and investments will be discussed, especially with Poland being a part of the EU, and the EU being currently in negotiations with India regarding a possible investment deal and a separate FTA deal,” he added.

About Poland:

- It is a country in central Europe.
- **Borders:**
 - Poland's borders have changed many times over the centuries. Its present borders were set after World War II ended in 1945.
 - **Poland has seven neighbors:** Germany, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia.
 - It has a variety of striking landscapes, from the sandy beaches of the Baltic Sea coast in the north and the rolling central lowlands to the snow capped peaks of the Carpathian and Sudeten Mountains in the south.
- **History:**
 - In 1795, Poland was conquered and divided up among Russia, Prussia (now Germany), and Austria.
 - Poland ceased to exist as a country for 123 years.
 - In 1918, after World War I, Poland was restored as a country. But just 21 years later, Germany and the Soviet Union attacked, intent on dividing Poland between them.
 - The aggression marked the beginning of World War II.
 - With the fall of Nazi Germany, Poland effectively lost its independence once again, becoming a communist satellite state of the Soviet Union.
 - Nearly a half century of totalitarian rule followed, though not without strong challenges on the part of Poland's workers, who, supported by a dissident Catholic Church, called the economic failures of the Soviet system into question.
 - In the late 1970s, beginning in the shipyards of Gdańsk, those workers formed a nationwide movement called Solidarity(Solidarność).
 - In May 1989, the Polish government fell along with communist regimes throughout eastern Europe, beginning Poland's rapid transformation into a democracy.
- **Capital:** Warsaw
- **Official Language:** Polish
- **Money:** Zloty
- **Area:** 312,685 sq. km.
- **Major Mountain Ranges:** Carpathians, Sudetens
- **Major Rivers:** Vistula, Oder
 - Poland has more than 1,300 lakes throughout the country.
- **Form of Government:**
 - Poland is a parliamentary republic with a Prime Minister who is the head of government and a president who is the head of state.
 - The government structure is centred on the Council Of Ministers.
 - It is a member of both NATO(North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the European Union (EU).

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2023

Ques : Consider the following countries:

1. Bulgaria
2. Czech Republic
3. Hungary
4. Latvia
5. Lithuania
6. Romania

How many of the above-mentioned countries share a land border with Ukraine?

- a) Only two
- b) Only three
- c) Only four
- d) Only five

Ans: a)

Page 06 : GS 2 : Governance and Social Justice : Government Policies & Interventions and Health

Recently, a vaccine-derived polio case has been confirmed in a two-year-old child from Tikrikilla, Meghalaya. Health authorities clarified that this is not wild poliovirus but an infection seen in individuals with low immunity.

➔ **India's polio-free status:** India was declared polio-free by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2014, with the last wild poliovirus case reported in 2011.

➔ **Understanding Vaccine-Derived Polio (VDPV)**

- **Vaccine composition:** The Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) contains a weakened form of the poliovirus, which stimulates an immune response.
- **cVDPV development:** On rare occasions, in under-immunized populations, the excreted vaccine virus can circulate, undergo genetic changes, and potentially revert to a form capable of causing paralysis. This is known as circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV).
- **Global context:** Since 2000, over 10 billion doses of OPV have been administered globally, resulting in 24 cVDPV outbreaks in 21 countries, with fewer than 760 cases.
- **Prevention:** To stop cVDPV transmission, WHO recommends multiple rounds of high-quality immunisation campaigns.

➔ **Key Facts about Polio:**

- **Polio overview:** Polio is a viral

WHO investigating suspected new polio strain in Meghalaya'

Health Department officials in Meghalaya have been on high alert since a poliomyelitis case was diagnosed in a two-year-old child from Tikrikilla

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Meghalaya Health Minister Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh on Wednesday said the World Health Organization (WHO) was conducting a thorough investigation to determine if a new strain of polio has infected a two-year-old child at Tikrikilla in West Garo Hills district of the State.

Though the State government is awaiting the sample test reports from laboratories in Kolkata and Mumbai, the Union Health Ministry said the child's case was not that of wild polio but a vaccine-derived infection that presents in some people with low immunity. The test reports are expected by the end of the week.

"Another case has apparently been identified in some other State. It is a different strain of polio to my understanding but WHO is investigating the case further for certainty," Dr. Lyngdoh said.

She said the State go-



The WHO declared India polio-free in 2014 after the last case of wild poliovirus was reported in 2011. C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

vernment and the Health Department had been closely monitoring the situation at Tikrikilla, where people have a history of opposing vaccination. "The child is under observation and we are in touch with the family. The doctors attending to the child said the child is okay," she said, observing that the case may impact vaccination efforts in the future. The Minister did not rule out the possibility of the WHO issuing an advisory if the new strain is confirmed. The WHO declared

India polio-free in 2014 after the last case of wild poliovirus was reported in 2011.

Health officials in Meghalaya have been on high alert after the emergence of the poliomyelitis case from Tikrikilla.

While the oral polio vaccine has helped eliminate wild polio, the live virus in the vaccine can mutate and lead to vaccine-derived poliovirus, which can cause polio in unvaccinated individuals or in areas with low immunisation coverage.

infectious disease that can cause irreversible paralysis and even death by affecting the nervous system.

- **Wild Poliovirus strains:** There are three distinct strains of wild poliovirus:
 - Wild Poliovirus Type 1 (WPV1)
 - Wild Poliovirus Type 2 (WPV2)
 - Wild Poliovirus Type 3 (WPV3)
 - Although symptomatically similar, each strain has genetic and virological differences, necessitating separate eradication efforts.
- ➔ **Transmission:** The virus primarily spreads through the fecal-oral route and can multiply in the intestine, where it can invade the nervous system. It predominantly affects children under five.
- ➔ Available vaccines:
- ➔ **Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV):** Administered as a birth dose, followed by three primary doses at 6, 10, and 14 weeks, and a booster dose at 16–24 months.
- ➔ **Injectable Polio Vaccine (IPV):** This vaccine is given as an additional dose along with the third DPT (Diphtheria, Pertussis, and Tetanus) vaccine under the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)..

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2016

Ques : 'Mission Indradhanush' launched by the Government of India pertains to :

- (a) immunization of children and pregnant women
- (b) construction of smart cities across the country
- (c) India's own search for the Earth-like planets in outer space
- (d) New Educational Policy

Ans: a)

Location In News : Banni Grasslands of Kachchh

A study conducted by researchers at Kachchh University assessed the suitability of different areas in Banni for sustainable grassland restoration, with ecological value being the primary criterion.



Restoration of Banni Grasslands: Highlights of the Study

Recent Study:

- **Objective:** A study conducted by researchers at KSKV Kachchh University assessed the suitability of different areas in Banni for sustainable grassland restoration, with ecological value being the primary criterion.
- **Need for restoration:** Originally covering about 3,800 sq. km, the Banni grasslands have shrunk to about 2,600 sq. km.
- **Categories of Restoration Zones:** The researchers divided the grassland into five categories based on restoration suitability:
 - **Highly Suitable:** 937 sq. km (36%)
 - **Suitable:** 728 sq. km (28%)
 - **Moderately Suitable:** 714 sq. km (27%)
 - **Marginally Suitable:** 182 sq. km (7%)
 - **Not Suitable:** 61 sq. km (2%)
- **Restoration Potential:** The "highly suitable" and "suitable" zones, making up nearly two-thirds of the Banni grasslands, can be restored easily by providing adequate water sources.

About Banni Grasslands:

- ▶ The Banni Grassland is a salt-tolerant ecosystem located in the Kutch district of Gujarat, covering around 3,847 square km.
- ▶ It is said to be Asia's largest grassland (TOI).
- ▶ The climate is arid and semi-arid, with extremely hot summers (temperatures above 45°C) and mild winters (12°C to 25°C), receiving 300-400 mm of annual rainfall mainly during the monsoon.
- ▶ It is inhabited by pastoral communities like the Maldharis, who rely on livestock grazing (cattle, buffalo, and sheep) for their livelihood.
- ▶ Agriculture is limited due to arid conditions, with some areas used for salt production.
- ▶ **Flora:** Grasses such as Dichanthium, Sporobolus, and Cenchrus species, with salt-tolerant plants, shrubs, and trees like Acacia and the invasive Prosopis juliflora.
- ▶ **Fauna:** Indian wolf, hyena, chinkara, Great Indian Bustard, flamingos, and various raptors, reptiles, and invertebrates.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2021

Ques : The vegetation of Savannah consists of grassland with scattered small trees, but extensive areas have no trees. The forest development in such areas is generally kept in check by one or more or a combination of some conditions. Which of the following are such conditions?

1. Burrowing animals and termites
2. Fire
3. Grazing herbivores
4. Seasonal rainfall
5. Soil properties

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 4 and 5
- (c) 2, 3 and 4
- (d) 1, 3 and 5

Ans : c)

Imports weaken Indian pharma

Ensuring the affordability of pharmaceuticals is essential for controlling healthcare costs, especially in India, where out-of-pocket health expenditures accounted for nearly 47.1% of the total health expenditure in 2021. While the Drugs Price Control Order, 2013, aims to regulate the prices of existing medicines, a better option is to establish a competitive environment for critical medicines by promoting local production. However, the government has taken two initiatives to meet domestic requirements through imports, which could have a chilling effect on the domestic industry.

The first was a Department of Expenditure (DoE) order permitting the Ministry of Health to procure 120 medicines through global tenders to supply Union government schemes. This list includes several top-selling anti-diabetes medicines and anti-cancer drugs. Currently, the companies selling these medicines enjoy a market monopoly in India, largely due to patent protection, regulatory barriers, or both. Moreover, for over 40 of these 120 medicines, the DoE order specifies a specific brand to be procured, implying that monopoly control of foreign companies would be enhanced.

Secondly, the 2024-25 Union Budget proposed removing the 10-12% customs duty on three cancer medicines marketed by AstraZeneca, ostensibly to reduce their prices. Given that some of these medicines are priced extremely high, the proposed import duty reduction would contribute little towards making them affordable.

These measures could seriously disincentivise domestic producers, making the country dependent on imports. More importantly, they could reinforce two entry barriers faced by the domestic industry, namely, the product patent regime and the regulatory guidelines for marketing approval of bio-therapeutics.



Biswajit Dhar

Distinguished Professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi



K.M. Gopakumar

legal advisor and senior researcher, Third World Network



Chetali Rao

Consultant, Third World Network

Reliance on imports could have a chilling effect on the pharmaceutical industry, weakening its ability to remain relevant

New medicines are generally under patent protection, preventing Indian companies from producing affordable generics/biosimilars. Meanwhile, regulatory guidelines, which impose costly and time-consuming requirements for obtaining marketing approval of biosimilars, can adversely affect domestic producers. However, both these entry barriers can be overcome through proactive government action. The Patents Act has several public interest provisions which can be invoked to promote local production. Similarly, regulatory guidelines for marketing approval of bio-therapeutics can be suitably amended to reduce the burden on domestic companies.

Section 83 of the Patents Act states that “patents are granted to encourage inventions and to secure that the inventions are worked in India on a commercial scale and to the fullest extent that is reasonably practicable without undue delay” and that “they are not granted merely to enable patentees to enjoy a monopoly for the importation of the patented article”. It also states, “Patents are granted to make the benefit of the patented invention available at reasonably affordable prices to the public”. Substantive provisions enforce these key assertions, ensuring that while patent holders are guaranteed their rights under the Act, they cannot act in a manner that is prejudicial to the public interest.

If a patented medicine is “not available to the public at a reasonably affordable price,” compulsory licences (CL) can be granted to any company willing to make the product in India. Issuing CL is the most effective remedy to ensure affordability of medicines but it was issued only once. This was when the originator company was charging nearly three lakh for a medicine. Using CL, an Indian company produced for ₹8,000. However, despite the high prices of medicines, the Patent Office has not issued CL for any other medicine. The government opposed granting CL even during

the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in stark contrast to the stance of the U.S. government, which granted licences on multiple patents during the pandemic.

India's Patents Act also permits the granting of government-use licences. Section 100 states, “patents granted do not in any way prohibit Central government in taking measures to protect public health”. Provisions under this section allow for the granting of government-use licences to enable domestic production of generic versions of patented medicines.

Biosimilar guidelines

The guidelines for marketing approval of biosimilars in India are not only obsolete but also resource and time-intensive. For instance, the current guidelines require mandatory animal studies, which are no longer necessary even in developed countries with stringent regulatory standards, including the U.S. and the EU. Further, the WHO guidelines and the U.K. guidelines, for biosimilar marketing approval, treat clinical trial requirements as an exception rather than a rule, whereas the Indian guidelines still insist on mandatory clinical trials. These requirements create another barrier for Indian producers. In a recent press release, the International Generic and Biosimilar Medicines Association stated that “savings in time and resources from eliminating these duplicative requirements could have a meaningful impact on patient access.”

The proposed duty waiver on cancer medicines and global tendering for critical medicines undermine Parliament's directives to improve access and affordability of medicines through domestic production, using the provisions of the Patents Act. Reliance on imports could have a chilling effect on the pharmaceutical industry, weakening its ability to remain relevant. The government needs to review its recent decisions, but more crucially, align its policies to support the growth of the domestic pharmaceutical industry.

GS Paper 03 : Social Justice – Health

(UPSC CSE (M) GS-3 : 2019) How is the Government of India protecting traditional knowledge of medicine from patenting by pharmaceutical companies? (150 words/10m)

Mains Practice Question : Discuss the impact of recent government policies on the domestic pharmaceutical industry in India, particularly in the context of global tendering and customs duty waivers. Suggest measures to promote local production and ensure medicine affordability. (250 Words)

Context :

- Recent government policies, such as global tendering for essential medicines and the removal of customs duties on cancer drugs, could undermine India's domestic pharmaceutical industry.
- These measures may disincentivize local production, increase reliance on imports, and contradict legislative efforts aimed at promoting affordable, locally produced medicines through the Patents Act.

Introduction

- Ensuring the affordability of pharmaceuticals is crucial for controlling healthcare costs in India, where out-of-pocket expenditures made up 47.1% of total health expenditure in 2021.
- While the Drugs Price Control Order, 2013, regulates medicine prices, fostering local production of critical medicines could be a better strategy.
- However, recent government initiatives to meet domestic pharmaceutical demands through imports may harm the domestic pharmaceutical industry.

Government Initiatives and Impact of initiatives on Domestic Industry:

1. Global Tendering for Medicines

- The Department of Expenditure (DoE) allowed the Ministry of Health to procure 120 medicines through global tenders for Union government schemes.
- This list includes top-selling anti-diabetes and anti-cancer drugs, which are currently monopolised by specific companies in India due to patent protection or regulatory barriers.
- For over 40 of these medicines, the DoE specified a particular brand, likely increasing the monopoly power of foreign companies in the Indian market.

2. Removal of Customs Duty on Cancer Medicines

- The 2024-25 Union Budget proposed removing the 10-12% customs duty on three cancer medicines marketed by AstraZeneca to reduce their prices.

- Given the high costs of these medicines, this duty waiver would likely have a minimal effect on their affordability.

3. Impact on the Domestic Industry

- These measures could disincentivize local production and make India more reliant on imports, weakening the domestic pharmaceutical industry.
- Additionally, the domestic industry faces two significant barriers: the product patent regime and regulatory guidelines for biosimilar marketing approval.

What are Biosimilar guidelines?

1. Product Patent Regime

- New medicines are typically under patent protection, preventing Indian manufacturers from producing cheaper generics or biosimilars.
- The Patents Act includes public interest provisions that can be invoked to encourage local production, but these remain underutilised.

2. Regulatory Guidelines for Biosimilars

- India's regulatory guidelines for obtaining marketing approval of biosimilars are resource-intensive and outdated.
- They require unnecessary animal and clinical studies, creating additional hurdles for domestic manufacturers.

Provisions Under the Patents Act

1. Compulsory Licensing (CL)

- Section 83 of the Patents Act emphasises that patents are meant to promote inventions that are worked commercially in India and to ensure public access to patented inventions at reasonable prices.
- CL can be issued if a patented medicine is not reasonably affordable to the public.

2. Government-Use Licences

- Section 100 of the Patents Act allows the Central government to grant licences for domestic production of patented medicines to protect public health.
- This provision could be utilised to promote the local manufacturing of affordable medicines but has seen limited application.

3. Obsolete Biosimilar Guidelines

- India's guidelines for biosimilar approval require animal studies and clinical trials, which are no longer mandatory in countries with stringent standards like the U.S. and EU.
- The WHO and U.K. guidelines treat clinical trials as optional for biosimilars, yet India still insists on them.
- Reducing these duplicative requirements could significantly lower the time and cost burdens on domestic producers, thereby increasing patient access to affordable medicines.

Misalignment of Government Policies

- The proposed customs duty waiver on cancer medicines and global tendering for essential drugs contradict India's legislative directives aimed at improving medicine affordability and local production.
- These policies could reduce incentives for domestic production, leading to greater reliance on imports.
- To maintain the relevance and growth of the domestic pharmaceutical sector, the government needs to rethink these decisions and align its policies to support local manufacturing.

Conclusion

- The government's recent decisions to rely on imports for critical medicines threaten the domestic pharmaceutical industry's ability to thrive and remain competitive.
- While patent protection and regulatory guidelines pose significant entry barriers, proactive measures under the Patents Act and modernising biosimilar approval processes can help overcome these challenges.
- A balanced approach that promotes local production while maintaining affordability and access to essential medicines is essential for India's long-term healthcare and pharmaceutical sustainability.

Status of Indian Pharma

- Current Scenario:
 - India is one of the biggest suppliers of low-cost vaccines in the world and is the largest provider of generic medicines globally, occupying a 20% share in global supply by volume.
 - India accounts for 60% of global vaccine production making it the largest vaccine producer in the world.
 - The Pharmaceutical industry in India is the 3rd largest in the world in terms of volume and 14th largest in terms of value.
 - The Pharma sector currently contributes to around 1.72% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Market Size & Investments: India is among the top 12 destinations for biotechnology worldwide and 3rd largest destination for biotechnology in Asia Pacific.
 - The Indian pharmaceutical industry has seen a massive expansion over the last few years and is expected to reach about 13% of the size of the global pharma market while enhancing its quality, affordability, and innovation.
 - Up to 100%, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has been allowed through automatic routes for Greenfield pharmaceuticals projects.
 - For Brownfield Pharmaceuticals projects, FDI allowed is up to 74% through automatic route and beyond that through government approval.
 - Indian pharmaceutical market is estimated to touch USD 130 billion in value by the end of 2030.

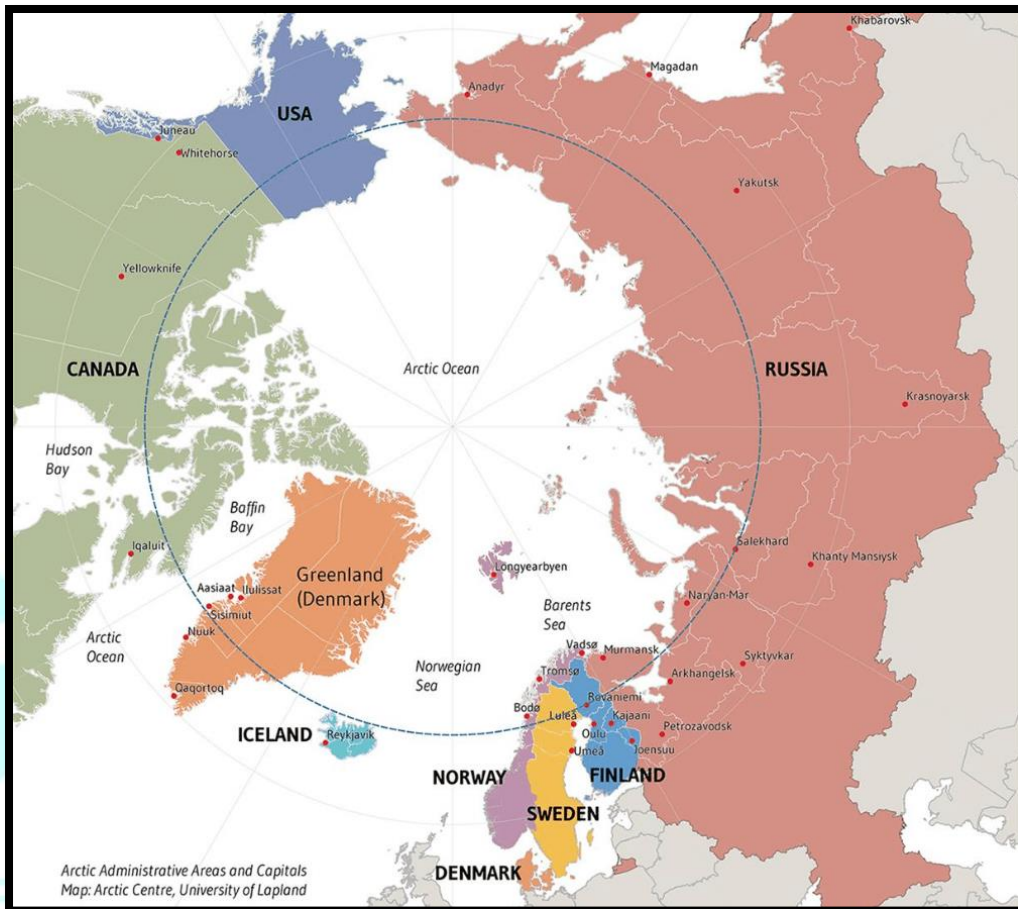
- **Exports:** Pharmaceutical is one of the top ten attractive sectors for foreign investment in India. The pharmaceutical exports reached more than 200 nations around the world, including highly regulated markets of the USA, West Europe, Japan, and Australia.
- India's drugs and pharmaceuticals exports stood at USD 22.51 billion in FY24 (April-January) recording a strong year-on-year growth of 8.12% during the period.

How Drugs Are Regulated in India?

- **The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:**
 - The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules 1945 have entrusted various responsibilities to central and state regulators for regulation of drugs and cosmetics.
 - It provides the regulatory guidelines for issuing licenses to manufacture Ayurvedic, Siddha, Unani medicines.
- **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO):**
 - Prescribes standards and measures for ensuring the safety, efficacy and quality of drugs, cosmetics, diagnostics and devices in the country.
 - Regulates the market authorisation of new drugs and clinical trials standards.
- **Drugs Controller General of India:**
 - DCGI is the head of the department of the CDSCO of the Government of India responsible for the approval of licences of specified categories of drugs such as blood and blood products, IV fluids, vaccines and sera in India.
 - DCGI also sets standards for manufacturing, sales, import, and distribution of drugs in India.

Arctic Council

- ▶ The Arctic Council is a high-level intergovernmental body set up in 1996 by the Ottawa declaration to promote cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States together with the indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants.



- ▶ The Council has the eight circumpolar countries as member states and is mandated to protect the Arctic environment and promote the economies and social and cultural well-being of the indigenous people whose organizations are permanent participants in the council.
- ▶ **Arctic Council Secretariat:** The standing Arctic Council Secretariat formally became operational in 2013 in Tromsø, Norway.
 - The Council has members, ad hoc observer countries and “permanent participants”

- **Members of the Arctic Council:** Arctic Council Secretariat: The standing Arctic Council Secretariat formally became operational in 2013 in Tromsø, Norway.
 - It was established to provide administrative capacity, institutional memory, enhanced communication and outreach and general support to the activities of the Arctic Council.
 - The Council has members, ad hoc observer countries and "permanent participants"
 - **Members of the Arctic Council:** Ottawa Declaration declares Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States of America as a member of the Arctic Council.
 - Denmark represents Greenland and the Faroe Islands.
- **Permanent participants:**
 - Aleut International Association (AIA),
 - Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC)
 - Gwich'in Council International (GCI)
 - Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)
 - Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPN)
 - Saami Council
- **Observer status:** It is open to non-Arctic states, along with inter-governmental, inter-parliamentary, global, regional and non-governmental organizations that the Council determines can contribute to its work. It is approved by the Council at the Ministerial Meetings that occur once every two years
 - Arctic Council Observers primarily contribute through their engagement in the Council at the level of Working Groups.
 - Observers have no voting rights in the Council.
 - As of 2022, thirteen non-Arctic states have Observer status.
 - Germany, 1998
 - Netherlands, 1998
 - Poland, 1998
 - United Kingdom, 1998
 - France, 2000
 - Spain, 2006
 - China, 2013
 - India, 2013
 - Italy, 2013
 - Japan, 2013
 - South Korea, 2013

- Singapore, 2013
 - Switzerland, 2017.
- ➔ **Permanent participants:** In 1998, the number of Permanent Participants doubled to make up the present six, as the Aleut International Association (AIA), and then, in 2000, the Arctic Athabaskan Council (AAC) and the Gwich'in Council International (GCI) were appointed Permanent Participants.
- ➔ **Observer status:** It is open to non-Arctic states, along with inter-governmental, inter-parliamentary, global, regional and non-governmental organizations that the Council determines can contribute to its work. It is approved by the Council at the Ministerial Meetings that occur once every two years.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2021

Ques : Consider the following countries:

1. Denmark
2. Japan
3. Russian Federation
4. United Kingdom
5. United States of America

Which of the above are the members of the 'Arctic Council'?

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 2, 3 and 4
- c) 1, 4 and 5
- d) 1, 3 and 5

Ans: d)