

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Tuesday, 07 Jan, 2024

Edition: International Table of Contents

<p>Page 04 Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations</p>	<p>U.S. to remove Indian entities from restricted lists, says Jake Sullivan</p>
<p>Page 07 Syllabus : Prelims Fact</p>	<p>Twigstats: new tool reveals hi-res genetic view of people's ancestors</p>
<p>Page 10 Syllabus : GS 2 : Indian Polity</p>	<p>Decoding the National Anthem controversy</p>
<p>Page 10 Syllabus : GS 2 & 3 : Social Justice & Science and Technology</p>	<p>What is the human meta-pneumovirus?</p>
<p>In News</p>	<p>UJALA: 10 Years of Energy-Efficient Lighting</p>
<p>Page 08 : Editorial Analysis: Syllabus : GS 2 : Indian Polity</p>	<p>The Collegium and changes — it may still be early days</p>

Jake Sullivan announced the U.S. will remove Indian scientific and nuclear entities from restricted lists, fostering enhanced bilateral cooperation.

U.S. to remove Indian entities from restricted lists, says Jake Sullivan

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

The United States will soon remove Indian scientific and nuclear entities from the “restricted lists” in order to “fully realise” the potential of the India-U.S. nuclear deal that was signed between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President George W. Bush, visiting U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said here on Monday. Speaking at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, Mr. Sullivan presented the space and nuclear sectors as arenas of greater cooperation between the two sides.

“So today I can announce that the U.S. is now finalising the necessary steps to remove long-standing regulations that have prevented civil nuclear cooperation between India’s leading nuclear en-



Strong ties: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

tities and U.S. companies. The formal paper work will be done soon,” said Mr. Sullivan declaring the initiative. He described the move by the Biden administration as an “an opportunity to turn the page on some of the frictions of the past and create opportunities for the Indian entities that have been on the res-

tricted list of the United States”. He called upon the U.S. private sector and scientists and technologists to collaborate with Indian entities to “move civil nuclear cooperation” between the two countries.

Mr. Sullivan met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his

visit. Following the meeting, Mr. Modi remarked, “The India-U.S. Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership has scaled new heights, including in the areas of technology, defence, space, biotechnology and Artificial Intelligence. Look forward to building upon this momentum in ties between our two democracies for the benefit of our people and global good.”

The External Affairs Ministry, in a statement, announced that Mr. Sullivan met his Indian counterpart, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, and briefed him about the “updates brought out by the Biden administration to U.S. missile export control policies under the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) that will boost U.S. commercial space cooperation with India.”

What is a restricted list?

- The restricted list refers to a list of entities and individuals in certain countries, including India, that face trade or cooperation restrictions, particularly in sensitive areas like nuclear technology and scientific advancements.
- These restrictions prevent U.S. companies and government entities from engaging in civil nuclear cooperation or providing certain technologies to the listed entities.
- The list was a result of concerns over the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the potential for sensitive technologies being misused.
- For India, many of its leading nuclear and scientific entities have been on this list, hindering full cooperation with the U.S. in civil nuclear and space sectors.
- Recent policy shifts aim to remove these entities from the list to foster greater collaboration in these areas.

Benefits for India:

- Enhanced access to advanced U.S. nuclear technology, fostering growth in India's civil nuclear sector.
- Improved collaboration with U.S. scientific and technological institutions, boosting India's research capabilities.
- Increased opportunities for joint ventures and partnerships between Indian and U.S. companies, particularly in space, defense, and nuclear sectors.
- Greater access to U.S. expertise and resources in the development of clean energy solutions, contributing to India's energy goals.
- Expansion of commercial space cooperation, benefiting India's space programs through enhanced technology sharing and collaboration.
- Facilitation of India's participation in global nuclear governance frameworks, improving its standing on the global stage.
- Accelerated innovation and technological development in critical sectors like biotechnology and AI.

USPC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Examine the potential implications of the U.S. decision to remove Indian entities from its restricted lists on bilateral relations and technological cooperation. (250 Words /15 marks)

Twigstats is a new method that helps scientists understand the movement and ancestry of ancient populations.

Twigstats: new tool reveals hi-res genetic view of people's ancestors

A fresh analysis using Twigstats has determined more precisely than ever individual-level ancestry at a very high resolution. An international collaboration was even able to revisit the ancestry of population groups in the far-flung western frontiers of the Roman Empire

Sridhar Sivasubbu
Vinod Scaria

Prehistoric human ceremonial burials, mass graves, and war graves scattered around the world are a treasure trove of ancient genetic material that scientists consider key to unlocking secrets from our past. The ancient DNA (aDNA) at these sites opens windows into population dynamics, including the expansion and replacement of populations using peaceful, natural, or violent means; admixture events involving two or more sub-populations; cultural transitions; migrations for hunting; and wealth at individual, local, and global scales.

That said, tracing genetic ancestry in particular across populations still remains a challenging task. This is because populations across geographical regions often tend to be very similar, statistically speaking.

Different sample sizes

For example, studies in the past have documented genetic differences between ancient groups such as the hunter-gatherers, early farmers, and the steppe-pastoralists of the Stone and Bronze Ages. Similarly, numerous studies in recent years have provided insights into the genetic diversity of mediaeval populations across the world. But comparing the genetic ancestry of ancient and mediaeval populations has been hampered by differences in sample sizes. There are fewer samples bearing aDNA, resulting in lower sequencing quality compared to that of mediaeval or modern genomes, which come from larger cohorts.

The incorporation of genetic material in the form of gene flows laterally, from an ancient line into a modern one after ancient times, adds an additional layer of complexity.

Traditionally, researchers' studies of aDNA have involved analysing single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs), which are natural genetic variations in the genomes. The method has been extensively used to reconstruct genetic histories and ancestry models using aDNA derived from Indo-European and Native American populations.

In a 2009 study, researchers from the Broad Institute in the US and the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, reconstructed India's population history as well. They analysed 25 diverse groups and identified two ancient populations in the country that were ancestral to most Indians. Ancestral North Indians were found to be genetically closer to Central Asian, European, and Middle Eastern populations, while Ancestral South Indians were a distinct group. The analysis of SNPs is a powerful technique when the task is to understand populations, but it's restricted by the need for high-quality DNA samples and its inability to resolve the histories of groups with closely related ancestors.

Combining various techniques

Alternatively, analytical methods that use haplotypes, or shared segments of DNA, and rare variants instead of only SNPs have been found to be more powerful.



Tracing genetic ancestry in particular across populations still remains a challenging task. This is because populations across geographical regions often tend to be very similar, statistically speaking. CHUTTERS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Researchers have applied the genealogical tree inference method to modern and ancient genomes to understand their population structure, demographics, locations of ancestors, etc.

This method captures information from haplotype-sharing, or identity-by-descent, and rare variants simultaneously, includes time-resolved information about genetic ancestry, and provides comprehensive insights into how individuals 'share' their ancestors.

For example, in a study published on January 1 in *Nature*, a collaboration led by the Francis Crick Institute in the UK and including multiple research groups across the UK, Japan, and Sweden developed a new way to infer genome-wide genealogies. The team has called it Twigstats. It uses time-stratified ancestry analysis that boosts the statistical power of existing methods by a magnitude and reduces statistical errors.

A particularly unique aspect of Twigstats is its ability to take into account the coalescence of populations in recent times.

The moving Viking

The authors first tested Twigstats on multiple simulated genetic conditions, including to verify using previously published work, to ascertain its robustness. Then they applied it to the task of reconstructing the genetic history of 1,556 aDNA samples belonging to individuals who lived in northern and central Europe from 500 BC to 1000 AD, spanning the Iron, Roman, and Viking ages on the European continent.

This fresh analysis using Twigstats has determined more precisely than ever individual-level ancestry at a very high resolution. The researchers were even able to revisit the ancestry of population groups in the far-flung western frontiers of the Roman Empire in the first millennium AD. Twigstats models also provided direct evidence and

high-resolution maps of the migration of individuals who spoke Germanic languages and had Scandinavian-like ancestry across Europe in the first century AD.

In the region represented by present-day Poland, the analysis of ancient genomes using Twigstats suggested a unique shift in ancestry over historical timelines. For example, the team found signs of a shift away from the corded ware cultures in the middle to late Bronze Age (1500 BC to 1000 BC). For another, in the first to the fifth centuries AD, populations associated with the Wielbark culture peeled away from Bronze Age groups.

In the appropriate historical and anthropological contexts, these insights are significant – and Twigstats should be credited for uncovering them. By analysing a large dataset of ancient genomes, the researchers could reconstruct fine population movements and admixture events that coincided with key cultural transitions, offering new insights into the genetic legacy of groups like the Vikings and the impact of migrations on the genetic makeup of modern Europeans.

The study also uncovered evidence of Scandinavian-like ancestry present in the British and the Baltic regions before the traditional commencement of the Viking Age. This suggests interactions with and migrations from Scandinavia began sooner than researchers believed was the case. The presence of Scandinavian ancestry in Britain was also linked to the Anglo-Saxon migrations, while its presence in the Baltic region indicated early contact with Scandinavian groups.

While Scandinavian ancestry expanded significantly across Europe, the study also revealed gene flows into Scandinavia before the Viking Age. Specifically, the researchers reported evidence of ancestry related to continental Europe and the British Isles in pre-Viking Age

Researchers reconstructed fine population movements and admixture events coinciding with cultural transitions, offering new insights into the genetic legacy of groups like the Vikings and the impact of migrations on the genetic makeup of Europeans

Scandinavian individuals. The implication is that the flow of genes was bidirectional. Evidence of the movements of Vikings is recorded in the genetic makeup of the populations of Britain, Ireland, and Iceland.

Cultures and genes

In the historical context, the study seems to confirm the widespread impact of Viking activity as well as highlight the complex and dynamic nature of population movements during the Viking Age.

Taken together, the new study is a good example of how the use of innovative methods for genomic analysis can refine our understanding of the dynamics of early mediaeval populations. By combining genetic data with archaeological and historical evidence, and adding the fact that cultural shifts are often associated with genetic changes as well, researchers can now offer a more nuanced and detailed picture of the complex processes that shaped the cultural histories of our ancestors.

As the researchers wrote in their paper, "Our approach can be used for the reconstruction of new high-resolution genetic histories around the world."

(The authors work at Karkinos Healthcare and are adjunct professors at IIT Kanpur and Dr DY Patil Medical College, Hospital and Research Centre. All opinions are personal. sridhar.sivasubbu@gmail.com, vinodscarria@karkinos.in)

- It provides clearer insights into cultural and genetic changes over time.

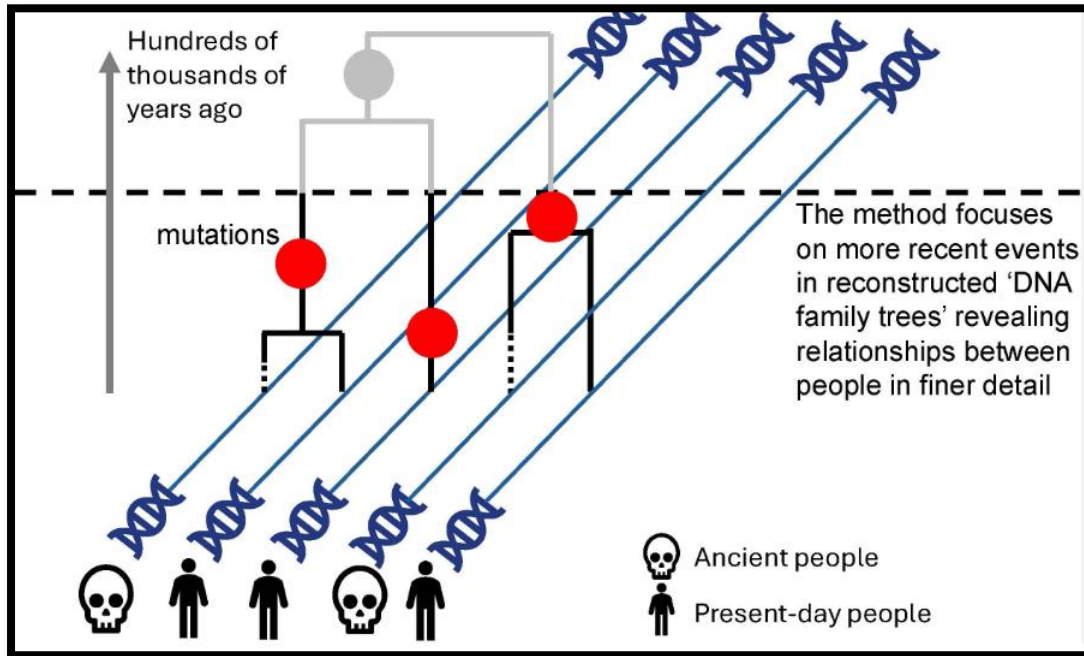


Diagram showing how Twigstats works.

What is Twigstats?

- Twigstats is a new method developed by researchers to study the genetic history of populations.
- It helps scientists trace the ancestry of ancient people and understand how they moved and mixed with other groups.
- This method looks at both shared DNA segments and rare DNA variations to get a clearer picture of population history.
- Twigstats improves the accuracy of genetic studies by reducing errors and increasing the statistical power of existing methods.
- The method can analyze large sets of ancient DNA samples and create detailed maps of population movement and ancestry.
- It has been tested on ancient DNA samples from Europe, especially from the Viking Age, to study migration patterns.

Germanic expansions
1 - 500 AD



Expansion into Scandinavia
by 800 AD



Viking Age
after 800 AD



Three waves of migrations across Europe were identified in the paper. Credit: Leo Speidel, the Francis Crick Institute

- By using Twigstats, researchers can better understand how cultural and genetic changes happened over time.
- It offers a more precise way to reconstruct the past and track the movement of ancient populations.

On January 6, Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi left the Legislative Assembly without delivering his customary address after the National Anthem was not played before his scheduled address.

Decoding the National Anthem controversy

What is the practice followed in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly during and after the Governor's address? Why did Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi leave the Assembly without delivering his address? Is the singing of the National Anthem during certain occasions mandatory?

EXPLAINER

D. Suresh Kumar

The story so far:

On January 6, Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi left the Legislative Assembly without delivering the customary address on the opening day of the first session of the year complaining that the National Anthem was not played before his scheduled address. Last year too, he had refused to read out his address.

What did the T.N. Raj Bhavan say?

The Raj Bhavan has alleged "the Constitution of Bharat and the National Anthem were once again insulted in the Tamil Nadu Assembly". It said respecting the National Anthem is among the first fundamental duties enshrined in our Constitution. It is sung in all the State legislatures at the beginning and at the end of the Governor's address. Not to be a party to such "brazen disrespect to the Constitution and the National Anthem," the Governor left the House.

What is the practice in Tamil Nadu?

As per convention, the State anthem – "Tamil Thai Vazhthu" – is played at the beginning of the Governor's address. The National Anthem is played at the end of the address. The practice of playing the State anthem at the commencement of the Governor's address and the national anthem at the end in the Tamil Nadu Assembly was introduced in July 1991 when the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) government, led by Jayalalithaa, was in power. At that time, Bhisma Narain Singh was Governor. Prior to that, the Governor would enter the House, deliver the address, and leave.

What is the practice in other States?

Each House follows its own convention. For instance, in Nagaland, the national anthem was not played at all for several



Problems in procedure: Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin salute the national flag, in Chennai on January 26, 2024. S. R. RAGHUNATHAN

decades. It was played for the first time in February 2021 when R.N. Ravi was the Governor of the northeastern State. Likewise, it was only in March 2018, that the national Anthem was played for the first time in the Tripura Assembly.

What is the practice when the President's address is delivered?

When the President reaches his seat on the dais, a band installed in the lobby of the central hall to the right of the President, plays the National Anthem. The President then reads the printed address, in Hindi or English, followed by a reading of the address in another version if necessary, by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. After the conclusion of the address, the President rises in his seat, followed by the members and visitors in the galleries, when the National Anthem is played again. The President, thereafter,

leaves the central hall in a procession.

What does the Constitution say?

Section 51 (A) (a) of the Constitution of India dealing with fundamental duties, says, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the national flag and the national anthem."

What does the order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs say?

The full version of the National Anthem shall be played on the following occasions – during civil and military investitures; when the national salute is given in accompaniment with the National Anthem to the President or to the Governor/Lieutenant Governor during ceremonial occasions within their respective States/ Union Territories; during parades; on arrival of the

President at formal State functions and other functions organised by the Government and on his departure from such functions; immediately before and after the President addresses the nation over All India Radio; on arrival of the Governor/Lieutenant Governor at formal State functions within his State/Union Territory and on his departure from such functions; when the National Flag is brought on parade; when the regimental colours are presented; and for the hoisting of colours in the Navy.

When is mass singing of the national anthem required?

The full version of the anthem shall be played accompanied by mass singing on the following occasions – on the unfurling of the National Flag, on cultural occasions or ceremonial functions other than parades; and on the arrival of the President at any government or public function (excluding formal State functions) and also immediately before his departure from such functions.

Can punishment be imposed if it isn't played at official functions?

On January 29, 2019, the Prime Minister, Tamil Nadu Governor and Chief Minister had participated at a function in Madurai for laying the foundation stone for an AIIMS building. The national anthem as well as "Tamil Thai Vaazhthu" were not played at this function. Objecting to this, a woman had moved the Madras High Court seeking a direction to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to frame the rules for imposing punishment, and also to take action against the Chief Secretary for disobedience in not playing the National Anthem.

The court pointed out that a bare reading of her representation made it abundantly clear that when the petitioner herself has stated that there is no mandate for the National Anthem to be sung, and is only a customary practice, mandamus sought against the respondents, cannot be issued. The court dismissed her petition.

THE GIST

Each House follows its own convention. For instance, in Nagaland, the national anthem was not played at all for several decades.

In Tamil Nadu, as per convention, the State anthem – "Tamil Thai Vazhthu" – is played at the beginning of the Governor's address. The National Anthem is played at the end of the address.

Section 51 (A) (a) of the Constitution of India dealing with fundamental duties, says, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the national flag and the national anthem."

➔ The Governor had previously refused to read out his address last year as well under similar circumstances.

Raj Bhavan's Allegations

- The Tamil Nadu Raj Bhavan claimed that “the Constitution of Bharat and the National Anthem were once again insulted in the Tamil Nadu Assembly.”
- It emphasized that respecting the National Anthem is a fundamental duty enshrined in the Constitution.

Tamil Nadu's Practice Regarding Anthems

- In Tamil Nadu, the State anthem, 'Tamil Thai Vazhthu,' is played at the beginning of the Governor's address, and the National Anthem is played at the end.
- This practice was introduced in July 1991 during the AIADMK government led by Jayalalithaa and Governor Bhisma Narain Singh.
- Prior to this, the Governor would enter the House, deliver the address, and leave without playing either anthem.

Practice in Other States

- Different states follow varying conventions. In Nagaland, the National Anthem was played for the first time in February 2021 during Ravi's tenure as Governor.
- Similarly, Tripura first played the National Anthem in March 2018.

Constitutional Provisions and Legal Practices:

- **Constitution of India:** Section 51(A)(a) mandates citizens respect the Constitution, National Flag, and National Anthem.
- **Ministry of Home Affairs Order:** The National Anthem must be played on formal occasions such as civil/military investitures, presidential arrivals, and state functions.
- **Judicial Interpretation:** The Madras High Court dismissed a petition that sought punishment for not playing the National Anthem at a function in Madurai.
- **Supreme Court's Ruling:** There is no legal mandate to play the National Anthem; it is a customary practice, not a compulsory act.
- **No Legal Consequence:** The court emphasized that failing to play the National Anthem does not warrant legal action.

USPC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Examine the constitutional provisions and practices related to the playing of the National Anthem in official functions and their legal implications in India. (150 Words /10 marks)

China is piloting a pneumonia monitoring system due to rising infections, with human metapneumovirus detected in children under 14.

What is the human meta-pneumovirus?

Is the unknown pathogen a reason for concern? How does it spread and can it be prevented? What are the symptoms exhibited after being infected by the human metapneumovirus?

Zubeda Hamid

The story so far:

China's diseases control authority said that it was piloting a monitoring system for pneumonia of unknown origin. The country was already witnessing an upward trend in overall infections as of mid-December, and is expecting to see more respiratory infections in the winter and spring. One of the pathogens that was detected, especially among people under the age of 14, was human metapneumovirus. Subsequently, posts showing crowds of people in what looked like Chinese hospitals appeared on social media along with statements about China declaring an emergency over the virus. So far, there has been no such declaration.

What is human metapneumovirus?
Human metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a

respiratory virus that causes mild infections similar to that caused by a common cold. First identified by scientists in 2001, the virus belongs to the *Pneumoviridae* family, of which respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), measles and mumps are also members. HMPV can cause both upper and lower respiratory tract infections and is generally seen in winter and early spring. Children, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems are more susceptible to the infection and to developing complications from it. The symptoms of HMPV can resemble those caused by a common cold. They include a cough, runny or blocked nose, sore throat, fever and wheezing. The estimated incubation period is three to six days. In most people, the illness goes away on its own within a few days, with rest and supportive care at home. In a few people however, complications such as

bronchitis or pneumonia may arise, requiring medical care.

How does HMPV spread?

HMPV spreads through contact with an infected person or touching objects that have the virus on them. This can be through secretions from coughs and sneezes; close contact with someone who has the infection by shaking hands, hugging; touching a doorknob or a phone or a keyboard that may be contaminated with the virus and then touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

How is HMPV treated?

There is no vaccine and no specific antiviral to treat HMPV. Most people require over-the-counter medications to relieve fever and pain, possibly with a decongestant. Antibiotics will not work for HMPV. However, the virus can be prevented. As with most other respiratory

viruses, the best way to protect yourself from illness is to wash your hands frequently with soap and water, avoid close contact with infected persons, avoid touching your face, nose, eyes and mouth and wear a mask if you think you may be infected, so that you can prevent transmitting it to others. People with lung conditions such as asthma or COPD should be extra cautious and protect themselves from infection.

What has the Indian govt. said?

In light of the reports from China, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) under the Union Health Ministry is closely monitoring respiratory and seasonal influenza cases in the country, and is in touch with international agencies. "We will continue to monitor the situation closely, validate information and update accordingly," sources said.

HMPV cases have been confirmed in two infants from Karnataka and one in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. In Chennai too, two children tested positive for the virus. The Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda in a video statement said, "Health experts have clarified that the HMPV is not a new virus. It was first identified in 2001 and it has been circulating in the entire world for many years. HMPV spreads through air, by way of respiration... The health systems and surveillance networks of the country are vigilant and there is no reason to worry."

THE GIST

Human metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a respiratory virus that causes mild infections similar to that caused by a common cold.

There is no vaccine and there is no specific antiviral to treat HMPV. Most people require over-the-counter medications to relieve fever and pain, possibly with a decongestant.

In light of the reports from China, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) under the Union Health Ministry is closely monitoring respiratory and seasonal influenza cases in the country.

- Social media reports on crowded hospitals, but no health emergency has been declared in China.

What is Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV)?

- Human metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a respiratory virus that causes mild cold-like symptoms, such as cough, fever, sore throat, and runny nose.
- It was identified in 2001 and belongs to the Pneumoviridae family, which includes respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).
- The virus can lead to upper and lower respiratory tract infections, particularly in children, the elderly, and those with weak immune systems.
- While most cases resolve with rest, complications like bronchitis or pneumonia may require medical care.

Spread and Treatment of HMPV

- HMPV spreads through respiratory droplets and contact with contaminated surfaces.
- There is no vaccine or specific antiviral treatment; supportive care is used for symptom relief.
- Preventive measures include handwashing, avoiding close contact, and wearing masks.

India's Response

- The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is monitoring respiratory infections, including HMPV cases in Karnataka, Gujarat, and Chennai.
- Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda reassured that HMPV is not a new virus and there is no cause for concern.

USPC Prelims Practice Question

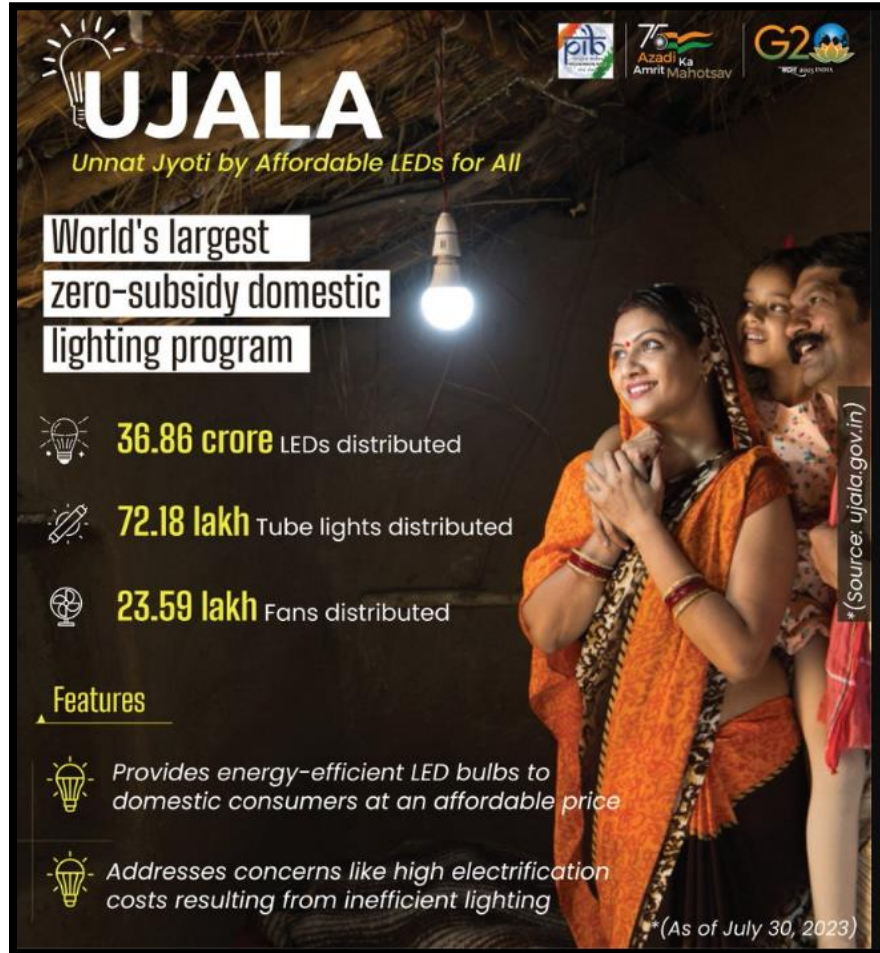
Ques : What is Human Metapneumovirus (hMPV)?

- (a) A bacterial infection causing pneumonia
- (b) A virus associated with respiratory infections
- (c) A fungal pathogen affecting the lungs
- (d) A genetic disorder affecting immunity

Ans: b)

In News : UJALA: 10 Years of Energy-Efficient Lighting

Launched on 5th January 2015, UJALA aimed to transform household lighting in India by offering affordable energy-efficient LED bulbs, tube lights, and fans.



UJALA
Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All

World's largest zero-subsidy domestic lighting program

- 36.86 crore** LEDs distributed
- 72.18 lakh** Tube lights distributed
- 23.59 lakh** Fans distributed

Features

- Provides energy-efficient LED bulbs to domestic consumers at an affordable price
- Addresses concerns like high electrification costs resulting from inefficient lighting

*(As of July 30, 2023)

*(Source: ujala.gov.in)

Introduction and Purpose of UJALA

- Initially known as the Domestic Efficient Lighting Programme (DELP), it later became UJALA, focusing on energy conservation, reducing electrification costs, and cutting carbon emissions.
- Over the last decade, more than 36 crore LED bulbs have been distributed, making India the world's largest zero-subsidy lighting program.

Need for UJALA and Energy Efficiency

- Traditional lighting systems in India consumed excessive electricity, leading to high costs for consumers. LEDs, offering significant energy savings compared to CFLs and ICLs, were identified as a key solution.
- Prior to UJALA, LED bulbs were expensive, with retail prices ranging from Rs 450-500, making them inaccessible to many.
- Under UJALA, LED bulbs were made available at a subsidized rate of Rs 70 per bulb, drastically reducing the cost and increasing adoption across households.
- LED bulbs use significantly less electricity, consuming just 1 unit for 140 hours, compared to 2 units for CFLs and 9 units for ICLs, resulting in lower energy bills.

UJALA's Achievements and Impact

- As of 6th January 2025, UJALA has distributed over 36.87 crore LED bulbs, contributing to major reductions in energy consumption and electricity bills for millions of households.
- The program has increased transparency and efficiency through e-procurement and competitive bidding, reducing costs and enhancing market competition.
- Beyond economic savings, the scheme has helped India reduce its carbon footprint, contributing to the nation's goals of energy conservation and climate change mitigation.

Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP)

- Launched on the same day as UJALA, the Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) aimed to replace conventional streetlights with LED lights, reducing energy consumption and operational costs for municipalities.
- EESL, the implementing agency, collaborated with urban and rural local bodies to execute the program, relieving municipalities from upfront investment costs through a unique business model.
- By January 2025, SLNP had installed over 1.34 crore LED streetlights, saving 9,001 million units of electricity annually, reducing peak demand by 1,500 MW, and cutting CO₂ emissions by 6.2 million tonnes per year.

Conclusion

- UJALA and SLNP together exemplify the impact of government initiatives in promoting energy efficiency, reducing energy costs, and mitigating environmental damage.
- These programs have transformed India's lighting sector, helping households and municipalities save costs while fostering a sustainable, energy-efficient future.

USPC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Other than economic savings, discuss the environmental and social impacts of the UJALA scheme and the Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) in India. **(150 Words /10 marks)**



The Collegium and changes — it may still be early days

Two interesting nuggets of information have emanated in recent days about the functioning of the Supreme Court of India's Collegium. As is often the case with the body's processes, reports in the media attribute the news of these decisions to unnamed sources. The collegium, the accounts say, will now conduct interviews of candidates who have been recommended for elevation as judges to the High Courts. The panel will also, to the extent possible, exclude from selection those whose close relatives have served or continue to serve as judges of the High Courts or the Supreme Court.

By themselves, neither of these resolutions might seem especially remarkable. One would think that appointments to important positions in the State — in this case, to the higher judiciary — would require careful consideration, including a meeting by the decision-makers with the nominated candidates.

One would also think that some amount of pruning of nominees is inevitable in any process of selection. Here, the collegium is conscious that a few deserving candidates might miss out in a move to exclude those with kin on the Bench, but it believes, on a balance, that this will help create a more diverse judiciary.

There is still a concern

It is too early to judge the merits of these choices. In time, they may well come to be seen as harbingers of change and reform, but, for now, a familiar concern looms large, threatening to militate against that prospect. Any reform of the collegium system — much needed as it is — will only go so far, if the government is permitted to stonewall proposals, on arbitrary, whimsical and often undisclosed grounds.

At its foundation, the collegium is a product of judge-made law. Thus, it seems to forever stand at a crossroad. It has no formal rules to bind it; it is answerable to nobody; and its functioning — whether it is in the publication of its decisions or in the opacity and the mystique of its methods — is suffused in a certain ad hocism.

Replacing this with a clear set of binding rules is essential to the maintenance of the system's integrity. For example, we are told that there exists a "memorandum of procedure". But does a breach of that manual carry with it any consequences? Will the interviewing of candidates be written into those set of rules? Who is to say how the collegium under future Chief Justices of India (CJI) will function?

In recent weeks, as we have marked the 75th anniversary of the Constitution's adoption, we have seen many a paean sung to the document's text and vision. Its survival has enlivened our commitment to equality and social justice. But that we have been unable to determine quite how



Subhrith Parthasarathy

an advocate practising in the Madras High Court

Any meaningful reform of the collegium system is possible only when the government stops stonewalling proposals on arbitrary and often undisclosed grounds

best to appoint our judges is an enduring blemish.

The Constitution's framers debated the question over many days. They were mindful of the foundational ideas underlying the republic: that the legislature, the executive and the judiciary must remain separate. But striking a balance and ensuring that the sovereign function of making judicial appointments would not come in the way of ensuring the autonomy of the courts was always going to be a sticky issue.

The 'middle course' it was

All manners of suggestions were made in the Constituent Assembly. But the drafters, in the Assembly's chairperson Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's words, chose to go down a "middle course". To that end, the Constitution provides that judges to the Supreme Court are to be appointed by the President of India in consultation with the CJI and such other judges that he or she deems fit. Judges to the High Courts are to be appointed by the President in consultation with the CJI, the Governor of the State and the Chief Justice of that court. In the case of transfers, the President may move a judge from one High Court to another, but only after consulting the CJI.

These stipulations are by themselves clear. But in failing to define what manner of consultation ought to be made, in failing to explicate how transparent this process needs to be, the provisions opened themselves up for judicial consideration.

In 1993, in what is popularly known as the Second Judges Case, the Court held that "consultation" must mean "concurrence". And concurrence not only from the CJI, but from a "collegium" of judges. In the process, the Court fashioned a whole new procedure that it believed would maintain both a fidelity to the bare text of the Constitution's words and the chief objective of ensuring an independent and autonomous judiciary

The process has a number of nuts and bolts to it. But, in short, it postulates the following: the recommendation to appoint a new judge to a High Court or to the Supreme Court, to transfer a judge from one High Court to another, and to elect a new Chief Justice to a High Court, would come from the collegium — a body comprising the CJI and his senior colleagues, in some cases, two members, and in others four. The collegium will make this recommendation after taking the views of "consultee" judges. Once this recommendation is made, the Union government can either choose to accept the proposal or return the proposal for reconsideration. Upon reconsideration, if the proposal is submitted anew, the government has no choice but to sanction the resolution.

While this seems simple enough, seeing as the

law was laid down by the Court sans any attendant and binding rules, the government has a variety of means available to it to block recommendations it deems inconvenient. It can either keep the proposal pending at its end or, on a re-recommendation, stop short of issuing a presidential warrant authorising the appointment or transfer.

This has led to a curious paradox: in theory, the collegium retains primacy over judicial appointments. But the government's capacity to forestall any recommendation made means that the question of primacy remains moot, despite the Court having previously spelled out — in the Fourth Judges Case (2015) — that it is the judiciary alone that must retain pre-eminence and that any tinkering with that position would impinge on the Constitution's basic structure.

The Judges' cases and rule of law

Whatever our position on the collegium's constitutional suitability may be, today, the system represents the rule of law. The government is legally obliged to follow the procedure laid down in the Judges' cases. It enjoys no discretion in the matter. When it sits over recommendations endlessly, and when it resists proposals by simply failing to act, it is effectively stymieing the legal process.

There is no doubt that until such time we manage to find a process that can carry the requirements of accountability with independence, embracing meaningful reforms within the extant process remains critical. The law as it stands must be followed. The collegium's newest proposals address some of the long-standing concerns over its processes. But at some stage, we must also take seriously the question of implementation.

Until now, while the Court has, on occasion, asked questions of the government when it has failed to follow through on a resolution, it has stopped short of issuing express directions for compliance. Perhaps the Court has felt that orders of this kind might be seen as unnecessarily confrontational. Ultimately, in matters such as these, one would want different wings of the state working together collaboratively to ensure that the procedure stands fulfilled.

But for the collegium system to retain salience, and for it to achieve its purported objective — the maintenance of our judiciary's independence — the rulings in the Judges' cases must be accorded due respect. The Court's ability to function as a counter-majoritarian institution depends as much on its ability to declare the law as it does on its ability to ensure that the law is followed. For, as Chief Justice Coke put it, way back in 1611, summing up the essence of the rule of law, "The king hath no prerogative but what the law of the land allows him."

GS Paper 02 : Indian Polity – Judiciary

PYQ: (UPSC CSE (M) GS-2 2017): Critically examine the Supreme Court's judgement on 'National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014' with reference to appointment of judges of higher judiciary in India. (150 words/10m)

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Discuss the challenges posed by the Supreme Court Collegium system in ensuring judicial independence and transparency. Suggest measures for improving its accountability. **(150 Words /10 marks)**

Context :

- The article highlights recent reforms in the Supreme Court Collegium system, including candidate interviews and efforts to promote judicial diversity.
- It also addresses challenges such as government interference and the need for transparency and accountability to ensure judicial independence.

Key Decisions by the Supreme Court Collegium

- **Recent reports indicate two decisions by the Supreme Court Collegium:**
 - Conducting interviews for candidates recommended for elevation as High Court judges.
 - Avoiding selection of candidates with close relatives serving or having served as judges in the High Courts or Supreme Court.
 - These steps aim to promote transparency and diversity in judicial appointments, though they might exclude some deserving candidates.

Concerns Over Collegium Functioning

- Despite the potential for reform, concerns about the government's ability to stall recommendations persist.
- The collegium's processes are criticized for lacking formal rules, transparency, and accountability, relying instead on ad hoc mechanisms.

Constitutional Provisions on Judicial Appointments

- The Constitution mandates judicial appointments by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and other relevant stakeholders:

- **For Supreme Court judges:** Consultation with the CJI and other judges deemed fit.
- **For High Court judges:** Consultation with the CJI, Governor, and Chief Justice of the High Court.
- The provisions lack clarity on the manner and transparency of consultation, leaving room for interpretation.

Evolution of the Collegium System

- The Second Judges Case (1993) redefined "consultation" as "concurrence," introducing the collegium system:
 - The collegium, comprising the CJI and senior judges, recommends judicial appointments and transfers.
 - The government can return recommendations for reconsideration but must accept them if resubmitted.
 - The Fourth Judges Case (2015) emphasized the judiciary's primacy in appointments, asserting that any alteration would violate the Constitution's basic structure.

Challenges in Implementation

- Despite the judiciary's declared primacy, the government can stall recommendations by delaying approvals or withholding presidential warrants.
- This paradox undermines the collegium's authority, despite its basis in the rule of law.

Need for Binding Rules and Reforms

- The absence of formal, binding rules weakens the collegium system.
- Questions remain on whether recent changes, like candidate interviews, will be codified into binding procedures.
- The lack of a clear enforcement mechanism for the "memorandum of procedure" highlights the need for systemic reforms.

Balancing Accountability and Independence

- Judicial independence is critical for the rule of law, yet accountability mechanisms remain insufficient.
- Until a new process emerges, reforms within the collegium system must focus on transparency, rule enforcement, and government compliance.

Way Forward

- ▶ The government must respect the rulings in the Judges' cases to uphold the law and ensure judiciary independence.
- ▶ Collaboration between the judiciary and executive is essential to fulfill procedural requirements.
- ▶ The judiciary must assert its authority to ensure compliance, fostering confidence in the rule of law.

Conclusion

- ▶ Strengthening the Collegium system is vital to uphold judicial independence.
- ▶ Transparent, binding rules and government compliance with judicial decisions are essential for sustaining the rule of law in India.

