

# **Weekly Current Affairs**

By Abhishek Sir

# Zika Virus Disease

- **Why in News**
- Recently, Zika Virus Disease (ZVD) was reported for the first time in Kerala.
- **About:**
- ☐ Zika virus is a mosquito-borne flavivirus that was first identified in Uganda in 1947 in monkeys. It was later identified in humans in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

# Zika Virus Disease

- **Transmission:**
- ZVD is caused by a virus transmitted primarily by Aedes mosquitoes(AM), mainly Aedes aegypti.
- This is the same mosquito that transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.
- Zika virus is also transmitted from mother to fetus during pregnancy, through sexual contact, transfusion of blood and blood products, and organ transplantation.
- **Symptoms:**
- Symptoms are generally mild and include fever, rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise or headache. Most people with Zika virus infection do not develop symptoms.
- Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause infants to be born with microcephaly (smaller than normal head size) and other congenital malformations, known as congenital Zika syndrome

# **GST appellate tribunal may be headed by a former Supreme Court judge**

- **Why in News?**
- Amendments to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) laws to enable the GST Appellate Tribunal's constitution are expected to be introduced in the Lok Sabha.
- The GST Appellate Tribunal is likely to be headed by a former Supreme Court (SC) judge or a former Chief Justice of a High Court (HC).

# What Exactly is the Goods and Services Tax (GST)?

- It is an indirect tax (not directly paid by customers to the government), that came into effect from 1 July 2017 through the implementation of the 101st Amendment to the Constitution of India by the Indian government.
- It has actually replaced various indirect taxes such as - service taxes, VAT, excise and others in the country.
- It is levied on the manufacturer or seller of goods and the providers of services.
- It is divided into five different tax slabs for collection of tax - 0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%.

# What is the GST Council?

- Article 279A of the Indian Constitution gives power to the President of India to constitute a joint forum of the Centre and States called the GST Council, consisting of the –
- Union Finance Minister – Chairperson
- The Union Minister of State, in-charge of Revenue of finance-Member
- The Minister in-charge of finance or taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State Government – Members
- The GST Council is an apex committee to modify, reconcile or to make recommendations to the Union and the States on GST, like the goods and services that may be subjected or exempted from GST, model GST laws, etc.

# What is the GST Appellate Tribunal?

- The CGST Act empowers the Central Government to constitute, on the recommendation of the GST Council, an Appellate Tribunal known as the GST Appellate Tribunal.
- It is the forum of second appeal in GST laws and the first common forum of dispute resolution between Centre and States.
- The appeals against the orders passed by the Appellate Authority under the Central and State GST Acts lie before the GST Appellate Tribunal.
- Being a common forum, GST Appellate Tribunal will ensure that there is uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST, and therefore, in implementation of GST across the country.

# FSSAI Prohibits Use of Newspapers for Food Storing

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has notified the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging) Regulations, 2018 which strictly prohibits the use of newspapers or similar materials for storing and wrapping food.
- The ink used in newspapers contains various bioactive materials with known negative health effects, which can contaminate food and lead to health issues when ingested.
- Additionally, printing inks may contain chemicals including lead and heavy metal that can leach into the food, posing serious health risks over time.
- FSSAI is an autonomous statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.



# What is FSSAI?

- It is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. It has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which consolidates various acts and orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- The Food Standards and Safety Act, 2006 replaced several Acts and Orders like the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954; Fruit Products Order, 1955; etc.
- FSSAI is headed by a non-executive Chairperson, appointed by the Central Government, either holding or have held a position, not below the rank of Secretary to the Government of India. It is not under the charge of Director General of Health Services.
- FSSAI has been created for laying down science-based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.

# Urban Fire Safety in India

- The recent cases of fire outbreak in Rajkot's Game Zone and the short circuit-induced blast of oxygen cylinders in a paediatric hospital in Vivek Vihar in New Delhi has drawn our attention to the ignored issue of Urban Fire Safety In India.
- In densely packed urban areas of India, devastating urban fires have emerged as one of the most predominant risks to human lives and properties.

# What is Urban Fire? What is the status of Urban Fires in India?

- Urban Fire- Urban fire refer to fires occurring in urban areas, such as cities and towns, which are densely populated and have a high concentration of buildings, infrastructure, and human activity.
- India has witnessed many tragic urban fire incidents in the recent past. For ex- Uphar cinema, New Delhi (1997); Kamala Mills, Mumbai (2017) and Taxila Coaching Centre, Surat (2019).
- Status of Urban Fires in India
- ▪ According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data 2019, India witnessed 330 deaths in commercial building fires and 6,329 fatalities in residential or dwelling building fires.
- In 2015, NCRB reported death of 17,700 Indians died due to fire accidents. Maharashtra and Gujarat accounted for a significant portion (about 30%) of the country's fire-related deaths.
- ▪ The India Risk Surveys 2018 has placed India at 3rd position in fire incidents. This signifies the grave risks of fire incidents to urban habitats.

# Mount Kanlaon

- Hundreds of people sheltered in evacuation centres after Mount Kanlaon volcano erupted in the central Philippines recently.
- **About Mount Kanlaon:**
- It is a strato volcano located in the north-central portion of the island of Negros, Philippines.
- It is the highest mountain on the island of Negros and the 42<sup>nd</sup> tallest peak on an island in the world.
- It is one of the active volcanoes in the Philippines and part of the Pacific Ring of Fire.



# Colombo Process

- India has become chairman of the Colombo Process for the first time since its inception in 2003.
- **About Colombo Process**
- It is a Regional Consultative Process and it provides an important platform for consultations on the management of overseas employment and contractual labour for countries of origin in Asia.
- It serves as a forum for the exchange of best practices on overseas employment.

# Membership:

- It comprises 12 Member States of Asia countries of origin of migrant workers.
- Members: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.
- India has been a member of the Colombo Process since its inception in 2003.

# Objectives

- Share experiences, lessons learned and best practices in labour migration management.
- Consult on issues faced by migrants, countries of origin and countries of destination and propose practical solutions for the wellbeing of overseas workers.
- Optimize development benefits from organized overseas employment and enhance dialogues with countries of destination.
- Review and monitor the implementation of the recommendations and identify further steps of action.
- The process is non-binding and decision-making is by consensus.
- The process is coordinated through the Permanent Missions of Member States at the United Nations in Geneva.
- The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has provided technical support to the Colombo Process since its inception and serves as its Secretariat.
- There are five Thematic Area Working Groups (TAWGs):
  - Skills and Qualification Recognition (chaired by Sri Lanka);
  - Fostering Ethical Recruitment (chaired by Bangladesh);
  - Pre-Departure Orientation and Empowerment (chaired by Philippines);
  - Remittances (chaired by Pakistan);
  - Labour Market Analysis (chaired by Thailand);



# Exit poll

- Recently, Congress refrained from participating in Lok Sabha Elections-related debates in exit polls 2024.
- **What is an exit poll?**
- An exit poll is a post-election survey that shows how many seats a
- political party will likely win.
- It is not the same as the official election results.
- **When will Exit polls be released?**
- They can be released by media houses only after the voting ends for an election.
- **Methods of conducting:**  
They are taken immediately after voters have cast their ballots.

# Exit poll

- **Legal Regulations:**
- The exit polls are regulated by Section 126A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951
- This law stipulates that no person shall conduct or publish exit polls via print or electronic media, or disseminate the results in any manner, during a period specified by the Election Commission of India.
- Any person who contravenes the provisions of the Section 126A shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years or with a fine or with both.

# NOTA (None of the Above)

- It is a voting option on the ballot that allows voters to indicate disapproval of all contesting candidates without choosing any of them.
- NOTA empowers the electors to express their negative opinions and a lack of support for the contenders.
- It gives them the right to reject while maintaining the secrecy of their decision

# NOTA (None of the Above)

- **When was it first used?**
- NOTA was used for the first time in the 2013 Assembly elections in five states- Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh-and later in the 2014 General Elections.
- It was introduced into the electoral process following the 2013 Supreme Court directive in the PUCL versus Union of India case.

# NOTA (None of the Above)

- **Does NOTA Vote Count?**
- The Election Commission clarified that votes cast as NOTA are counted, but are considered 'invalid votes'.
- Even if NOTA votes get the most number of votes in a constituency, the next candidate with the second-most number of votes is declared the winner.
- Therefore, votes made to NOTA do not change the outcome of an election.
- Current Petition: The Supreme Court is considering a petition to frame guidelines for elections to be declared "null and void" if NOTA receives the highest number of votes in the constituency.

**THANK YOU**