

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

NOVEMBER 2021

MISCELLANEOUS

#COVAXIN GRANTED MUCH AWAITED WHO'S APPROVAL

- The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** granted its much-awaited Emergency Use Listing (EUL) to **India's first indigenously developed COVID-19 vaccine, Covaxin.**
- The vaccine has now been added to the growing portfolio of vaccines that have received a go-ahead from **WHO for emergency use against COVID-19.**



Significance

- The WHO EUL Listing will now enable Covaxin to get emergency use approval in other countries as well that haven't yet given it a go-ahead. The countries will now be able to expedite their **regulatory approval processes to import and administer Covaxin.**
- This also means that **UNICEF, GAVI COVAX facility, Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO),** will be able to procure Covaxin for distribution to countries worldwide.
- The approval will also enable travellers fully vaccinated with Covaxin to travel to the United States from November 8. The **US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) acknowledged WHO's EUL listing of India's indigenous vaccine Covaxin** on November 3, 2021.
- The US CDC's travel guidance allows all people vaccinated with FDA approved and WHO Emergency Use Listing vaccines to enter the United States. The guidance includes any new vaccine that may be added to either of those lists over time.

Key Highlights

- **Covaxin has shown 77.8 percent efficacy against symptomatic COVID-19** and 65.2 percent efficacy against the new Delta variant.
- Bharat Biotech has concluded the final analysis of the protection offered by Covaxin against the COVID-19 virus from its Phase 3 trials.

Background

- The WHO panel had earlier sought additional clarifications from Bharat Biotech, **manufacturer of Covaxin to conduct a final assessment for the global use of the vaccine.**
- The WHO approval finally came through upon the recommendation of the **Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for Emergency Use Listing (TAG-EUL).**
- The group determined that the Covaxin vaccine meets WHO standards for protection against COVID and that benefit of the vaccine far outweighs risks and the vaccine can be used across the world.
- The **Technical Advisory Group** is an independent advisory panel that was convened by WHO to provide recommendations on whether the COVID vaccine **should be listed for emergency use under the EUL procedure.** The advisory group is made up of regulatory experts from around the world.

- However, WHO stated that the available data on vaccination of pregnant women with the Covaxin are insufficient to assess vaccine safety or efficacy in pregnancy and added that studies in pregnant women are planned, including a pregnancy sub-study and a pregnancy registry.
- The World Health Organisation has so far granted EUL listing to COVID-19 vaccines of **Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson Janssen, AstraZeneca- SK Bio/SII and Sinopharm.**

Covaxin: India's only indigenous Covid-19 vaccine

- It is India's only indigenous **Covid-19** vaccine.
- **Produced By:** Developed by **Bharat Biotech**, Hyderabad in collaboration with the **Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute of Virology**, Pune.
- **Constituents and Action:** It is an **inactivated vaccine** which is **developed by inactivating (killing) the live microorganisms** that cause the disease.
- This **destroys the ability of the pathogen to replicate**, but keeps it intact so that the immune system can still recognise it and produce an immune response.
- It is expected to **target more than just the spike protein.**
- It also **aims to develop an immune response to the nucleocapsid protein** (the shell of the virus that encloses its genetic material).

Significance:

- **COVAXIN** is more likely to work against newer variants of the virus, **including the UK variant**, as it contains **immunogens (epitopes)** from other genes in addition to those from Spike protein.
- **Immunogen** is a stimulus that produces a humoral or cell-mediated immune response, whereas antigens are any substance that binds specifically to an antibody.
- All immunogens are antigens, but all antigens may not be immunogens.

#DAMON GALGUT WINS 2021 BOOKER PRIZE

- **Damon Galgut**, a **South African novelist**, won the **2021 Booker Prize** for his novel '**The Promise**'.
- It was one of the six shortlisted novels for the **Booker Prize** and **stood out for its artistry and scope.**
- The novelist who was shortlisted for two of his previous books received one of the most prestigious literary awards for his cutting depiction of a white family in a post-apartheid South Africa. Damon Galgut was also shortlisted twice before, in 2003 and 2010.



- **Damon Galgut's 'The Promise' wins Booker Prize 2021**
- **'The Promise', which is also Galgut's ninth book, had already won acclaim among critics for its menacing and bleakly funny portrait of the Swart family.**
- **They are the descendants of Dutch settlers who are desperately trying to hold onto their farm and status in post-apartheid South Africa.**

Who is Damon Galgut?

- **Damon Galgut is a South African playwright and novelist who has been awarded the 2021 Booker Prize for his novel 'The Promise'.**
- Galgut wrote his first novel 'A Sinless Season' at the age of 17 in 1982.
- After his work **'The Good Doctor'** was published in 2003, Galgut became better known outside South Africa. It was the story of two contrasting characters in a remote, rural hospital in post-apartheid South Africa. Good Doctor was received enthusiastically by critics and was shortlisted for Booker Prize in 2003.
- In 2010 Booker Prize, his novel **'In a Strange Room'** was shortlisted for fiction.
- **By winning the 2021 Booker Prize for his novel 'The Promise', Galgut has become the third writer from South Africa to win the prize, following Nadine Gordimer and JM Coetzee, who has won twice.**

2021 Booker Prize: American authors dominate the shortlist

- American authors have once again dominated the shortlist of Booker Prize in 2021, accounting for three of the finalists. **They were Richard Powers for 'Bewilderment', Patricia Lockwood for 'No One is Talking About This', and Maggie Shipstead for 'Great Circle'.**
- The other authors shortlisted for Booker Prize 2021 were **AnukArudpragasam for "A Passage North"**. It is about a lingering trauma from his country's Civil War. The another one was the British and Somali Novelist Nadifa Mohamed for 'The Fortunate Men', about a Somali man who has been falsely accused of murder in Wales.

Booker Prize

- The Booker Prize is awarded manually to the best novel written in English and published in Ireland or Britain. The prize was selected in 2021 from 158 submitted novels.
- In 2020, the **Booker Prize went to Douglas Stuart for 'Shuggie Bain'**. It was his autobiographical debut novel which was about growing up in Scotland with an alcoholic mother.
- Breaking the tradition in 2019, the literary prize was awarded jointly to **Margaret Atwood and Bernardine Evaristo.**
- Booker Prize, since 2014, has been open to any novel written in English and published in Britain. Previously, it was limited to the writers from Ireland, Britain, Zimbabwe, and the Commonwealth.

#UNITED STATES AS 101ST MEMBER OF ISA

- The United States has become the **101st member country of the International Solar Alliance**. US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry formally signed the ISA framework agreement on November 10, 2021 during the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow.



Green Grids Initiative – OSOWOG

- India along with the United Kingdom had launched the Green Grids Initiative – **One Sun One World One Grid** on November 2, 2021 during the World Leaders Summit of the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow.
- The steering committee of the initiative comprised **five members- India, Australia, France, the US and the United Kingdom**.
- Under the initiative, 80 countries endorsing the **One Sun Declaration** resolved to combine their efforts to create more inter-connected grids to **deliver the vision of One Sun One World One Grid**.
- US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm** said that the US is excited to be back in climate conversation and citing the One Sun Declaration, she said that all the energy used by humans in a year is equal to the energy that reaches the earth from the sun in a single hour.

Background

- The **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** was launched in 2015 by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former **French President Francois Hollande** during the 21st session of the **United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-21)** in Paris, France.
- The then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon** had attended the conference along with the heads of state of about 120 nations who had affirmed their participation in the International Solar Alliance.
- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an alliance of 124 countries, most of whom lie **either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn**.
- The **main objective of the alliance** is to work towards efficient consumption of solar energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. The initiative was proposed by **PM Modi in a speech in November 2015 in the United Kingdom**.

International Solar Alliance

- It is an **Indian initiative** that was launched by the **Prime Minister of India and the President of France** on 30th November 2015 in Paris, France on the side-lines of the Conference of the Parties (COP-21), with **121 solar resource-rich countries** lying **fully or partially between the tropic of Cancer and tropic of Capricorn** as prospective members.

- **Objective:** To collectively address key common challenges to the scaling up of solar energy in ISA member countries.
- **Members:** Till now, **87 countries have signed the Framework Agreement** of the ISA and of these **67 have deposited their instruments of ratification**.
- Nicaragua, a Central American country is the **87th and the latest** country to sign the agreement.
- The Government of India has **allotted 5 acres of land** to the ISA in **National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE)** campus, Gurugram and has released a **sum of Rs. 160 crore** for creating a corpus fund, building infrastructure and meeting day to day recurring expenditure of the ISA up to the year 2021-22.

#NIZAMI GANJAVI INT. AWARD GIVEN TO TEDROS ADHANOM

- World Health Organisation (WHO) Director General **Tedros Ghebreyesus** and UN Geneva Office Director General **Tatiana Valovaya** were honoured with the **NizamiGanjavi International Award** on November 4, 2021.

8th Global Baku Forum

- The **8th Global Baku Forum** brought together high-level delegates including former heads of state and government and international officials of **non-governmental organizations** from more than 40 countries to discuss issues of global importance.



- **What is NizamiGanjavi International Award?**
- The **NizamiGanjavi International Award** was established in 2012. The award celebrates the great Azerbaijani poet NizamiGanjvai and is presented to distinguished personalities and institutions who embody the values that NizamiGanjavi promoted through his poetry.

Who was NizamiGanjavi?

- **NizamiGanjavi is the greatest representative of the Eastern Renaissance.** He was born in the 12th century in Ganja, Azerbaijan.
- He epitomized the global citizen of his day and represented the quintessence of world literature in his immortal work "**Khamsa**" (Five).
- NizamiGanjavi's poetry has been centred around humanity and his mission has been to **apply his creativity to the service of his people**.
- The main themes of his work include people and nations, gender equality, peaceful coexistence, cross-cultural understanding, ideal leadership and respect among classes.
- Ganjavi was also a social reformer and his works reflect a genuine, deep concern for the human condition, for all people and the status of women. He is not just celebrated in his native Azerbaijan but in the whole world.

NizamiGanjavi International Award winners

- The NizamiGanjavi International Award 2019 was conferred to Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani for his contribution to international security and peace.
- In 2018, the award was bestowed upon MehribanAliyeva, the first Vice-President of Azerbaijan for her role in fostering global projects for the development of science and culture and M.V.Vardinoyannis, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for her humanitarian and cultural endeavors.

#NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES DAY: 9TH NOVEMBER

The National Legal Services Day is celebrated on 9th November every year to spread awareness for ensuring reasonable fair and justice procedure for all citizens.



- NLSD was first started by the Supreme Court of India in 1995 to provide help and support to poor and weaker sections of the society.
- Free legal services are provided in matters before Civil, Criminal and Revenue Courts, Tribunals or any other authority exercising judicial or quasi judicial functions.
- It is observed to make the citizens of the country aware of the various provisions under the Legal Services Authorities Act and the rights of the litigants. On this day, each jurisdiction organizes legal aid camps, Lok adalats, and legal aid programmes.

Constitutional Provisions:

- Article 39A of the Constitution of India provides that State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disability.
- Articles 14 and 22(1) also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law and a legal system which promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity to all.

Objectives of Legal Services Authorities:

- Provide free legal aid and advice.
- Spread legal awareness.
- Organize lokadalats.
- Promote settlements of disputes through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanisms. Various kinds of ADR mechanisms are Arbitration, Conciliation, Judicial settlement including settlement through Lok Adalat, or Mediation.
- Provide compensation to victims of crime.

Legal Services Institutions for providing Free Legal Services:

- **National Level:** **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)**. It was constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief.
- **State Level:** **State Legal Services Authority**. It is headed by the Chief Justice of the State High Court who is its Patron-in-Chief.
- **District Level** District Legal Services Authority. The District Judge of the District is its ex-officio Chairman.
- **Taluka/Sub-Division Level** Taluka/Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committee. It is headed by a senior Civil Judge.
- **High Court:** High Court Legal Services Committee
- **Supreme Court:** Supreme Court Legal Services Committee.

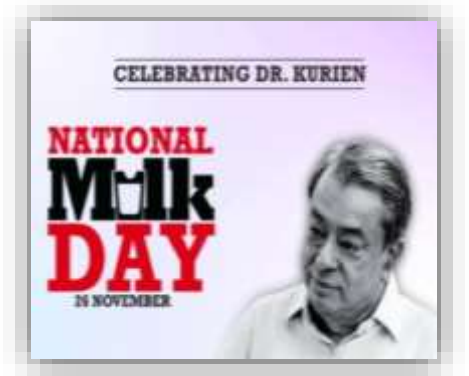
Persons Eligible for Getting Free Legal Services:

- Women and children
- Members of SC/ST
- Industrial workmen
- Victims of mass disaster, violence, flood, drought, earthquake, industrial disaster.
- Disabled persons
- Persons in custody
- Those persons who have annual income of less than the amount prescribed by the respective State Government, if the case is before any court other than the Supreme Court, and less than Rs. 5 Lakhs, if the case is before the Supreme Court.
- Victims of Trafficking in Human beings or begar.

#NATIONAL MILK DAY: 26TH NOVEMBER

Recently, the Ministry of Animal Husbandry & Dairying has celebrated the **National Milk Day (NMD)** on 26th November.

- **National Gopal Ratna Awards** were conferred to the winners of the respective stakeholders of Dairy sector and also launched **IVF (In Vitro Fertilization)** Lab at Dhamrod, Gujarat and Hessarghatta, Karnataka.
- Every year, the **first day of June** is observed as **World Milk Day**.



About:

- NMD is celebrated to commemorate the birth Anniversary of **Dr. Verghese Kurien (Milk Man of India)**.
- NMD 2021 commemorates the **100th birth anniversary of Dr. Kurien**.

- The day celebrates the **importance of milk in a person's life**. And to promote the **benefits related to the milk & milk industry** and to **create awareness among people about the importance of milk** and milk products.

Dr. Verghese Kurien (1921-2012):

- He is known as the **'Father of White Revolution in India'**.
- He is famous for his **'Operation Flood'**, which is known as **the world's largest agricultural program**.
- He established 30 institutions that are **run by various farmers and workers**. He also played a key role in the **establishment and success of Amul Brand**.
- Because of his efforts only, **India became the largest producer of milk in 1998**, surpassing the U.S.
- He also helped manage the **Delhi Milk Scheme and corrected the prices**. He also helped India **become self-sufficient in edible oils**.
- He was honoured with several awards, including the **Ramon Magsaysay Award (1963)**, **Krishi Ratna (1986)** and **World Food Prize (1989)**.
- He is also the recipient of India's highest civilian awards- **Padma Shri (1965)**, **Padma Bhushan (1966)** and **Padma Vibhushan (1999)**.

Operation Flood:

- It was launched on 13th January, 1970. It was the world's largest dairy development programme.
- Within 30 years, the operation **helped double milk available per person in India**, making dairy farming India's largest self-sustainable rural employment generator.
- The operation gave **farmers direct control over the resources they create, helping them direct their own development**. This was achieved not only by mass production, but by production by the masses. It is also now known as the **"White Revolution"**.
- **Phases of the White Revolution:**
- **Phase I (1970-1980):** This phase was financed by the sale of butter oil and skimmed milk powder donated by the **European Union** through the World Food Program.
- **Phase II (1981 to 1985):** During this phase, the number of milk sheds increased from 18 to 136, milk outlets were expanded to about 290 urban markets, a self-sustaining system was set up that included 4,250,000 milk producers spread across 43,000 village cooperatives.
- **Phase III (1985-1996):** This phase enabled the dairy cooperatives to expand and gave a finishing touch to the programme. It also strengthened the infrastructure required to procure and market increasing volumes of milk.

Objectives:

- Increase milk production ("a flood of milk").
- Increase rural incomes.
- Reasonable prices for consumers.

- **Significance:** It helped dairy farmers **direct their own development**, placing control of the **resources** they create in their own hands.
- It has helped **India become the largest producer of milk** in the world in 2016-17.
- Currently, India is the world's largest milk producer, with 22% of global production.

Indian Dairy Sector

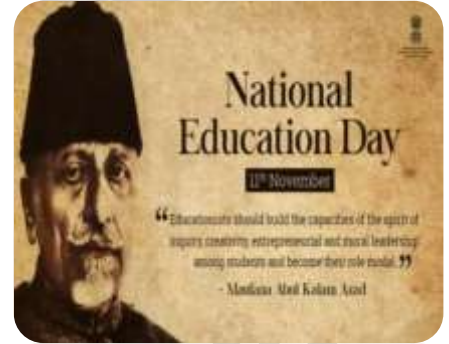
- India being the world's **largest milk producing country**, accounts for more than 22.0% of the world and 57% of Asia's total milk production.
- The milk production of India has grown **from 17 million tonnes in 1951 to 187.7 million tonnes in the year 2018-2019**.
- **Significance:**
- Dairy is the only **agri-product in which around ~70-80% final market value** is shared with farmers and **it accounts for approximately one-third of rural household income** in India.
- It **improves farmer livelihoods, creates jobs, supports agricultural industrialization and commercialization, and enhances nutrition for the masses**.
- **Challenges: Lack of proper packaging and labeling system** of milk and milk products.
- **Lack of Market Intelligence** to understand the mindset of entrepreneurs.
- Consumer perception/**Brand Building** is also a major challenge.
- **Cold chain (transportation)** and storage facilities are not effectively in operation.

Related Initiatives:

- **Gopal Ratna Awards:** They are National Awards for the Cattle and Dairy sector, the awards have been launched to promote the best herd of Indigenous Breed and practicing best management practices.
- **e-Gopala (Generation of wealth through Productive Livestock) App:** It is a comprehensive breed improvement marketplace and information portal for direct use of farmers.
- **National Action Plan on Dairy Development 2022:** It seeks to increase milk production and double the income of dairy farmers.
- **National Animal Disease Control Programme & National Artificial Insemination Programme:** It was launched to control and eradicate the Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis amongst the livestock in the country,
- **Pashu-Aadhar:** It is a unique ID on a digital platform for traceability for the animals.
- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission:** It was launched in 2019 for the setting up of 21 Gokul Grams as Integrated Cattle Development Centres.

NATIONAL EDUCATION DAY: 11TH NOVEMBER

Every year, **11th November** is celebrated as **National education day**, which commemorates the **birth anniversary of independent India's first education minister, Maulana AbulKalam Azad**.



- In 2008, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Now Ministry of Education) decided to celebrate Azad's birthday as National Education Day. Educational institutions across India mark the event with seminars, essay-writing, workshops etc to highlight the importance of education.
- **Birth:** Maulana AbulKalam Azad, **originally named Muhiyuddin Ahmad**, was born **on 11th November 1888 in Mecca, Saudi-Arabia**.
- Azad was a **brilliant debater**, as indicated by his name - "AbulKalam" which literally means "Lord of Dialogues".

Contributions (Pre-Independence):

- He was a **proponent of Hindu Muslim unity, opposed to Partition**.
- **In 1912**, he started a **weekly journal in Urdu called Al-Hilal** which played an important role in forging Hindu-Muslim unity after the bad blood created between the two communities in the aftermath of **Morley-Minto reforms (1909)**.
- Under the 1909 reforms, the **provision of separate electorates for Muslims was resented by Hindu**.
- Azad **supported the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22)** started by Gandhiji and **entered the Indian National Congress in 1920**.
- In **1923**, he was **elected as the president of Indian National Congress**. At an age of 35, he **became the youngest person** to serve as the President of the Indian National Congress.
- Maulana Azad was **arrested in 1930 for violation of the salt laws** as part of Gandhiji's **Salt Satyagraha**. He was put in Meerut jail for a year and a half.
- He **again became the president of Congress in 1940** and remained in the post till 1946.

An Educationist:

- In the field of education, Maulana Azad had been an **uncompromising exponent of universalism**, a truly liberal and humanitarian educational system. Azad's ideal was a **fusion of the Eastern and Western concepts of man**, to create a fully integrated personality.
- He was **one of the founding members of the Jamia Milia Islamia University**, originally established at Aligarh in the United Provinces in 1920.
- **His Works:** Basic Concept of Quran, Ghubar-eKhatir, Dars-e-Wafa, India Wins Freedom, etc.

Contributions (Post-Independence):

- In 1947, he became the **first education minister of free India and remained at this post till his death in 1958**. In his tenure, he did tremendous work for the upliftment of the country.
- The first IIT, IISc, School of Planning and Architecture and the University Grants Commission were established under his tenure as the education minister.
- **Indian Council for Cultural Relations**, for introduction of Indian culture to other nations.
- Following **three academics** were formed:
 - **Sahitya Academy** for development of literature;
 - **SangeetNatak Academy** for the development of Indian music and dance;
 - **Lalit Kala Academy** for the development of painting.
- Maulana AbulKalam Azad was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, **Bharat Ratna** in 1992.

#CENTRE DECLARED NOV. 15TH AS JANJATIYA GAURAV DIWAS

- The Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi on November 10, 2021, approved declaration of **November 15 as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** to commemorate the brave tribal freedom fighters as part of the year-long celebrations of 75 years of India's Independence.
- **The date November 15 also marks the birth anniversary date of Birsa Munda** who is revered as God by tribal communities across India.
- Munda fought for India's Independence against the exploitative system of British colonial system and spearheaded movement.
- The **Union Cabinet has approved November 15 as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** to commemorate the brave tribal freedom fighters as part of the year-long celebrations of 75 years of India's Independence.
- The **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** will make the coming generations aware of the sacrifices of the tribal freedom fights during India's freedom struggle.
- The date November 15 also marks the birth anniversary date of Birsa Munda who spearheaded an Indian tribal movement during the fight for India's Independence. Birsa Munda is revered as God by tribal communities across India.
- **Munda fought for India's Independence from the exploitative system of the British colonial system** and spearheaded the movement. Birsa Munda was born on November 15, 1875.
- He belonged to the Munda tribe. He spearheaded an Indian tribal religious Millenarian movement during the British rule in the late **19th century across the tribal belt of modern-day Jharkhand and Bihar**.



November 15 as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas: Significance

- The **declaration of November 15 as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** acknowledges the cultural heritage and glorious history of tribal communities.

- The Janjatiya Gaurav Divas will be celebrated every year to recognize the efforts of the tribals in the preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of Indian values of national pride, valour, and hospitality.

Role of tribal freedom fighters in India's Freedom Struggle

- The people at large are not aware that the tribal communities in India contributed and strengthened India's freedom struggle through several movements. These **tribal communities include Tamars, Santhals, Khasis, Bhils, Mizos, and Kols to name a few.**
- The tribal communities across India organized revolutionary movements that showcased their supreme sacrifice and immense courage.
- They held **several tribal movements across different regions of India against the British colonial rule.**

#VICE ADMIRAL R HARI KUMAR TO BE NEXT NAVY CHIEF

- The **Ministry of Defence announced that Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar will take charge as the next Chief of the Indian Navy** after the incumbent, Admiral Karambir Singh, retires on November 30.
- **Vice Admiral Kumar** has been serving as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command.
- The Defence Ministry officials informed that Vice Admiral Anil Kumar Chawla, the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Southern Command, is senior-most officer after Admiral Singh, but he will also be retiring on November 30.



Who is Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar?

- **Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar was commissioned on January 1, 1983, into the executive branch of the Indian Navy.**
- **The Vice-Admiral R Hari Kumar**, during his long and distinguished service which spanned nearly 39 years, has served in a variety of command, staff and instructional appointments.
- Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar's sea command includes **INS Nishank, Missile Corvette, INS Kora and Guided Missile Destroyer INS Ranvir.**
- Vice Admiral Kumar has also commanded Indian Navy's aircraft carrier **INS Viraat**. He also served as the Fleet Operation Officer of the Western Fleet.
- Vice Admiral Kumar, before serving as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command, was the Chief of Integrated Staff Committee of headquarters, Integrated Defence Staff.

Medals and honours

- Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar has been decorated with-

➤ Param VishistSeva Medal (PVSM)

- AtiVishistSeva Medal (AVSM)
- VishistSeva Medal (VSM)
- Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar was born on April 12, 1962. Kumar has undergone courses at the **Naval War College, the US, Amry War College, Mhow** and the Royal College of Defence Studies, the United Kingdom.

Chief of Naval Staff

- The **Chief of the Naval Staff is the head of the military staff of the Indian Navy**. The Naval Staff Chief is the highest-ranking naval officer on the active service of the Indian Armed Forces unless the Chief of Defence is a Navy Officer.
- **Role-** The **Chief of Naval Staff** is the primary adviser to the Government of India on naval affairs. The Chief is also responsible for governing and directing the naval staff, **the supreme decision-making body which consists of the highest-ranking naval officers of the Indian Navy**.
- They are the **Navy's Chief Executive and the Chief Naval Adviser of the Chief of Defence Staff**.

#NEW VARIANT OF CONCERN: OMICRON

The **World Health Organization** has declared the recently-discovered B.1.1.529 strain of **Covid-19**, to be a variant of concern.

- The virus was first detected in **Southern Africa** and it is **renamed Omicron**.
- Omicron is placed in the **most-troubling category of Covid-19 variants**, along with the **globally-dominant Delta** plus its weaker rivals Alpha, Beta and Gamma.
- This variant has a **large number of mutations**. Some of them are cause for serious concern because they may allow the new variant to evade immunity obtained from a past infection or via a vaccine.
- However, there are no reliable estimates of just how much more transmissible the Omicron variant is compared to previous strains of the virus
- Apart from South Africa, Omicron has been detected in **Israel in people coming from Malawi, Botswana, Belgium and Hong Kong**.



Nomenclature:

- The WHO has decided to name the variants **after the letters of the Greek alphabet**, to avoid the **countries that first detected them being stigmatised**.
- WHO selected the name Omicron, **instead of Nu or Xi**, the two letters between Mu and Omicron. This is because:
 - Xi happens to be a popular **surname in China** (avoiding 'causing offence to any cultural, social, national, regional, professional or ethnic groups').
 - Nu could have been confused with the **word 'new'**.

Situation In India:

- Seroprevalence studies indicate that a **large proportion of the population has already been exposed to the virus** providing some level of protection to subsequent infections.
- Further, the immunisation campaign has gained momentum.
- Approximately 44% of Indian adults have been fully vaccinated and 82% have received at least one dose.
- Scientists believe that prior infection followed by one or two doses of vaccination may have a **larger protective effect** than two doses of the vaccination alone.

Variants of Concern

- A variant for which there is evidence of an **increase in transmissibility, more severe disease** (e.g., increased hospitalizations or deaths), **significant reduction in neutralization by antibodies** generated during previous infection or vaccination, **reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines**, or diagnostic detection failures.
- The new Variants could kick off **new wave(s) of epidemic transmission**.
- The WHO currently lists **5 variants of concern**:
- **Omicron (B.1.1.529)**, identified in southern Africa in November 2021
- **Delta (B.1.617.2)**, which emerged in India in late 2020 and spread around the world
- **Gamma (P.1)**, which emerged in Brazil in late 2020
- **Beta (B.1.351)**, which emerged in South Africa in early 2020
- **Alpha (B.1.1.7)**, which merged in Britain in late 2020.

Variants of Interest

- A variant **with specific genetic markers** that have been associated with changes to receptor binding, reduced neutralization by antibodies generated against previous infection or vaccination, reduced efficacy of treatments, potential diagnostic impact, or predicted increase in transmissibility or disease severity.
- There are currently two:
- **Mu (B.1.621)**, which emerged in Colombia in early 2021
- **Lambda (C.37)**, which emerged in Peru in late 2020

Mutation, Variant and Strain

- When a virus replicates it doesn't always manage to produce an exact copy of itself.
- This means that, over time, the virus may start to differ slightly in terms of its genetic sequence.
- Any changes to the viral genetic sequence during this process are known as a **Mutation**.
- Viruses with new mutations are sometimes called **Variants**. Variants can differ by one or multiple mutations.
- When a new variant has different functional properties to the original virus and becomes established in a population, it is sometimes referred to as a **New Strain of the virus**.
- **All strains are variants, but not all variants are strains.**

#INDIAN-ORIGIN PARAG AGARWAL TO BE NEXT TWITTER CEO

- **Twitter Co-founder Jack Dorsey** announced on November 29, 2021, that he will be stepping down as the Chief Executive of Silicon Valley.
- With his latest decision, Dorsey has paved the way for an IIT-Bombay Graduate and Indian-origin **Parag Agrawal to be the new CEO of Twitter**. Parag Agrawal has also become the youngest CEO in top 500 companies after the Board of Directors appointed him unanimously.
- The CEOs from India are known for excelling and leaving their mark everywhere in the world, particularly in technology. **For decades, the Indian-origin CEOs** have been playing a significant role in the tech industry and have been contributing in many ways.
- As an IIT-Bombay Graduate **Paras Agrawal takes over as CEO of Twitter**, here is a list of other **Indian-origin CEOs in Silicon Valley**.



Indian-Origin CEOs in Silicon Valley	Companies
Parag Aggarwal	Twitter
Satya Nadella	Microsoft
Shantanu Narayen	Adobe Inc.
Arvind Krishna	IBM
Nikesh Arora	Palo Alto Networks
SundarPichai	Google and Alphabet
George Kurian	NetApp
Jayshree Ullal	Arista Networks

What is Silicon Valley?

- **Silicon Valley** is home to many Start-Ups and global technology companies including Google, Facebook, Apple, which are among the most prominent ones.
- **Silicon Valley is in the Southern San Francisco Bay Area of California**. The place is also the site of the technology-focused institutions that are centered around Palo Alto's Stanford University.
- Silicon valley in the US also includes the headquarters of more than **30 businesses in the Fortune 1000**

and thousands of start-up companies.

Why Silicon Valley is significant?

- It was in Silicon Valley in the United States that the Silicon-based integrated circuit, the microcomputer, and the microprocessor, among other technologies, were developed. As of the year 2013, **Silicon Valley has employed about a quarter of a million information technology workers.**

#NITI AAYOG RELEASED MULTI-DIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX

Recently, **NITI Aayog** has released the **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)**.

- Earlier, **Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021** was released by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** and the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI).
- The MPI **seeks to measure poverty** across its multiple dimensions and in effect complements existing poverty statistics based on per capita consumption expenditure.
- According to **Global MPI 2021**, India's rank is 66 out of 109 countries. The National MPI is aimed at **deconstructing the Global MPI** and creating a globally aligned and yet customised India MPI for drawing up comprehensive Reform Action Plans with the larger goal of improving India's position in the Global MPI rankings.
- It has **three equally weighted dimensions** – health, education, and standard of living.
- These three dimensions are **represented by 12 indicators** such as nutrition, school attendance, years of schooling, drinking water, sanitation, housing, bank accounts among others.



Methodology & Data:

- The national MPI measure **uses the globally accepted and robust methodology** developed by the **Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)** and the **UNDP**.
- This baseline report of the **national MPI measure** is based on the reference period of 2015-16 of the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4)**.
- NFHS-4** data has been used to derive an idea of baseline multidimensional poverty **to know the situation on ground before the full rollout of various central government schemes.**
- NFHS-4 precedes the full roll out of (central government's) flagship schemes** on housing, drinking water, sanitation, electricity, cooking fuel, financial inclusion, and other major efforts towards improving school attendance, nutrition, mother and child health, etc.
- However, it has to be noted here that the **NFHS-5 data suggests improvement** in access to clean cooking fuel, sanitation, and electricity which translates to reduction in deprivation.

Findings of the Index:

- **Poverty Levels:** Bihar has the highest proportion of people of the state's population followed by Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh who are multidimensional poor.
- **Kerala registered the lowest population poverty levels**, followed by Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Goa and Sikkim.
- **Malnourished People:** Bihar also has the highest number of malnourished people followed by Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh.

Significance of the Index:

- **Contribution towards Instituting Public Policy Tool** The development of the Index is an important contribution towards instituting a public policy tool which monitors multidimensional poverty, informs evidence-based and focused interventions, thereby ensuring that **no one is left behind**.
- **Presents Overall Picture of Poverty:** This presents an overall picture of poverty in the country, while also enabling closer and more in-depth analyses of areas of interest such as regions – state or districts, and specific sectors and complements the existing monetary poverty statistics.
- **Help Achieving SDGs Goals:** It is a contribution towards measuring progress towards target 1.2 of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** which aims at reducing “at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions.

Related Government Initiatives:

- **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**
- **The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MNREGA)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)**
- **Public Distribution System (PDS)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)**
- **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**
- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)**

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