

**COVID-19 NEWS****Access To Covid-19 Tools (Act) Accelerator**

Led by the World Health Organization, a long list of countries, industry groups, and nongovernmental organizations committed to joining a project called Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator.

**About:**

- “Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator” is a Global Collaboration to Accelerate the Development, Production and Equitable Access to New COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines.
- A key goal is to level the global playing field so that any products will be available to rich and poor populations alike.
- The project, however, is still in the early stages. On May 4, countries and organizations are encouraged to start pledging contributions with an eye toward commitments worth about \$8 billion in initial funding.

**CIM-Paushak**

Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), Lucknow, has developed scientifically proven two herbal products, which may boost immunity of the persons to avoid symptom generally associated with the coronavirus infection.

**About:**

- CIMAP has decided to transfer the technology of its herbal products ‘CIM-Paushak’ and ‘Herbal Cough Syrup’ to the entrepreneurs and start-up companies.
- These two products were found to be effective in boosting the immunity of a person.
- Twelve valuable herbs including Puranva, Ashwagandha, Mulethi, Harad, Baheda and Sataver compounds have been used in both these products.

**Related Info :** Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), Lucknow is a constituent laboratory of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

**GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC****Rohtang Pass**

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) opened the Rohtang Pass, three weeks in advance, for transporting essential supplies and relief materials to the Lahaul and Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh amid the lockdown.

**About:**

- Rohtang Pass is a high mountain pass (at 13,058 feet) on the eastern Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas.
- It connects the Kullu Valley with the Lahaul and Spiti Valleys of Himachal Pradesh.
- The pass lies on the watershed between the Chenab and Beas basins. On the southern side of this pass, the Beas River emerges from underground and flows southward and on its northern side, the Chandra River, a source stream of the river Chenab, flows westward.
- The operation to clear snow is carried out every year as the pass remains snow-bound for almost six months, from mid-November to mid-May.

**CONSTITUTION AND POLITY****Rajya Sabha Functioning**

An analysis by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat has revealed that the Rajya Sabha spends 24% of its time in deliberating and passing laws. Most of its functional time is spent on deliberating issues of public importance.

**About:**

- Data from 1978 onwards was analysed. During 1978-2018, the Rajya Sabha held 3,022 sittings and transacted business for 13,946 hours as against the available 18,132 hours. This comes to 76.91% productivity while 23.09% of the available time was lost due to disruptions.
- Around 40 % of time is spent in deliberating issues of national importance followed by 32 % in asking questions and holding the government accountable.
- Only 24 % of its functional time is spent on making laws. And an additional 3.5 % is spent on Private members Bills, which have rarely translated into laws though.

- The time spent on the Government Bills ranged from 10.87% of the time in 2015 to 40.09% in 2002. It has touched a record high of 45.90% during the historic 250th session last year.
- Deliberative functions like debating electoral reforms or recent discussion on law and order in parts of Delhi take up the largest chunk of time.
- The oversight function — which is to hold the government accountable by way of asking questions — calling attention motions and so on takes about 32.22% of time with portion of time reserved for the daily question hour.

### **GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**

#### **Central Vigilance Commissioner**

Retired bureaucrat Sanjay Kothari was sworn in as the next Central Vigilance Commissioner by President Ram Nath Kovind at an official oath-taking ceremony.

#### **About Central Vigilance Commission (CVC):**

- **Background:** The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) was set up by the Government in 1964 on the recommendations of the Committee on Prevention of Corruption, headed by K. Santhanam.
- **Status:** It is a statutory body governed by the Central Vigilance Commission Act 2003.
- **Mandate:** To inquire into offences alleged to have been committed under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 by certain categories of public servants of the Central Government, corporations established by or under any Central Act, Government Companies, societies and local authorities owned or controlled by Central Government.
- **Composition:** The Commission shall consist of a Central Vigilance Commissioner (Chairperson); and not more than two Vigilance Commissioners (Members).
- **Appointment:** They are appointed by the President on recommendation of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister (Chairperson), the Minister of home affairs and the Leader of the Opposition in the House of the People.

### **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**

#### **Flogging**

Saudi Arabia has abolished flogging as a punishment for crime.

#### **About:**

- This reform was made in order to “bring the kingdom into line with international human rights norms against corporal punishment”.
- Previously, the courts could order the flogging of convicts found guilty of offences ranging from extramarital sex and breach of the peace to murder.
- Now, judges will have to choose between fines and/or jail sentences, or non-custodial alternatives like community service.

#### **Raif Badawi case:**

- The most high-profile instance of flogging in recent years was the case of Saudi blogger Raif Badawi who was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes in 2014 for “insulting” Islam and for setting up a liberal media forum.
- He was awarded the European parliament’s Sakharov human rights prize the following year

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Hydrogen Fuel Bus And Car Project**

NTPC Ltd, India's largest power producer and a central PSU under Ministry of Power, has invited Global Expression of Interest (EoI) to provide 10 Hydrogen Fuel Cell (FC) based electric buses and an equal number of Hydrogen Fuel Cell based electric cars in Leh and Delhi.

#### **About:**

- The EoI has been issued by NTPC's wholly owned subsidiary, NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVVN) Limited.
- The move to procure Hydrogen Fuel Cell based vehicles is first of its kind project in the country, wherein a complete solution from green energy to the fuel cell vehicle would be developed.
- The initiative, which has been undertaken with support of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, will also harness renewable energy for generation of hydrogen and develop its storage and dispensation facilities as part of pilot projects at Leh and Delhi.
- The move to launch hydrogen powered vehicles aims at decarbonizing mobility segment.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC****Ruhdaar**

A Team of engineering students led by a IIT Bombay student have developed a low-cost mechanical ventilator named Ruhdaar using locally available materials.

**About:**

- The team will now go for medical testing of the prototype. Once it is approved, it will be taken for mass production. The effort is to make it amenable for production by small scale industry.
- Ventilators are an important component of the medical infrastructure required for treating coronavirus-infected patients, providing critical breathing support to those falling critically ill.

**GW190412**

For the first time since it started functioning, the gravitational wave observatories at LIGO scientific collaboration have detected a merger of two unequal-mass black holes.

**About:**

- The event, dubbed GW190412, was detected nearly a year ago, and this is almost five years after the first ever detection of gravitational wave signals by these powerful detectors.
- The event involved two black holes of unequal masses coalescing, one of which was some 30 times the mass of the Sun and the other which had a mass nearly 8 times the solar mass.
- The actual merger took place at a distance of 2.5 billion light years away.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Discuss the challenges and opportunities pertaining to India's pharmaceutical industry.**

**Ans;**

India as the largest provider of generic drugs globally, is often referred as Pharmacy of the world. The Indian pharmaceuticals market is the world's third-largest in terms of volume and thirteenth-largest in terms of value. Indian pharmaceutical industry possesses many niche advantages like low-cost manufacturing, thriving private sector, also high economic growth along with increasing penetration of insurance in healthcare and medicine in India. However, the sector faces many challenges.

**Associated Challenges**

- Despite being a leading supplier of high-quality medicines to several countries, Indian pharmaceutical industry is highly dependent on China for pharmaceutical raw materials i.e Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients.
- Fake versions of high value and/or high volume brands of the pharmaceutical companies in India are adversely affecting their business performance posing another major challenge.
- Indian pharmaceutical Industry is facing pressure from both the government and the civil society to make generic medicines more affordable for a large section of the population of the country.
- This emphasis on the low price of generic medicine impacts the net profits of pharma companies.
- Countries like the US criticize India's patent law for invoking compulsory license (though complaint as per WTO's TRIPS) to produce generic versions of branded drugs.
- Due to this India's pharmaceutical industry faces ban or high import duty in these countries.

**Opportunities**

- India should look up to and invest in biopharmaceuticals, as India's biotech sector is expected to grow at an average rate of around 30% a year and reach \$100 billion by 2025.
- E-pharmacies also promise a better future, as it can take medicines to the remote corner of the country.
- To ensure health security of Indian people, revival of R&D and public sector API manufacturers is necessary.
- There is a need for a functional testing laboratory in every state to fasten the work of specification of raw materials.
- Skilled manpower from academic institutions can be achieved through continuing education programmes.

**Conclusion:** The future of Indian pharma industry is quite bright, but it needs to address the few dark clouds on the horizon as well.