

**GOVERNANCE****Deworming in India**

As per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, states in India have witnessed reduction in worm prevalence.

Regular deworming as advised by the World Health Organization (WHO) eliminates worm infestation among children and adolescents living in areas with high Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis (STH) burden, thereby contributing to achieve better nutrition and health.

Helminthiasis is infestation with or disease caused by parasitic worms.

**Key Points****Background:**

- As per WHO Report on STH published in 2012, in India there were an estimated 64% children in the age group (1-14 years) at risk of STH.
- The risk was estimated based on the hygiene and sanitation practices and limited STH prevalence data at that point of time.
- To assess the exact burden of STH in India, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare appointed the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) as the nodal agency to coordinate and conduct nationwide baseline STH mapping.
- The baseline STH mapping across the country was completed by the end of 2016. The data showed varied prevalence ranging from 12.5% in Madhya Pradesh to 85% in Tamil Nadu.
- To evaluate the impact of the consistently implemented high coverage National Deworming Day (NDD) programme, the Ministry recently initiated follow-up prevalence surveys led by NCDC and partners.

**Result of the Follow-up Surveys:** The follow-up surveys are completed in 14 States.

- All 14 States have shown reduction in the follow up survey compared to the baseline prevalence survey.
- The States of Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar have shown substantial reduction in worm prevalence in the STH follow up prevalence survey.
- Chhattisgarh has successfully conducted 10 rounds of NDD as on date, and the drop in prevalence has been significant from 74.6% in 2016 to 13.9% in 2018.
- Sikkim, with 9 rounds, has seen reduction from 80.4% in 2015 to 50.9% in 2019.
- Rajasthan, the State that implemented an annual round only due to low baseline of 21.1 in 2013 has seen significant reduction to the level of less than 1% in 2019 as per the survey.

**National Deworming Day Programme**

- Implementation of NDD is led by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Education and technical assistance from WHO and the technical partners. It was launched in 2015.
- It is implemented as a biannual single day programme (10th February and 10th August) through the platforms of schools and anganwadis.
- In the last round of deworming earlier this year in the country (which was halted due to the Covid pandemic), 11 crore children and adolescents were administered Albendazole tablets across 25 States/UTs.
- Albendazole tablet, approved by the WHO, is used for treatment of intestinal worms in children and adolescents as part of Mass Drug Administration (MDA) programmes globally.

**Soil-Transmitted Helminths**

- Soil-Transmitted Helminths refer to the intestinal worms infecting humans that are transmitted through contaminated soil.
- Intestinal worms are parasites that live in the human intestines and consume nutrients and vitamins needed for a child.
- There are three main types of helminths that infect people, roundworm (*Ascaris lumbricoides*), whipworm (*Trichuris trichiura*) and hookworms (*Necator americanus* and *Ancylostoma duodenale*).
- These worms depend on the human body for their food and survival and while being there, they lay thousands of eggs each day.

**Transmission:**

- Soil-transmitted helminths are transmitted by eggs that are passed in the faeces of infected people. In areas that lack adequate sanitation, these eggs contaminate the soil.
- Impact:
- Since worms feed on host (human body) tissues, including blood, it leads to loss of iron, and protein, resulting in anaemia – reduced oxygen carrying capacity due to less Haemoglobin (Hb) available in the body.
- Worm infection can also lead to diarrhoea; dysentery; loss of appetite; reduced nutritional intake and physical fitness; increased malabsorption – a condition that prevents absorption of nutrients through the small intestine.

**Treatment:**

The WHO recommended medicines – albendazole (400 mg) and mebendazole (500 mg) – are effective, inexpensive and easy to administer by non-medical personnel (e.g. teachers).

**Deworming infants, children and women for better health** World Health Organization

Intestinal parasitic worms (soil-transmitted helminths) are spread through soil, contaminated by human faeces.

Worm infections interfere with children's nutritional uptake and can result in malnourishment, anaemia, and stunted growth.

**Periodic treatment of at-risk populations reduces the intensity of infection. No individual diagnosis is needed.**

**Treatment with what?**  
Free deworming medicines such as albendazole or mebendazole

**Who should be treated?**  
Preschool, school-age children and women of reproductive age

**Why treat everyone?**  
To reduce ill health (malnutrition, anaemia, impaired growth); To prevent others from acquiring severe infection

**Where can treatment be sought?**  
Schools and community health centres

**Global target: To reach 75% of children in need of treatment by 2020**

**INDIAN ECONOMY**

**Indian Forex Reserve**

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, the country's foreign exchange (forex) reserves touched a lifetime high of USD 555.12 billion after it surged by USD 3.615 billion in the week ended 16th October 2020.

**Key Points**

**Reason Behind the Increase:**

- The rise in total reserves was due to a sharp rise in Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves.
- FCA jumped by USD 3.539 billion to USD 512.322 billion.

**Foreign Exchange Reserves:**

- Foreign exchange reserves are assets held on reserve by a central bank in foreign currencies, which can include bonds, treasury bills and other government securities.
- It needs to be noted that most foreign exchange reserves are held in U.S. dollars.
- These assets serve many purposes but are most significantly held to ensure that the central bank has backup funds if the national currency rapidly devalues or becomes altogether insolvent.

**India's Forex Reserves include:**

- Foreign Currency Assets
- Gold
- Special Drawing Rights
- Reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

**Foreign Currency Assets**

- FCA are assets that are valued based on a currency other than the country's own currency.
- FCA is the largest component of the forex reserve. It is expressed in dollar terms.
- FCA includes the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.
- Currency appreciation refers to the increase in value of one currency relative to another in the forex markets.
- Currency depreciation is a fall in the value of a currency in a floating exchange rate system.
- In a floating exchange rate system, market forces (based on demand and supply of a currency) determine the value of a currency.

**Special Drawing Rights**

- The SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
- The SDR is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF. Rather, it is a potential claim on the freely usable currencies of IMF members. SDRs can be exchanged for these currencies.
- The value of the SDR is calculated from a weighted basket of major currencies, including the U.S. dollar, the euro, Japanese yen, Chinese yuan, and British pound.
- The interest rate on SDRs or SDRi is the interest paid to members on their SDR holdings.

**Reserve Position in the International Monetary Fund**

- A reserve tranche position implies a portion of the required quota of currency each member country must provide to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that can be utilized for its own purposes.
- The reserve tranche is basically an emergency account that IMF members can access at any time without agreeing to conditions or paying a service fee.

**ENVIRONMENT AND DIVERSITY**

**Importance of Seagrasses**

Recently, the restoration process of seagrasses has been taken up by Tamil Nadu in the Gulf of Mannar.

**Key Points**

**Seagrasses:**

- These are flowering plants that grow submerged in shallow marine waters like bays and lagoons.
- These have tiny flowers and strap-like or oval leaves.

**Evolution:**

- Terrestrial plants evolved about 850 million years ago from a group of green algae and seagrasses evolved from terrestrial plants that recolonised the ocean 70-100 million years ago.

**Food Production:**

- Like terrestrial plants, seagrasses also require sunlight for photosynthesis from which these manufacture their own food and release oxygen.

**Reproduction:**

- Sexual Reproduction Method: The pollen from the flower of the male plant is transferred to the ovary of the female flower through this method.
- This is known as submarine pollination. Most species undergo this process and complete their life cycle underwater.
- Asexual Reproduction Method: Seagrasses can also reproduce asexually by branching off at their rhizomes (modified subterranean plant stem that sends out roots and shoots from its nodes).
- Because of this character, they can recover after being cut by grazers or disturbed by storms.

**Order and Species:**

- There are 60 species belonging to four families in the order Alismatales.
- Some of the important seagrasses are Sea Cow Grass (*Cymodocea serrulata*), Thready Seagrass (*Cymodocea rotundata*), Needle Seagrass (*Syringodium isoetifolium*), Flat-tipped Seagrass (*Halodule uninervis*), etc.

**Habitat:**

- Though seagrasses inhabit all types of substratas (layers) from mud to rock, the lush green seagrass beds are found extensively in muddy and sandy substratas.
- These occur all along the coastal areas of India and are abundant in the Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu.

**Significance:**

- Seagrasses are considered 'Ecosystem Engineers' as they are known for providing many ecosystem services and are also called 'the lungs of the sea' as they release oxygen into the water through photosynthesis.
- Sequesters up to 11% of the organic carbon buried in the ocean even though they occupy only 0.1% of the ocean floor and absorb 83 million tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere annually.
- Seagrasses can capture carbon from the atmosphere up to 35 times faster than tropical rainforests.
- Help maintain water quality by trapping fine sediments and suspended particles in the water column and increase water clarity.
- Filter nutrients released from land-based industries before they reach sensitive habitats like coral reefs.
- Prevent soil erosion as the extensive vertical and horizontal root systems of seagrasses stabilise the sea bottom.
- Provide food as well as habitat for fishes, octopuses, shrimp, blue crabs, oysters, etc.
- Endangered marine organisms like dugong (Sea Cow), green turtle, etc, graze directly on seagrass leaves.
- Bottle-nosed dolphins feed on the organisms that live in seagrass areas.
- Detritus (natural waste) of decomposed dead seagrass supplies food for worms, sea cucumbers, crabs, etc.
- After decomposition, it releases nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus which are absorbed by seagrasses and phytoplankton.
- Protect juvenile and small adult fish from large predators and also protect worms, crabs, starfishes, sea cucumbers, sea urchins, etc, from strong currents.
- Provide ideal nursery sites for important commercial marine life like squids and cuttlefish.

**Threats:**

- Seagrass beds are facing decline all over the world at the rate of 2-5% annually.
- Around 30,000 square kilometres of seagrass has been lost during recent decades at a global level.
- These face natural disturbances like grazing, storms, ice-scouring (abrasion and erosion of seabeds by glaciers.) and desiccation (extreme dryness).
- Human disturbances like eutrophication, mechanical destruction of habitat, overfishing, release of nutrients, coastal engineering construction, pollution, etc are destructive for them.

**Way Forward**

- If seagrass habitats are lost, the marine organisms that depend on them for their survival may also face extinction, resulting in the loss of marine ecosystem productivity.
- Protection and restoration should be attempted at a global level as it can play a significant role in mitigating climate change.
- There is an urgent need to take earnest measures to conserve seagrasses and their habitats. For that, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) should intervene immediately and study the status of the different seagrass species before they become extinct.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

**Pakistan on FATF'S Grey List**

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has decided to keep Pakistan on the "greylist" till the next review of its compliance to the recommendations in February 2021.

The decision was taken after a three-day virtual plenary session.

**Key Points**

**Pakistan Remains on Grey List:**

- The FATF had issued the 27-point action plan after placing Pakistan on the 'Grey List' in June 2018. The action plan pertains to curbing money laundering and terror financing.



- Recently, the task force's International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG) noted that Pakistan had complied with 21 points.
- Since 2007, the ICRG has analysed high-risk jurisdictions and recommended specific action to address the money laundering/terror financing risks emanating from them.
- At the recent plenary session, the FATF observed that Pakistan has made progress across all action plan items and has largely addressed 21 of 27 action items.
- Keeping Pakistan on the 'Grey List', the FATF strongly urged Pakistan to swiftly complete its full action plan by February 2021.
- The points on which Pakistan failed to deliver included its lack of action against the non-profit organisations linked to the terror groups banned by the UN Security Council (UNSC); and delays in the prosecution of banned individuals and entities like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief Hafiz Saeed and LeT operations chief, Zaki Ur Rahman Lakhvi, as well as Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar.
- While Saeed was sentenced in February 2020 to 11 years in prison for terror financing, the Pakistan government claims that others are "untraceable".
- Further, Pakistan was found non-compliant in cracking down on terror financing through narcotics and smuggling of mining products including precious stones.
- The FATF process also showed concern about the 4,000 names that were on Pakistan's Schedule-IV list under the Anti-Terrorism Act up to January, but went missing in September 2020.

#### **Consequences for Pakistan:**

- The FATF listing makes it extremely difficult for Pakistan to get financial aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Union.
- Response of Different Countries:
- Turkey proposed that the members should consider Pakistan's good work and instead of waiting for completion of the remaining six of the 27 parameters, an FATF on-site team should visit Pakistan to finalise its assessment.
- On-site teams are permitted only after jurisdictions complete their action plans. Normally such a visit is a signal for exit from the grey or black list.
- When the proposal was placed before the Plenary, no other member seconded the move. It was not supported by even China, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia.

#### **India's Stand:**

- Pakistan continues to provide safe havens to terrorist entities and individuals and has also not yet taken any action against several terrorist entities and individuals including those proscribed by the UNSC, such as Masood Azhar, Dawood Ibrahim, Zakir-ur-Rahman Lakhvi.

#### **Financial Action Task Force**

- Formation: The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 during the G7 Summit in Paris.
- Objectives: To set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- Secretariat: Its Secretariat is located at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) headquarters in Paris.
- Member Countries: The FATF currently has 39 members including two regional organisations — the European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council. India is a member of the FATF.
- Decision Making Body: The FATF Plenary is the decision making body of the FATF. It meets three times per year.

#### **Lists under FATF:**

**Grey List:** Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list (or 'Jurisdictions under increased monitoring'). This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.

**Black List:** Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the blacklist. These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities. The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries. As of this year, there are only two countries on the FATF's black list - North Korea and Iran.

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**

**South Asian Flash Flood Guidance System**

Recently, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has launched the South Asian Flash Flood Guidance System (FFGS), which is aimed at helping disaster management teams and governments make timely evacuation plans ahead of the actual event of flooding.

A dedicated FFGS centre will be established in New Delhi, where weather modelling and analysis of rainfall data observations from member countries will be done.

**Key Points**

**Flash Floods:**

- These are sudden surges in water levels during or following an intense spell of rain.
- These are highly localised events of short duration with a very high peak and usually have less than six hours between the occurrence of the rainfall and peak flood.
- The flood situation worsens in the presence of choked drainage lines or encroachments obstructing the natural flow of water.

**Concerns:**

- Forecasting flash floods is very difficult as an event can occur within three to six hours and the water run-off quantity is very high.
- Frequency of extreme rainfall events has increased due to climate change and south Asia is highly prone to flash floods.
- Data suggest that across the world, about 5,000 people die annually due to flash floods.
- Despite such high mortality, there was no robust forecasting or warning system for flash floods.

**South Asian Flash Flood Guidance System:**

- It has been developed by US-based Hydrologic Research Centre after the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and few South Asian countries put forth their views and the urgent need for such a warning system.

**Warning Mechanism:**

- Based on the rainfall and potential flooding scenario, flash flood warnings will be issued to respective nations.
- Flash flood threat warning will be issued six hours in advance, whereas flood risk warning will be issued 24 hours in advance. Warnings about watershed level will be issued 12 hours in advance.

**India's Role:**

India is leading the delegation of nations, including Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal, in sharing hydrological and meteorological data towards preparing flash flood forecasts.

India's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Central Water Commission (CWC) partnered in developing the system.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Is it a good idea to privatise even the profit-making public sector enterprises? Give reason in support of your answers. (250 words)**

**Ans.**

Recently there has been a change in disinvestment policy for CPSEs, allowing for strategic disinvestment in profit-making CPSEs like BPCL, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, some of which have Navratna status.

**Good Idea**

- **LPG reforms:** Over the years, keeping in line of LPG reforms, disinvestment targets have been raised so as to allow private players more space for investment e.g. FY 2010-11 target was 40000 crore while in FY 2019-20 it is 90000 crore.
- **To plug fiscal deficit:** Necessity to fulfil targets of FRBM Act, which itself have been comprehensively reviewed in 2016 due to regular slippages.
- **New Targets:** Fiscal Deficit by FY2020-21 2.8% and 2.5% by 2023
- Though there have been declining fiscal deficit from over 5% in 2012-13 to 3.4% in 2018-19, challenges remain in face of welfare role of state e.g. PM-KISAN scheme.

- **To ensure the attractiveness of PSEs for the private sector:** To achieve objectives of bringing down shareholding by the government to less than 51% along with the attractiveness of such profit-making CPSEs will help overcome challenges faced in loss-making CPSE's privatization, such as Air India.

**Not a Good Idea**

- **Against values and objectives of LPG reforms:** a profit-making PSU is able to show professionalism, higher productivity, able to compete in the domestic and global market along with meeting welfare objective doesn't need further privatization (a private entity will have only one aim of profit-making).
- **Need for short-term liquidity** (meeting FRBM target etc.) should not compromise stable long term macro-economic structural adjustment. E.g. there is a need to enhance revenue from tax collections and rationalise subsidies. This route also disincentivises the government in ensuring targets of the fiscal deficit are met.
- Global level corporations like China's PetroChina have state support and are profit-making. CPSEs in India can be developed on such a line in strategic areas like energy, shipping etc.

**Way Forward**

Thus, such privatization should not compromise long-term socio-economic considerations. Even if it is done, at the most, some stakes should be diluted rather than going for full-scale privatization that too on level playing and rule-based regime.

**DAILY QUIZ**

- With respect to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), consider the following statements:
  - It aims to implement an integrated approach to Disaster Management in India.
  - It is a statutory body.
  - It is headed by the Minister of Home Affairs.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only (c) 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3 only
- The terms 'Arr-Rinam', 'Motor', 'Arrue' associated with tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh refer to which of the following?
  - Indigenous method of rice cultivation.
  - Harvest festivals
  - Religious practices in sacred groves
  - Quarantine rituals**
- With reference to the convalescent plasma therapy against coronavirus, consider the following statements:
  - The convalescent plasma therapy seeks to make use of the antibodies developed in the recovered patient against the coronavirus.
  - It will be used for the first time to cure any viral disease.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- With reference to the PM-CARES Fund, consider the following statements:
  - It is a fund to deal with COVID-19 pandemic only.
  - Contribution by the companies towards this Fund is considered as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure under the Companies Act, 2013.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Consider the following statements with reference to VIX index:
  - It is an index used to measure volatility expectations of the markets.
  - India VIX has been established by SEBI.
  - VIX value is the important parameters that are taken into account for pricing of derivative instruments.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 2 and 3 only