

Current Affairs

Who and what is whip?

Reference News

Congress has appointed MPs Syed Naseer Hussain and Chhaya Verma as Rajya Sabha whips.

- The party now has the same number of whips and chief whips in the Upper House as in the Lok Sabha.

What is a whip?

A whip is an official of a political party who acts as the party's 'enforcer' inside the legislative assembly or house of parliament.

- Parties appoint a senior member from among their House contingents to issue whips — this member is called a Chief Whip, and he/she is assisted by additional Whips.
- India inherited the concept of the whip from the British parliamentary system.

(Note: A whip in parliamentary parlance is also a written order that party members be present for an important vote, or that they vote only in a particular way.)

Role of whips:

They try to ensure that their fellow political party legislators attend voting sessions and vote according to their party's official policy.

What happens if a whip is disobeyed?

A legislator may face disqualification proceedings if she/he disobeys the whip of the party unless the number of lawmakers defying the whip is 2/3rds of the party's strength in the house. Disqualification is decided by the Speaker of the house.

Limitations of whip:

There are some cases such as Presidential elections where whips cannot direct a Member of Parliament (MP) or Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) to vote in a particular fashion.

Marburg virus

Reference news-

Recently, Guinea confirmed the first recorded case of Marburg virus death in West Africa.

About Marburg virus

- Marburg virus disease (MVD) was formerly known as Marburg hemorrhagic fever.
- Marburg virus disease is a highly virulent disease that causes hemorrhagic fever, with a fatality ratio of up to 88%.
- It is in the same family as the virus that causes **Ebola** virus disease.
- Two large outbreaks that occurred simultaneously in Marburg and Frankfurt in Germany, and in Belgrade, Serbia, in 1967, led to the initial recognition of the disease.
- The outbreak was associated with laboratory work using African green monkeys (*Cercopithecus aethiops*) imported from Uganda.

Symptoms:

Headache, vomiting blood, muscle pains and bleeding through various orifices. Many patients develop severe hemorrhagic signs within seven days. Case fatality rates have varied from 24% to 88% in past outbreaks depending on virus strain and case management.

Transmission

- *Rousettus aegyptiacus*, fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family, are considered to be natural hosts of Marburg virus.
- The Marburg virus is transmitted to people from fruit bats and spreads among humans through human-to-human transmission.
- Once an individual is infected with the virus, Marburg can spread through human-to-human transmission via direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials contaminated with these fluids.

Treatment and vaccines:

Currently there are no vaccines or antiviral treatments approved for MVD. However, supportive care rehydration with oral or intravenous fluids – and treatment of specific symptoms, improves survival.

- The worst epidemic was in Angola in 2005, with 252 infections and a 90% death rate. This epidemic apparently spread through the reuse of contaminated transfusion equipment in a paediatric ward

Democracy summit

Reference news:

USA President Joe Biden will host a 'Summit for Democracy', virtually, on December 9-10.

About the summit

- It will be held around three themes:
 - Defending against authoritarianism,
 - Fighting corruption,
 - Promoting respect for human rights.
- The summit will gather together Heads of State, civil society, philanthropy, and the private sector.
- The Summit is seen as one way to **counter growing Chinese influence**.
- There would be country-wise commitments made at the first summit.
- A second summit which will be in-person will follow in 2022.
- Following a year of consultation, coordination, and action, President Biden will then invite world leaders to gather once more to showcase progress made against their commitments.

Policy on Illegal Migrants

Reference News-

All foreign nationals, including those who enter into the country without valid travel documents or overstay beyond the validity of their visa period, are governed by the provisions contained in:

- The Foreigners Act, 1946
- The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939
- The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920
- The Citizenship Act, 1955, and rules and orders made thereunder.

Exemptions are given from the provisions of The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and the Foreigners Act, 1946 on a case-to-case basis.

Government's efforts or Policy on Illegal Migrants

- Some illegal migrants sneak into India in a clandestine and surreptitious manner mainly through difficult mountainous and riverine terrains along the international borders.
- Central Government has adopted a multi-pronged approach to ensure effective surveillance and domination of land borders to check infiltration of illegal migrants.

- **Physical infrastructure** in the form of border fencing, floodlighting, construction of border roads and establishment of border outposts has been created.
- **Vulnerable border outposts** are regularly reviewed and strengthened by deploying additional manpower, special surveillance equipment and other force multipliers.
- A technological solution in the form of **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS)** has been implemented in some vulnerable border areas.
- Border guarding forces conduct regular patrolling, lay nakas and establish observation posts and carry out anti-tunnelling exercises to stop illegal infiltration.
- Central Government has issued advisory to Border Security Force and Assam Rifles to maintain strict vigilance and surveillance and to take all possible steps for preventing illegal infiltration at International Border

Recent Topic

Reference News-

Recently, the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021, was passed by both the houses of the parliament.

- It seeks to amend the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Act, 1972.

Key Provisions of the Bill:

- **Government Shareholding Threshold:**
 - It seeks to remove the mandatory requirement of the Central government holding not less than 51% of the equity capital in a specified insurer.
- **Defines General Insurance Business:**
 - It defines general insurance business as fire, marine or miscellaneous insurance business.
 - It excludes capital redemption and annuity from certain businesses from the definition.
 - Capital redemption insurance involves payment of a sum of money on a specific date by the insurer after the beneficiary pays premiums periodically.
 - Under annuity certain insurance, the insurer pays the beneficiary over a period of time.
- **Transfer of Control from the Government:**
 - It will not apply to the specified insurers from the date on which the central government relinquishes control of the insurer. Here control means:
 - Power to appoint a majority of directors of a specified insurer.
 - To have power over its management or policy decisions.

- **Empowers the Central Government:**

- It empowers the central government to notify the terms and conditions of service of employees of the specified insurers.
- It provides that schemes formulated by the central government in this regard will be deemed to have been adopted by the insurer.
 - The board of directors of the insurer may change these schemes or frame new policies.
 - Further, powers of the central government under such schemes will be transferred to the board of directors of the insurer.

- **Liabilities of Directors:**

- It specifies that a director of a specified insurer, who is not a whole-time director, will be held liable only for certain acts which includes the acts which have been committed:
 - With his knowledge, attributable through board processes.
 - With his consent or connivance or where he had not acted diligently.

Significance:

- **Private Capital:**

- It will bring in more private capital in the general insurance business and improve its reach to make more products available to customers.

- **Improved Efficiency:**

- The move is part of the government's strategy to open up more sectors to private participation and improve efficiency.

- **Enhance Insurance Penetration:**

- It will enhance insurance penetration and social protection to better secure the interests of policyholders and contribute to faster growth of the economy

Concerns:

- **Affect the Workers:**

- It will affect the insurance sector in the country and the workers engaged with the General Insurance Company.

- **Total Privatisation:**

- It may lead to total privatisation of general insurance companies. Privatising would lead to opening a Pandora's Box, throwing into insecurity 30 crore policyholders.

- **Governments Loss:**
 - The government will also lose money by way of dividend in the proportion of shares being offered.
- **Pensions Safety:**
 - The pensioners in the four public sector general insurance companies were worried about the safety of their future pensions when the central government privatised one of them.
 - The pension fund is dependent on the contributions of the employees so that Pension Trust can pay the pensioners.

Daily Topic

The Charter Act of 1833

The Rise of Gandhi in the Indian Freedom Struggle

M K Gandhi returned from South Africa (where he had lived for more than 20 years) to India in 1915. There he had led a peaceful agitation against the discrimination meted out to Indians and had emerged as a respected leader. It was in South Africa that he developed his brand of Satyagraha. In India, he first used this tool against the British government at Champaran in Bihar.

Note: Aspirants of UPSC 2021 should know the trick to remember the Satyagraha movements chronologically by using the acronym **CAKE**. 'C' stands for Champaran (1917), 'A' stands for Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918) and 'KE' stands for Kheda Satyagraha (1918).

Champaran Satyagraha (1917)

- The first civil disobedience movement by Gandhi in the freedom struggle.
- Persuaded by Rajkumar Shukla, an indigo cultivator, Gandhi went to Champaran in Bihar to investigate the conditions of the farmers there.
- The farmers were suffering under heavy taxes and an exploitative system. They were forced to grow indigo by the British planters under the tinkathia system.
- Gandhi arrived in Champaran to investigate the matter but was not permitted by the British authorities to do so.
- He was asked to leave the place but he refused.
- He was able to gather support from the farmers and masses.
- When he appeared in court in response to a summons, almost 2000 locals accompanied him.
- The case against him was dropped and he was allowed to conduct the inquiry.

- After peaceful protests against the planters and landlords led by Gandhi, the government agreed to abolish the exploitative tinkathia system.
- The peasants also received a part of the money extracted from them as compensation.
- Champaran struggle is called the first experiment on Satyagraha by Gandhi and later Ahmedabad Mill Strike and Kheda Satyagraha occurred.
- It was during this time that Gandhi was given the names 'Bapu' and 'Mahatma' by the people.

Kheda Satyagraha (1918)

- 1918 was a year of failed crops in the Kheda district of Gujarat due to droughts.
- As per law, the farmers were entitled to remission if the produce was less than a quarter of the normal output.
- But the government refused any remission from paying land revenue.
- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, under Gandhi's guidance, led the farmers in protest against the collection of taxes in the wake of the famine.
- People from all castes and ethnicities of the district lend their support to the movement.
- The protest was peaceful and people showed remarkable courage even in the face of adversities like confiscation of personal property and arrest.
- Finally, the authorities gave in and gave some concessions to the farmers.

Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918)

- Gandhi used Satyagraha and hunger strike for the first time during an industrial dispute between the owners and workers of a cotton mill in Ahmedabad.
- The owners wanted to withdraw the plague bonus to the workers while the workers were demanding a hike of 35% in their wages.
- During the peaceful strike led by Gandhi, he underwent a hunger strike.
- The Ahmedabad Mill strike was successful and the workers were granted the wage hike they wanted.

In all these movements, Gandhi was able to involve the masses including farmers, artisans and even the so-called lower castes. This was a change from the previous movements when the participation was limited to the upper and the middle classes

QUIZ

1. Among the following cities, which one lies on a longitude closest to that of Delhi?

- a. Bengaluru
- b. Hyderabad
- c. Nagpur
- d. pune

Solution (a)

2. Consider the following statements:

1. Most of the world's coral reefs are in tropical waters.
2. More than one-third of the world's coral reefs are located in the territories of Australia, Indonesia and Philippines.
3. Coral reefs host far more number of animal phyla than those hosted by tropical rainforests.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Solution (d)

3. Which of the following leaf modifications occur(s) in the desert areas to inhibit water loss?

1. Hard and waxy leaves
2. Tiny leaves
3. Thorns instead of leaves

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 2 and 3 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Solution (d)

4. Which of the following statements best describes "carbon fertilization"?

- a) Increased plant growth due to increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere
- b) Increased temperature of Earth due to increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere
- c) Increased acidity of oceans as a result of increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere
- d) Adaptation of all living beings on Earth to the climate change brought about by the increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere

Solution (a)

5. Why is a plant called *Prosopis juliflora* often mentioned in news?

- a) Its extract is widely used in cosmetics.
- b) It tends to reduce the biodiversity in the area in which it grows.
- c) Its extract is used in the synthesis of pesticides.

d) None of these

Solution (b)

6. India's National Institute of Ocean Technology has signed an agreement with which organization to develop Research Moored Array for African-Asian-Australian Monsoon Analysis and Prediction?

- a) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- b) National Weather Service
- c) Weather Underground
- d) Accuweather

Solution: A

7. Chief Election Commissioner of India has inaugurated the 11th Annual Meeting of FEMBoSA. Who is the current Chief Election Commissioner of India?

- a) Achal Kumar Jyoti
- b) Sunil Arora
- c) Rajeev Kumar
- d) Sushil Chandra

Solution: D

8. Along with which organization, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has launched a loan interest subvention scheme to provide financial assistance to energy biomethanation projects?

- a) International Atomic Energy Agency
- b) United Nations Industrial Development Organization
- c) United Nations Environment Programme
- d) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Solution: B

9. Which Indian city has been declared as the first 'water plus' city of India?

- a) Kolkata
- b) Bengaluru
- c) Indore
- d) Hyderabad

Solution: C [Indore]

10. Which bank has signed a MoU with NABARD and Jammu & Kashmir Gramin Bank for Joint Liability Groups financing?

- a) Bank of Baroda
- b) Indian Bank
- c) SIDBI
- d) State Bank of India

Solution: D