### News Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>News Articles</th>
<th>Page Number*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SC refers Oxytocin ban to larger bench</td>
<td>7 7 9 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Poultry breeders pitch for import of GM maize</td>
<td>- 5 - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Belt and roadblocks (OPED)</td>
<td>9 9 11 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Russia launches rocket with humanoid robot into space</td>
<td>18 22 22 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Microplastics in drinking water not a health risk for now: WHO</td>
<td>- 18 22 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Practice cum Revision - MCQs</td>
<td>@end of the video</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*C – Chennai; B – Bengaluru; D – Delhi; T – Thiruvananthapuram*
SC refers Oxytocin ban to larger bench

The Supreme Court on Thursday referred to a larger bench a batch of petitions challenging a government notification banning private companies from manufacturing Oxytocin, a first line drug administered to save the lives of young mothers suffering from excessive bleeding immediately after childbirth.

At the centre of the controversy is an April 2018 notification issued by the Centre under Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 restricting the manufacture of Oxytocin for domestic use. Only public sector undertakings could manufacture the drug, the notification said.

Extracting milk

The trigger for the notification was a 21-year-old problem: clandestine manufacture of the drug and its misuse by dairy owners on milk animals to artificially extract milk.

However, the Delhi High Court, in a decision on December 14 last year, quashed the notification as arbitrary and unreasonable. The High Court said Oxytocin was an essential drug and the “Central government did not adequately weigh the danger to the lives of the users of Oxytocin, i.e. pregnant women and young mothers, nor did it consider the deleterious effect to the public generally and women particularly, of the possible restricted supply of a lifesaving drug, if the manufacture is confined to one single public sector enterprise.”

The Bench of Justices A M Sapre and Indu Malhotra, in a 49-page judgment, concluded that the case raises substantial questions of law to be answered by a three-judge Bench.

News:

- Regarding the ban in oxytocin
- April 2018 notification by Central Govt.
- Section 26A of Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940
  - Central Govt has the power to regulate, restrict or prohibit the manufacture, sale or distribution of drug and cosmetics, in public interest
  - Use of any drug or cosmetic is likely to involve any risk to human beings or animals
  - Drug does not have the therapeutic value claimed or purported to be claimed for it
  - Drug contains any ingredients and in such quantity for which there is no therapeutic justification

- April 2018 notification:
  - Central Govt has restricted the manufacture of oxytocin for domestic use to only to Public Sector Undertakings.

- Oxytocin:
  - Natural hormone secreted by the Pituitary glands of the humans & also some mammals
  - Plays an important role in women during childbirth and lactation
  - Artificially manufactured and given as a prescription drug
  - Used to start birth contractions
  - Injected to Milk animals – For more milk
  - Included in National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)
Practice Question – Prelims

Q. Which among the following hormones has recently been in news, for its rampant misuse in milch animals?
   a) Insulin
   b) Adrenaline
   c) Oxytocin
   d) Dopamine
Poultry breeders pitch import of GM maize

They will otherwise have to wait till mid-October for delivery of non-GM maize, and pay a steep price.

Activists oppose move

Several environmental organizations have raised objections to the import of GM maize, which they say is likely to spread to wild bird populations, posing a threat to the local biodiversity.

The poultry industry's call for importing maize has been met with strong opposition from environmentalists, who argue that the import of GM maize could pose a threat to the local biodiversity.

The activists have also pointed out that the import of GM maize could have serious implications for the local poultry industry, which is already facing challenges due to the pandemic.

Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I - (200 marks)

- Current events of national and international importance.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-IV


- Science and Technology - developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.
- Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

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Poultry farmers and breeders in Karnataka, who are already facing a shortage of indigenous maize, have said that they cannot afford the high price of non-GM maize.

They are also concerned about the impact of GM maize on the local biodiversity, which is already under threat due to the pandemic.

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Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)

Final decision on import of GM food

- Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) under MoEFCC

2018: India allowed import of chicken from U.S.

- U.S. Chicken fed on GM Maize and Soya (argument of farmers)

Residue from GM Cottonseed oil → feed for chicken, cattle and fish

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Practice Question – Prelims

Q) Consider the following statements.

1. Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is under the Ministry of External Affairs.

2. It regulates and promotes foreign trade in line with the principles of liberalization and globalization.

3. It is responsible for implementing Foreign Trade policy of India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a) 1 only
b) 1 and 2
c) 2 and 3
d) 1, 2 and 3
BRI → Chinese Marshall Plan → A response to China’s overcapacity in infrastructure
  • China's vast foreign reserve, expertise in building infrastructure, overcapacity in iron, cement, etc + Unemployed labour
  • Infrastructure need in South East, Central Asia and Africa

BRI → China to review BRI → China - US Trade War +
  • Criticisms on BRI +
  • Division of its Politburo

BRI - announced in 2013 - Two parts
  • I. Rail routes, highways, oil and gas pipelines, etc
    - Xi'an - Central Asia - Russia - West Asia - Europe
    • CPEC - a branch
  • II. Network of ports + Coastal Infra
    - Eastern China - SE Asia - South Asia - Gulf - East Africa - Europe

BRI did not succeed - full utilization of overcapacity
  • ¼ of projects failed
  • Why
    - No open tendering
    - No competitive bidding
    - No environmental impact studies
  • Local issues:
    - Lack of resources
    - Protest on land procurement
    - Corruption
    - Financial viability
    - Unsustainable debt
    - Low investment return
    - High interest rate

Chinese President - April 2019 - 2nd BRI Forum
  • To fine-tune BRI; to bring more transparency, clean governance and green projects
  • BRI - now a Chinese scheme - need to incorporate best practices to succeed
News:

- Russia has launched an unmanned rocket to international Space Station (ISS) carrying a life-size humanoid robot - by Roscosmos

- Fedor will assist astronauts in ISS

- FEDOR - Final Experimental Demonstration Object Research - Skybot F850

- First robot sent to space to Russia

- Put in MS-14 spacecraft launched from Russia’s cosmodrome, Baikonur, Kazakhstan

Other robots in space:

- Robonaut 2 - NASA

- CIMON - Crew Interactive Mobile Companion
  - Airbus on behalf of German Space Agency, DLR

- Kirobo, JAXA

- SPHERES & Astrobot - NASA

International Space Station (ISS)

- Joint project between 8 space agencies
  - NASA - USA
  - Roscosmos - Russia
  - JAXA - Japan
  - ESA - Europe
  - CSA - Canada

- Scientific research conducted in space to learn more about living + working in Space

India:

- June 2019 - Announcement by ISRO - To build a new space station in another 5 to 7 years
Practice Question – Prelims

Q. International Space Station is a joint project of the space agencies of which of the following countries?

1. USA
2. Russia
3. India
4. Japan
5. China

Choose the correct answer/s from the options given below.

a) 1, 2 and 4 only
b) 1, 3 and 5 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 only
d) 3, 4 and 5 only

Practice Question – Prelims

Q. Consider the following pairs.

Space Robots in International Space Station - Space Agencies
1. FEDOR - Roscosmos
2. Robonaut2 - NASA
3. Vikram - ISRO

Choose the incorrect pair/s from the options given below.

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

Microplastics in drinking water
not a health risk for now: WHO

The UN body has called for more research into potential future threats

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday called for more research into potential future threats.

Microplastics: Microplastics are ubiquitous in the environment and have been found in drinking water. They should be taken by policymakers and the public to better manage plastics and reduce the use of plastics when possible.

WHO said that microplastics larger than 50 micrometers are not likely to be absorbed by the human body but said the chances of absorbing very small microplastic particles, including nano-sized plastics, could be higher, although it said data is limited.

"We urgently need to know more about the health impact of microplastics because they are everywhere," said Maria Neira, director of the Public Health Impact at WHO, in a statement.

"We also need to stop the rise in plastic pollution worldwide," she added.

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Part A—Preliminary Examination

Paper I - (200 marks)

Current events of national and international importance.

Part B—Main Examination

PAPER-III

General Studies—II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

PAPER-IV

General Studies—III: Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management

- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

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• WHO: First report on effects of microplastics on human health
  ➔ Microplastics - length less than 5 mm
  ➔ Level of microplastics in drinking water - not yet dangerous
  ➔ Need for more research

• Limited number of researches in this field - difficult to analyze impacts

• WHO: Crackdown on plastic pollution
  ➔ Benefit environment
  ➔ ↓ exposure of human to microplastics
  ➔ Role of policymakers on plastic management

Need:
• A robust health risk assessment of microplastics - address data gaps
  ➔ Better understanding - occurrence and detection - microplastics and nanoplastics in water
  ➔ Research on adverse health impacts
  ➔ Research on capacity of microplastics to transport pathogenic bacteria

PRACTICE QUESTIONS DISCUSSION
Practice Question – Prelims

Q1. Which among the following hormones has recently been in news, for its rampant misuse in milch animals?
   a) Insulin
   b) Adrenaline
   c) Oxytocin
   d) Dopamine

Practice Question – Prelims

Q2. Consider the following statements.
   1. Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is under the Ministry of External Affairs.
   2. It regulates and promotes foreign trade in line with the principles of liberalization and globalization.
   3. It is responsible for implementing Foreign Trade policy of India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
   a) 1 only
   b) 1 and 2
   c) 2 and 3
   d) 1, 2 and 3
Practice Question – Prelims

Q3. International Space Station is a joint project of the space agencies of which of the following countries?

1. USA
2. Russia
3. India
4. Japan
5. China

Choose the correct answer/s from the options given below.

a) 1, 2 and 4 only
b) 1, 3 and 5 only
c) 1, 2 and 3 only
d) 3, 4 and 5 only

Practice Question – Prelims

Q4. Consider the following pairs.

Space Robots in International Space Station - Space Agencies
1. FEDOR - Roscosmos
2. Robonaut2 - NASA
3. Vikram - ISRO

Choose the incorrect pair/s from the options given below.

a) 1 and 2 only
b) 3 only
c) 2 and 3 only
d) 1 and 3 only
Q1. Option ‘c’ – Oxytocin
Q2. Option ‘c’ – 2 and 3
Q3. Option ‘a’ – 1, 2 and 4 only
Q4. Option ‘b’ - 3 only

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