

09.05.21

INDIA-EU LEADERS' MEETING



- At the invitation of the President of the European Council Mr. Charles Michel, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi participated in the India-EU Leaders' Meeting.
- The meeting was held in a hybrid format with the participation of leaders of all the 27 EU Member States as well as the President of the European Council and the European Commission.
- This is the first time that the EU hosted a meeting with India in the EU+27 format.
- The EU+27 have met in this format only once before, with the US President in March this year.
- It is a significant political milestone and will further build on the momentum witnessed in the relationship since the 15th India-EU Summit in July 2020. The meeting was the initiative of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union.
- During the meeting, the leaders exchanged views on three key thematic areas: i) foreign policy and security; ii) COVID-19, climate and environment; and iii) trade, connectivity and technology.
- The leaders welcomed the decision to resume negotiations on both the Trade and Investment Agreements which will enable the two sides to realise the full potential of the economic partnership.
- India and the EU launched an ambitious and comprehensive 'Connectivity Partnership' which is focused on enhancing digital, energy, transport and people-to-people connectivity.
- India welcomed the EU's decision to join CDRI.
- India and the EU also agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation on digital and emerging technologies such as 5G, AI, Quantum and High-Performance Computing including through the early operationalization of the Joint Task Force on AI and the Digital Investment Forum.
- A finance contract of Euro 150 million for the Pune Metro Rail Project was signed by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, and European Investment Bank.
- India-EU Leaders Meeting has set a significant milestone by providing a new direction to the Strategic Partnership and giving a fresh impetus for implementing the ambitious India-EU Roadmap 2025 adopted at the 15th India-EU Summit held in July 2020.

STARSHIP SN15



- The Starship SN15 blasted off from the SpaceX launch site in Boca Chica, Texas, along the Gulf Coast.
- Maneuvering itself back into vertical position under rocket thrust as it approached the ground, the 16-story, three-engine vehicle descended to a gentle touchdown on its landing gear.
- The flight came on the 60th anniversary of the first spaceflight by an American astronaut Alan Shepard's launch on a 15-minute suborbital mission atop NASA's Mercury-Redstone rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida.

- SpaceX achieved the first successful touchdown of its prototype Starship rocket during the latest test flight of the next-generation launch vehicle in south Texas, after four previous landing attempts ended in explosions.
- The feat marked a key milestone for the private rocket company of Elon Musk in its development of a reusable heavy-lift launch vehicle to eventually carry astronauts and large cargo payloads to the moon and Mars.

ARCTIC SCIENCE MINISTERIAL (ASM3)



- India is participating in the 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM3) - the global platform for discussing research and cooperation in the Arctic region (8-9 May, 2021).
- The first two meetings—ASM1 and ASM2—were held in the USA in 2016 and Germany in 2018, respectively.
- ASM3, jointly organised by Iceland and Japan, is the first Ministerial meeting being held in Asia.
- The meeting is designed to provide opportunities to various stakeholders to enhance collective understanding of the Arctic region, emphasize and engage in constant monitoring, and strengthen observations.
- The theme for this year is 'Knowledge for a Sustainable Arctic'.

India and Arctic

- India's engagement with the Arctic dates back to 1920 with the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in Paris. Since July 2008, India has a permanent research station in the Arctic called Himadri at NyAlesund, Svalbard Area in Norway.

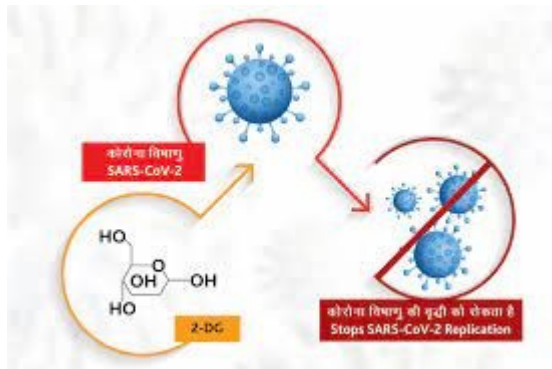
- Since 2013, India enjoys 'Observer' status in the Arctic Council with twelve other countries (Japan, China, France, Germany, UK, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Spain, Netherlands, Singapore, and South Korea).
- It has also deployed a multi-sensor moored observatory called IndARC in the Kongsfjorden fjord since July 2014.
- The research in the Arctic region from India is coordinated, conducted, and promoted by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.
- The launch of NISER (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) satellite mission by India, in collaboration with the USA, is underway.
- NISER aims to conduct global measurements of the cause and consequences of land surface changes using advanced radar imaging.
- India's contributions to the Sustained Arctic Observational Network (SAON) would continue

CHRISTCHURCH CALL TO ACTION TO ELIMINATE TERRORIST AND VIOLENT EXTREMIST CONTENT ONLINE



- The United States will join the Christchurch Call to Action to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online, a New Zealand-led global campaign to stamp out violent extremism online.
- The Christchurch Call is named after the New Zealand city in which 51 people from the Muslim community were killed in terrorist attacks broadcast live on the Internet on 15 March 2019.
- The Christchurch Call is an action plan that commits governments, international organizations and Internet players to take a series of measures, in particular: developing tools to prevent the downloading of terrorist and violent extremist content;
- combating the causes of violent extremism; improving transparency in the detection and removal of content; and
- ensuring that the algorithms designed and used by businesses do not direct users towards violent extremist content, so as to reduce their viral nature.

2-DEOXY-D-GLUCOSE (2-DG)



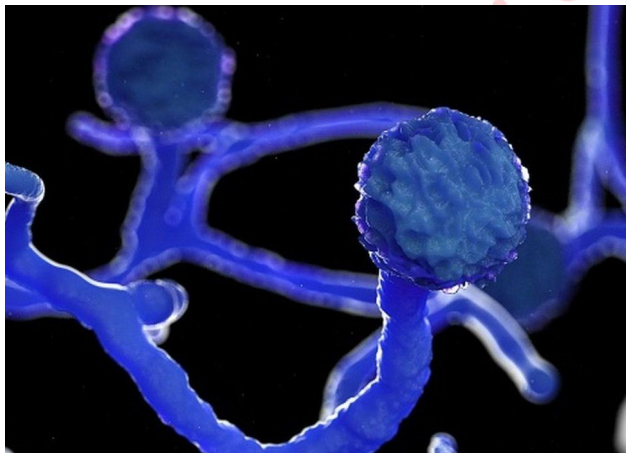
- Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) approved anti-COVID drug developed by DRDO for emergency use.
- An anti-COVID-19 therapeutic application of the drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) has been developed by Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a lab of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Hyderabad.

- Clinical trial results have shown that this molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence.

Higher proportion of patients treated with 2-DG showed RT-PCR negative conversion in COVID patients.

- The drug will be of immense benefit to the people suffering from COVID-19.
- The drug comes in powder form in sachet, which is taken orally by dissolving it in water.
- It accumulates in the virus infected cells and prevents virus growth by stopping viral synthesis and energy production.
- Its selective accumulation in virally infected cells makes this drug unique.

MUCORMYCOSIS



- Niti Aayog member Dr VK Paul has said that mucormycosis known as black fungus affects those people who are suffering from diabetes.
- Reacting to reports of mucormycosis or black fungus among Covid-19 patients, he said, the infection affects only those who have a high blood sugar level.
- Mucormycosis is a very rare infection.
- It is caused by exposure to mucor mould which is commonly found in soil, plants, manure, and decaying fruits and vegetables.
- It is ubiquitous and found in soil and air and even in the nose and mucus of healthy people.
- It affects the sinuses, the brain and the lungs and can be life-threatening in diabetic or severely immunocompromised individuals, such as cancer patients or people with HIV/AIDS.

- Doctor believe mucormycosis, which has an overall mortality rate of 50%, may be being triggered by the use of steroids, a life-saving treatment for severe and critically ill Covid-19 patients.
- Steroids reduce inflammation in the lungs for Covid-19 and appear to help stop some of the damage that can happen when the body's immune system goes into overdrive to fight off coronavirus.
- But they also reduce immunity and push up blood sugar levels in both diabetics and non-diabetic Covid-19 patients.
- It's thought that this drop in immunity could be triggering these cases of mucormycosis.

Sri Lanka to ban palm oil imports, raze plantations over environmental concerns



- Sri Lanka has imposed a ban on palm oil imports and ordered oil palm plantations in the country to be replaced with rubber trees and other crops over the next decade, citing adverse environmental and social impacts.
- The decision is based on recommendations from a 2018 report by a panel of environmental experts, who linked oil palm plantations to soil erosion and the drying up of water sources.
- Unlike in other countries where the crop is grown, oil palms aren't a driver of deforestation in Sri Lanka; instead, they've replaced rubber plantations, which host a higher level of biodiversity and provide more jobs for locals.
- Another concern is that oil palm is becoming an invasive species, occurring in the wild in a forest reserve, with as-yet-unknown impacts on native flora and fauna.

Reduce human-caused methane emissions by 45% to avoid worst of climate change: UN



- Human-caused methane emissions must be cut by 45 per cent to avoid the worst effects of climate change, a new United Nations report has said.
- Such a cut would prevent a rise in global warming by up to 0.3 degrees Celsius by 2045, the report added.
- It would also prevent 260,000 premature deaths, 775,000 asthma-related hospital visits annually, as well as 25 million tonnes of crop losses.

- Human-caused methane emissions are increasing faster currently than at any other time since record keeping began in the 1980s.
- Carbon dioxide levels have dropped during the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
- However, methane in the atmosphere reached record levels last year, according to the data from the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- The report said this was a cause of concern as methane was an extremely powerful greenhouse gas.
- It was responsible for about 30 per cent of warming since pre-industrial times.
- However, cutting methane emissions can rapidly reduce the rate of warming in the near-term as the gas broke down quickly, the report said.
- Governments worldwide were aspiring to reduce methane.
- For instance, the European Commission had adopted the European Union Methane Strategy in October 2020.
- It outlined measures to cut methane emissions in Europe and internationally.
- The UN report noted that most human-caused methane emissions came from three sectors: Fossil fuels, waste and agriculture.
- Oil and gas extraction, processing and distribution accounted for 23 per cent of methane emissions in the fossil fuel sector.
- Coal mining accounted for 12 per cent of emissions.
- Landfills and wastewater made up about 20 per cent of emissions in the waste sector.
- In the agricultural sector, livestock emissions from manure and enteric fermentation constituted for roughly 32 per cent and rice cultivation eight per cent of emissions.
- The assessment found that the mitigation potential varied between countries and regions.
- Europe had the greatest potential to curb methane emissions from farming, fossil fuel operations and waste management.
- India had the greatest potential to reduce methane emissions in the waste sector.
- China's mitigation potential was best in coal production and livestock, while Africa's was in livestock, followed by oil and gas.
- The report said the fossil fuel industry had the greatest potential for low-cost methane cuts.
- According to the report, up to 80 per cent of measures in the oil and gas industry could be implemented at negative or low cost.
- About 60 per cent of methane cuts in this sector could make money as reducing leaks would make more gas available for sale, the report said

- The waste sector could cut its methane emissions by improving the disposal of sewage around the world.
- Three behavioural changes — reducing food waste and loss, improving livestock management and adopting healthy diets (vegetarian or with a lower meat and dairy content) — could reduce methane emissions by 65–80 million tonnes per year over the next few decades, the report said.
- The report, titled Global Methane Assessment: Benefits and Costs of Mitigating Methane Emissions was released by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the United Nations Environment Programme May 6, 2021.

Indian and Indonesian navies carry out military drill in southern Arabian Sea



- The navies of India and Indonesia on Saturday carried out a military drill in the Southern Arabian Sea with a focus on further improving their interoperability
- The 'Passage' exercises are regularly conducted by the Indian Navy with friendly foreign navies.
- Under the framework of comprehensive strategic partnership between India and Indonesia, the two navies share a strong partnership of operational cooperation.

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