



PLUTUS IAS

Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. (GST NO-09AAPCA1478E1ZH)
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to
Priyagold Building gate, Sector 2, Pocket I, Noida,
Uttar Pradesh 201301, CONTACT NO- 8448440231

CONTENT BY -JITHIN LAL (GENERAL STUDIES FACULTY UPSC)

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1.Operation Thunder: INTERPOL, WCO and India Customs intercept 18 tonnes of Red Sandalwood

The INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization conducted Operation Thunder, 2020 in 103 countries. The operation was conducted against environmental crimes.

[About Operation Thunder](#)

The Operation Thunder was held between September 14, 2020 and October 11, 2020. It resulted in large seizures of protected forestry and wildlife specimens. This triggered arrests and investigations world-wide including India.

[Operation Thunder in India](#)

In India, the India Customs along with INTERPOL and WCO seized 18 tonnes of red sandalwood that were destined for UAE. The seizures included 1.3 tonnes of ivory, 1 tonnes of pangolin scales, 1,700 killed pangolins, 87 truckloads of timber, 56,200 kg of marine products and 15,878 kg of plants.

The operation recovered 45,000 live animals. This included 1,400 turtles, 6,000 tortoise eggs, 1,600 birds, 1,800 reptiles.

[Background](#)

According to INTERPOL, wildlife and forestry crime is the fourth largest illegal trade in the world. It often occurs in corruption, tax evasion, money laundering.

[About the Operation](#)

The Operation is being held since 2017. Under the operation, the participating countries focused on particularly vulnerable species protected under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in Wild Fauna and Flora).

[Significance of Operation Thunder](#)

The illegal trade in wildlife is estimated to be 20 billion USD per year.

[Other Operations of INTERPOL](#)

INTERPOL is conducting several other operations to protect the wildlife. They are as follows

Project Predator

The project was enforced in 2010. It focuses on big cats and other wildlife. It assists its member countries to organise intelligence gathering, transnational operations, providing investigative support, etc.

Project Wisdom

The project focuses on elephants and rhinoceros. White Rhino horn is reduced to powder and used in traditional medicines. Ivory is carved out and sold as artifact. Project Wisdom supports its member countries in preventing hunting of elephants and rhinos.

Operation Thunderbird

It focuses on tackling illegal trade in timber and wildlife. It has been conducted since 2017.

Operation Worthy II

It targets ivory trafficking in Africa. It has been held since 2015.

Operation PAWS

PAWS is Protection of Asian Wildlife Species. It has been implemented since 2015.

2.Mission COVID Suraksha: Key Facts

The Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced Mission COVID Suraksha. Under the mission, the Government of India has allocated Rs 900 crores to the research and development of COVID-19 vaccines in India. The funds allocated do not cover the cost and distribution of the vaccines.

Key Highlights

The mission is a part of the stimulus package launched on November 12, 2020, that is worth Rs 2.65 lakh crores. Along with the mission, the finance minister also announced several other measures of economic stimulus. Also, Atma Nirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana was launched to boost employment in the country during COVID-19 recovery phase.

Vaccines in India

Currently three vaccines are in trial in India. They are COVEXIN, COVERSIELD and the ZyKov-D vaccine. COVEXIN is being developed by Indian Council of Medical Research and Bharat Biotech. COVISHIELD is being developed by Oxford University and Serum

Institute of Technology. ZyKov-D is being developed by Zydus Cadila. All three vaccines are currently under trials in India.

Apart from these three vaccines, the Russian Vaccine Sputnik V is also under trials in the country.

COVAX of GAVI

India is a signatory of the COVAX facility of GAVI. GAVI is Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization. COVAX is a programme launched by GAVI to prevent vaccine nationalism. India has pledged 15 million USD for this initiative.

India bilateral agreements on COVID-19 vaccines

In October 2020, India and Myanmar signed agreements to jointly produce and supply COVID-19 vaccines. This is a part of India's Act East Policy.

Earlier in November 2020, Bangladesh signed a deal with India's Serum Institute to buy 30 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines

At WTO

India along with South Africa has proposed to relax certain provisions of Intellectual Property Agreements to contain COVID-19 pandemic at the World Trade Organization. This has been backed by the World Health Organizations.

3.China launches world's first 6G experimental satellite

China recently launched the first 6G experimental satellite. The satellite will test the technology of Terahertz waves in space.

Key Highlights

On November 6, 2020, China launched the world's first experimental satellite. It was launched into orbit along with 12 other satellites. The satellite weighs 70 kg approximately. The satellite carries technologies used for forest fire prevention and crop disaster monitoring.

About 6G

The 6G band lies between the 5G millimetre wave frequency and terahertz frequency. The 6G is more advantageous than the 5G in terms of speed and lossless transmission, especially in space.

Background

The 14th five year plan of China (2021-25) is dedicated to becoming technologically self-reliant in artificial intelligence, semiconductor chips, fifth generation wireless technologies and autonomous vehicles.

International Telecommunication Union on 6G

The research for 6G was recently launched by the ITU in March 2020 during its 34th ITU Working Group meet. The research works are to begin by 2021. Both machines and humans will use 6G. In other words, 6G will be more related to Artificial Intelligence communication.

Current status of 5G

5G is only in its initial stages. There are only 82 commercial networks in the world using 5G. They are mainly located in US, UK and Australia.

5G in India

The Government of India is to carry out a 5G spectrum auction in the first quarter of 2021. According to the Department of Telecommunications, the sale will include almost 8,300 megahertz of airwaves. The auction was to be held in 2020. However, it was postponed due to poor financial health.

Disadvantages of 5G

The range of 5G connectivity is not good as the 5G waves can travel only very short distances. The initial costs of 5G are high. It consumes more power and hence the battery drain in devices using 5G will be faster. The upload speeds in 5G do not match with the download speeds.

4.11th Annual Pneumonia and Diarrhoea Progress Report

On November 12, 2020, on the occasion of the World Pneumonia Day, the International Vaccines Access Centre released the 11th Annual Pneumonia and Diarrhoea Progress Report. According to the report, India has made significant progress in vaccination coverage to prevent Diarrhoea and Pneumonia.

Key Findings of the report

According to the report, India has achieved the global target of 90% coverage of three of five vaccines. These vaccines are DPT Vaccine, Measles vaccine, PCV vaccine, Rotavirus vaccine and Haemophilus Influenzae Type B vaccine. DPT is Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus vaccine. PCV is Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine.

Also, the report says that India has completed the 100-day agenda of unprecedented national scale up of Rotavirus vaccine. This will help protect 26 million children born with cases of rotavirus diarrhoea.

Progress of India

The report says that India has achieved the following

- The coverage of rotavirus vaccine in India has increased from 35% in 2018 to 53% 2019.
- The coverage of PCV vaccine has increased from 6% in 2018 to 15% in 2019.

About the report

The report tracked the progress by analysing the following indicators

- Breastfeeding
- Immunisation
- Antibiotics
- Oral Rehydration Solution
- Zinc Supplementation

Of the 15 countries that were focussed by the report, India is one among the four that exceeded targets of exclusive breastfeeding.

What were the leggings?

According to the report, India failed to reach all four targets. Only 51% of children in India received Oral Rehydration Solution and only 20% received Zinc. These two are considered as the most effective treatments in preventing deaths from diarrhoea in children.

Background

India accounts to 20% of deaths due to pneumonia in the world. Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are estimated to have the majority of Pneumonia cases in the country, especially in children of age under 5.

International Vaccine Access Centre

It builds knowledge support for the development of vaccines. It was established in 2003 and has served several international organizations since then. It is a part of the John Hopkins School of Public Health.

5.WHO: A Traditional Medicine Centre to be set up in India

The World Health Organization announced that it is to set up a traditional medicine centre in India.

Key Highlights

The announcement of establishing the centre was made during the inaugural ceremony of two future ready Ayurveda institutions. These institutions were inaugurated in Jamnagar and Jaipur. The Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda was established in Jamnagar and has been conferred with the status of

Institution of National Importance. The National Institute of Ayurveda that has been inaugurated at Jaipur has been designated as the Institution Deemed to be University. The status for these institutions were provided by the University Grants Commission. The institutes were inaugurated as part of Dhanteras celebrations.

About the Traditional Medicine Centre

The new centre of traditional medicines will support efforts of WHO to implement WHO Strategy of Traditional Medicines 2014-23. The strategy aims to develop policies and action plans to strengthen the role of traditional medicines in universal health coverage.

Dhanteras Celebrations

Every year, Dhanteras is celebrated on Dhanvantari Jayanti. Also, the National Ayurveda Day is marked during Dhanteras Celebrations.

Demand for traditional medicines

According to the National Medicinal Plant Board, the global trade of traditional medicines stands at 120 billion USD. It is predicted that it might grow to 7 trillion USD by 2050.

Ayurvedic drugs and USFDA

Several countries have fixed their export and import policies based on USFDA regulations. Some of the European countries have even made it mandatory for a drug to be certified by USFDA for its sale or distribution.

USFDA does not approve compounded drugs. On the other hand, most of the Ayurvedic drugs are compounded.

What is Pharmacy Compounding?

A compounding pharmacist creates medications from base ingredients for patients. It does not hold a pre-mixed formula. The compounding pharmacist begins with base drugs and prepares them to fit an individual patient needs.

6.National Ayurveda Day marked on Dhanteras

Every year National Ayurveda Day is marked on Dhanteras, that is, Dhanwantri Jayanti. Dhanwantri is a Hindu god of medicines. This year the day is marked under the theme Theme: Ayurveda for COVID-19

Key Highlights

The Ministry of AYUSH began to celebrate Dhanteras as National Ayurveda Day since 2016.

About Ayurveda

The main advantage of Ayurveda over the other traditional medicines is that it is well documented. Prevention of disease and promotion of health are the main objectives of Ayurveda.

About Lord Dhanwantari

He is an avatar of Lord Vishnu. He is also called the God of Ayurveda. Hindus worship him for sound health.

Why is National Ayurveda Day marked in India?

- To promote usage of Ayurvedic medicine.
- To boost treatment principles of Ayurveda
- To reduce mortality

AYUSH Ministry approved manufacturing of Ayurvedic COVID-19 drug



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On the eve of National Ayurveda Day, the Ministry of Ayush approved the manufacturing of Ayurvedic drugs called "Aastha-15". The drug was developed by Dalmia Centre for Research and Development. The Aastha-15 is to be made available in the first phase through prescriptions for mild and moderate COVID-19 cases.

The clinical trials for Aastha-15 began in May 2020. These Ayurvedic drugs also have to undergo three phases of clinical trials just like the Allopathic drugs.

Demand for Ayurvedic Medicines

The demand for Indian Ayurvedic medicines has grown globally. The export value of herbal and ayurvedic medicines in India were 446 million in 2019.

International Conference on Standardisation of AYUSH Terminologies

The ICoSDiTAUS 2020 was held in New Delhi in February 2020. It was the biggest international event that focuses on standardisation of traditional medicines. Around 16 countries came together at the conference. They were India, Iran, Switzerland,

Japan, Jamaica, Uzbekistan, Bhutan, Ghana, Qatar, Equatorial Guinea, Myanmar, Cuba, Curacao, Serbia, Mauritius and Sri Lanka.