

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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2023

1. India reports a record 93% DPT3 immunisation coverage in 2022: WHO: The Hindu – Page 12

Why is it in news?	The coverage rate for DPT3, the third dose of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccines, in India rose to an all-time of 93% in 2022, surpassing the previous pre-pandemic best of 91% recorded in 2019, and also marking a sharp increase from the 85% recorded in 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) has said.
UPSC SYLLABUS RELEVANCE for prelims and Mains	<p>Prelims: General Science</p> <p>Mains: General Studies II - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.</p>
Important concepts	DPT
<p align="center">Prelims PYQ Exercise-Find answer:</p> <p>Q. 'Mission Indradhanush' launched by the Government of India pertains to (2016)</p> <p>(a) immunization of children and pregnant women (b) construction of smart cities across the country (c) India's own search for the Earth-like planets in outer space (d) New Educational Policy</p>	
<p align="center">Today's prelims practice question:</p> <p>Q. Consider the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tetanus is acquired through infection of a cut or wound with the spores of the fungi <i>Clostridium tetani</i>. 2. Pertussis spreads easily from person to person mainly through droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. <p>Which among the statements mentioned above is/are correct?</p> <p>A. 1 only B. 2 only</p>	

- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Correct answer: B

Explanation: Tetanus is acquired through infection of a cut or wound with the spores of the bacterium *Clostridium tetani*, and most cases occur within 14 days of infection. Pertussis spreads easily from person to person mainly through droplets produced by coughing or sneezing.

DETAILED EXPLANATION OF IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

What is Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DPT)?

Diphtheria:

- Cause - Diphtheria is primarily caused by the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*.
- Symptoms - Common cold, fever, chills, swollen gland in neck, sore throat, bluish skin etc.
- Spread - It is mainly spread by coughs and sneezes, or through close contact with someone infected.
- Target Population - Diphtheria particularly affects children aged 1 to 5 years.
- Occurrence of diphtheria cases in under-five children reflects low coverage of primary diphtheria vaccination.

Tetanus:

- Cause - Tetanus is acquired through infection of a cut or wound with the spores of the bacterium *Clostridium tetani*, and most cases occur within 14 days of infection.
- Transmission - Tetanus cannot be transmitted from person to person.
- Prevention - Tetanus can be prevented through immunization with Tetanus-Toxoid-Containing Vaccines (TTCV).
- However, people who recover from tetanus do not have natural immunity and can be infected again.
- Symptoms - Jaw cramping or the inability to open the mouth. muscle spasms often in the back, abdomen and extremities. sudden painful muscle spasms often triggered by sudden noises. Seizures.

Pertussis:

- Pertussis, also known as whooping cough.
- Cause - It is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*.
- In 2018, there were more than 151 000 cases of pertussis globally.
- The disease is most dangerous in infants, and is a significant cause of disease and death in this age group.
- Spread - Pertussis spreads easily from person to person mainly through droplets produced by coughing or sneezing.

Mission Indradhanush:

- Mission Indradhanush is an initiative undertaken by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- Intensified Mission Indradhanush was announced on December 25, 2014, to increase immunization rates against deadly diseases that can otherwise be prevented with vaccinations all across the country.
- Mission Indradhanush 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0 have been initiated in recent years to expand the coverage of the Immunization program in India.
- As a part of Mission Indradhanush, pregnant women and children under two years of age are to receive vaccinations against eight diseases that vaccines can prevent.
- Vaccines against tuberculosis, meningitis, measles, hepatitis B, tetanus, whopping cold, poliomyelitis, and diphtheria are included in the immunization drive.
- In some specific places, the program will also offer immunizations for the Japanese encephalitis vaccine and the *Haemophilus influenza* vaccine.

Recent findings:

- The number of zero-dose children (those that have not received even the first dose of DPT vaccine) halved to 2.3 million in 2022 from 4.6 million in 2021.

- Similarly, the number of partially vaccinated children (those that have received at least one dose of DPT vaccine but did not complete the primary series of three doses) reduced to 6.5 lakh in 2022 from 1.3 million in 2021.
- The region had the best immunisation recoveries among all the WHO regions.
- This can be majorly attributed to the efforts being made by India and Indonesia.
- PT3 coverage is of 85% in 2022, the same as in 2019, but rising sharply from the 67% recorded in 2021.
- Bhutan recorded 98% and the Maldives 99%, surpassing their pre--pandemic rates.
- Bangladesh with 98% and Thailand 97% demonstrated consistency in routine immunisation coverage throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

2. Monsoon's uneven march could fuel food inflation, caution economists: The Hindu – Page 14

Why is it in news?	Despite a wetter July so far lifting the overall rainfall above the long period average, the southern peninsula, Deccan Plateau and the eastern region continue to experience a below-normal monsoon and kharif sowing remains lower than last year for crops like rice and pulses, risking faster food price inflation.
UPSC SYLLABUS RELEVANCE for prelims and Mains	Prelims: Economy - Inflation Mains: General Studies III - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.
Important concepts	Food inflation
Mains PYQ exercise:	There is also a point of view that Agricultural Produce Market Committees [APMCs] set up under the State Acts have not only impeded the development of agriculture but also have been the cause of food inflation in India. Critically examine. (2014)

**Today's mains
practice question:**

What are the causes of food inflation in India? Suggest some measures to tackle food inflation.

DETAILED EXPLANATION OF IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

Food inflation:

- Food inflation is the rise in the price of food commodities.
- The increase in production, labour and transportation costs, population and climate changes, hoarding of food products, and land exploitation cause food inflation.
- When food prices rise in the developed world, it is an inconvenience, something to grumble about.
- But, when food prices rise in the developing world, it can make a difference between going hungry and getting enough to eat.
- Food inflation is volatile.
- Agricultural prices tend to fluctuate because demand and supply are both inelastic and supply can vary due to the weather.
- However, despite the usual volatility, food prices seem to be showing a strong upward movement, reaching record highs in recent years.

Recent developments:

- By July 15, the overall sown area of kharif crops was 2% lower compared with the same time in 2022, with maize (-5.6%), rice (-6.1%) and pulses (-13.3%) being some of the major crops facing shortfalls in sowing this year.
- The widest fall was recorded in Arhar, with the area sown more than 38% lower than last year.
- Worryingly, reservoir levels in the western and southern regions were also at lower marks than last year, even as there had been uneven distribution of rainfall, with parts of West and North India seeing excessive rainfall, while it was deficient in States like Bihar and Jharkhand.

- With the Indian Meteorological Department signalling that parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Punjab, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu may see less than normal rainfall this month, sowing of paddy and pulses could be further affected.
- These effects were already exacerbating food inflation.
- Deficient rainfall, and consequently lower rice and pulses sowing, has pushed prices higher.
- July is a crucial period for sowing kharif crops as about 32% of monsoon precipitation typically occurs during this month.

MODEL MAINS ANSWER FOR TODAY'S EXPECTED MAINS QUESTION

Q. What are the causes of food inflation in India? Suggest some measures to tackle food inflation.

<p>Why this question</p>	<p>The question theme is reflected several times in UPSC (including prelims) and APPSC mains.</p> <p>UPSC PYQs</p> <p>There is also a point of view that Agricultural Produce Market Committees [APMCs] set up under the State Acts have not only impeded the development of agriculture but also have been the cause of food inflation in India. Critically examine. (2014)</p>				
<p><u>First step is to understand the demand of the question</u></p>	<p>Question has two parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Causes of food inflation 2. Measures to tackle food inflation 				
<p>Introduction</p>	<p>Food inflation is the rise in the price of food commodities. The increase in production, labour and transportation costs, population and climate changes, hoarding of food products, and land exploitation cause food inflation</p>				
<p>Body</p>	<p>Causes of Food inflation</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="504 1921 1393 1984"> <thead> <tr> <th>Dimension</th><th>Content</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Dimension	Content		
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	Causes	Increasing demand
		Disruption of supply chains
		Russia-Ukraine war
		Short term supply shocks
		Climate changes like El Nino
		Increased use of biofuels
		Export controls
	Measures to tackle food inflation	
	Dimension	Content
	Measures	Grain storage shall be improved
		Domestic production must be increased
		Policy shifts
		Inadequate cold storage and warehousing facilities
		Consuming less meat and dairy
		Introducing alternatives to few food commodities
Climate-smart farming must be encouraged		
Variety of crops must be planted		
Conclusion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the medium to long run, the GoI should have a plan to augment good quality fodder supplies and raise productivity of milch animals.• Food inflation can be contained if India uses trade policy wisely and well in time.• Developing commodity futures markets is a step forward direction.	

- India needs to invest in building trust in futures markets: Improving their efficiency with information symmetry, and bringing transparency through better technologies and regulatory institutions needs to be a priority.
- The RBI and Centre jointly need to enhance their tool kit to contain inflation.
- There should be consistency in import policy as that sends appropriate market signals in advance.
- Intervening through import tariffs is better than quotas which leads to greater welfare loss.
- This also calls for more accurate crop forecasts using satellite remote sensing and GIS techniques to indicate shortfall/surplus in a crop year much in advance.
- Moreover, a decade old CPI base year of 2011-12 that gives nearly half of the weight to food items needs to be revised and updated to reflect the change in food habits and lifestyle of the population.
- With the rising middle-class, spending on non-food items has increased and this needs to be better reflected in the CPI, thereby enabling RBI to better target the non-volatile segment (core inflation).
- Addressing the supply chain constraints causing food inflation in India requires a comprehensive approach.
- This includes investing in rural infrastructure, reducing post-harvest losses through improved storage and processing facilities, upgrading transportation systems, and enhancing market access for farmers.

- By implementing these measures, India can significantly improve its supply chain efficiency, reduce food wastage, and mitigate the impact of inflation on food prices.

