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GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

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1. The challenges of public health education in India

Context: The U.S. decision to leave the World Health Organization (WHO) and cut back USAID has shocked the aid and public health sectors. This has disrupted important healthcare services in many poorer countries. However, India has been mostly unaffected since foreign aid makes up only 1% of its health spending. The halt in funding risks further shrinking the already limited public health development sector, which depends on international support. This directly affects the job market, reducing opportunities for thousands of MPH and related graduates.

Key points

- **Overview:** The main challenge lies in the imbalance between supply and demand, driven by declining job opportunities and the predominance of the private sector.
- **Need for a Public Health Workforce:**
 - Importance of Public Health* - Public health is crucial for a nation's well-being and healthcare system.
 - Constitutional Responsibility* - Article 47 of the Indian Constitution emphasizes the state's duty to improve public health.
 - Need for Specialized Expertise* - Public health is a specialized field requiring specific knowledge and skills to meet health needs effectively.
- **Issues in Public Health Education:**
 - Lack of standard training* – No uniform curriculum across institutions.
 - Limited practical exposure* – Insufficient hands-on learning opportunities.
 - Faculty shortages* – Not enough trained teachers in public health.
 - Unequal distribution of institutions* – Many states, like Assam, Bihar, and Jharkhand, have few or no MPH programs.
- **Challenges in implementation:**
 - Mismatch Between Supply and Demand* - Job opportunities for public health graduates are shrinking, leading to intense competition for entry-level positions like research or program assistants. The success rate is very low due to high competition.
 - Limited Public Sector Jobs* - Public health roles within the government are reducing, and efforts to create public health management cadres in states have faced multiple obstacles.
 - Private Sector Preference* - The private sector prioritizes hospital and business management professionals over public health specialists, limiting opportunities for MPH graduates.
- **Way ahead:**
 - Increase Public Health Jobs* - Create more jobs in public health at all levels, from primary care to state and national health systems. Governments should become the primary employers of public health professionals, as seen in developed countries.
 - Set Up a Strong Regulatory System* - Create a public health regulatory body or a specialized division within existing agencies like NMC or UGC. Ensure public health experts lead this body to set curriculum standards and minimum training requirements.
 - Enhance Practical Learning* - Public health education must include hands-on training within health systems. Institutions should focus on real-world applications to better prepare graduates for professional roles.

2. Cardiovascular health benefits of tea

Context: Cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains the leading cause of premature death worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, in 2019, CVDs accounted for 38% of all premature deaths. These diseases include coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, and peripheral artery disease, among others. In recent years, compelling scientific research has highlighted the health benefits of tea, particularly its role in improving cardiovascular health. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (USA) recently included flavan-3-ol, a compound abundant in tea, in its dietary guidelines due to its cardioprotective effects.

Key points

- **Overview:** Regular tea consumption, particularly black and green tea, is linked to improved heart health due to antioxidants like flavonoids and polyphenols, which may lower cholesterol, reduce blood clotting, and improve blood vessel function, potentially lowering the risk of heart attack and stroke.
 - *Camellia sinensis var. sinensis (CSS)* – small-leaved, bush-like plants used primarily for non-fermented teas such as green and white tea. These teas have a delicate flavour and a lower polyphenol content.
 - *Camellia sinensis var. assamica (CSA)* – large-leaved trees with higher polyphenol content, commonly used to produce fermented teas such as black, oolong, pu-erh, and brick tea.
- **Reduction in Cardiovascular Risk Factors:** Green tea, a non-fermented tea, contains monomeric polyphenols such as epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), while black tea, a fermented tea, contains polymeric forms like theaflavins and thearubigins. These compounds promote cardiovascular health through several mechanisms –
 - *Prevention of atherosclerosis* - Tea polyphenols help prevent the narrowing of arteries caused by fatty plaque buildup, a major cause of heart disease.
 - *Reduction of oxidative stress* - Tea inhibits ROS-generating enzymes, reducing oxidative stress – a key driver of CVD.
 - *Enhancement of endothelial function* - Tea stimulates the production of nitric oxide, a potent vasodilator that keeps arteries flexible and clear of deposits.
 - *Improved lipid profile* - Tea consumption helps prevent high triglyceride and cholesterol levels resulting from high-fat and high-sugar diets.
 - *Anti-inflammatory effects* - Tea inhibits the production of inflammatory markers such as cyclooxygenase, lipoxygenase, and adhesion molecules, reducing vascular inflammation.
- **Further research:**
 - Meta-Analyses** - Several meta-analyses of studies on tea consumption have shown that regular tea drinkers have a reduced risk of heart attack and stroke.
 - Observational Studies** - Observational studies have linked tea consumption to a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, and premature death.
 - Intervention Studies** - Some intervention studies have shown that tea consumption can lead to improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and other cardiovascular risk factors.

3. Moving on security, Gabbard & others from five eyes join intel tsars in Delhi

Context: Signalling close cooperation on issues related to security, US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, UK's national security advisor Jonathan Powell and New Zealand's intelligence head Andrew Hampton joined the 4th conference of global intelligence and security chiefs hosted by NSA Ajit Doval on Sunday, the meeting had over 28 attendees. The theme for this edition is 'Kalachakra – People, Peace & Planet'. The meeting will be held for three days and there will be six pillars which includes, politics, resolving the green trilemma, digital planet, militant mercantilism, the tiger's tale, investment in peace.

Key points

- **Overview:** The rise of the international conference circuit on foreign and security policy issues, such as the Aspen Security Forum, the Munich Security Conference, and the Shangri-La Dialogue. The US has a tight circle of intelligence gathering and sharing with its Anglo-Saxon allies — Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK and the "Five Eyes" arrangement.
- **Highlight of the Conference:** As part of Raisina Dialogue, the security conference is organised by the country's external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) that reports to NSA.
Objective - To discuss the ongoing geopolitical tensions, provided an opportunity for participants to exchange views on how to address this crisis and other geopolitical tensions.
Nature of Meeting - It is modelled on the lines of the Munich Security Conference and Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue.
- **Raisina Dialogue:** The Raisina Dialogue is India's premier conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community. The conference is hosted by the Observer Research Foundation in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.
- **Observer Research Foundation:** It is an independent think tank based in New Delhi with three centres in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. It seeks to lead and aid policy thinking towards building a strong and prosperous India in a fair and equitable world and helps discover and inform India's choices. It carries Indian voices and ideas to forums shaping global debates.
- **Munich Security Conference:** It is an annual conference on international security policy that has been held in Munich, Bavaria, Germany since 1963. It has become the most important independent forum for the exchange of views by international security policy decision-makers.
- **Shangri-La Dialogue:** It is Asia's premier defence and security summit. It is attended by Defence Ministers, permanent heads of ministries and military chiefs of 28 Asia-Pacific countries. It is organized by an independent think-tank, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).
- **Shift in Diplomacy:** In the 21st century, there has been a rapid growth in international commercial, political, technological and military affairs.
- **For National Security:** The intelligence agencies are an essential part of the national security establishment along with the diplomatic community and the armed forces.
- **Reason for Shift:** The deepening military crises worldwide, the new stresses on the global economic order, rise of international terrorism, the growth of cross-border criminal networks, and the return of great power rivalry.

4. One more tiger reserve: why India needs them, the challenges some face

Context: Madhav National Park in Shivpuri district, Madhya Pradesh, has been declared a tiger reserve earlier this month, making a total of 58 reserves in the country. The reserve is spread over an area of 1651 square kilometres, and currently has six tigers, including a cub. The largest tiger reserve in the country is Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem, spanning across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, while Bor Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra holds the distinction of being the smallest.

Key points

- **Overview:** The 58th tiger constitutes over 2.3% of the country's total land, a significant increase from the original nine reserves covering 18,278 square kilometres in 1973.
- **Schemes Related to the Tiger Conservation in India:** India houses 80% of the world's tiger population, some of the schemes for conservation are -
 - *Tiger Census* - Conducted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). Aims to estimate the tiger population in India through a four-year census cycle.
 - *M-STrIPES* - Introduced in 2010, a software-based monitoring system for Tiger Reserves in India. Focuses on the conservation of critically endangered Bengal tigers.
 - *St. Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation* - Declared during the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit in 2010. Committed by 13 nations, including India, to protect tigers worldwide and double their population in the wild.
- **Tiger Population in India:** India's tiger population increased to 3,682 in 2022, up from 2,967 in 2018. This also indicates significant growth over the last decade; there were 2,226 tigers reported in 2014, up from 1,706 in 2010.
- **Need for tiger reserves:** *Decline in Tiger Population* - Tigers were once abundant in India, with an estimated 40,000 tigers in the early 20th century. However, due to hunting, poaching, deforestation, and colonial timber exploitation, their numbers declined sharply.
Conservation Efforts Begin - Recognizing the crisis, naturalists raised alarms, leading to the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL) recommending a ban on wild cat skin exports in 1969.
- **Objectives of Tiger Reserves in India:** *Conservation Focus* - The primary objective of Tiger Reserves in India is the conservation of tigers and their habitats. Apart from tigers, these reserves also safeguard a diverse range of flora and fauna that exist in the respective regions.
Core and Buffer Zones - Core Zone – Strictly protected habitat for tigers and wildlife and the Buffer Zone – Surrounding area with regulated human activities to support conservation efforts.
Ecotourism - Many tiger reserves in India offer ecotourism opportunities to visitors. These eco-friendly tourism initiatives allow people to experience the wildlife and natural beauty of the reserves while contributing to the local economy and generating funds for conservation efforts.
Legal Protection - Tiger Reserves in India are accorded legal protection under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This act empowers the authorities to take stringent action against poaching, illegal encroachments, and other activities that threaten the wildlife and ecosystem of the reserves.
- **Future Conservation Plans & Challenges:** Proposal to relocate Asiatic lions from Gir (Gujarat) to Kuno, approved by the Supreme Court. The government, in March 2023, raised concerns about lion-cheetah competition, delaying the relocation. If lions are introduced, it could bring more national and international conservation funding.

5. Farm fire in China-US trade

Context: In his trade wars with Canada & Mexico, US president Donald Trump has exempted many goods from the blanket 25% tariff he had earlier levied on all imports from the two countries. Thus, the 25% additional import duty will not be applicable on goods covered under the United State-Mexico-Canada-Agreement. That would automatically spare some 50% of Mexican and 38% of Canadian imports qualifying for preferential treatment under this trade agreement. On February 4, Trump effected a 10% additional tariff on all Chinese goods, which was doubled to 20% from March 4.

Key points

- **Overview:** The global economic landscape has been significantly reshaped by trade wars initiated during the US President Donald Trump and the broader trend of trade weaponization. These measures have had far-reaching effects on various sectors of the global economy.
- **Trade War:** A trade war occurs when nations impose tariffs or trade barriers against each other in retaliation for perceived economic harm or unfair trade practices.
U.S.-China Trade War (2018-Present) - The U.S. imposed heavy tariffs on Chinese goods, citing intellectual property theft, unfair subsidies, and currency manipulation. In response, China levied counter-tariffs, leading to disruptions in global supply chains.
- **Trade Weaponization:** Trade weaponization refers to the strategic use of trade policies as geopolitical tools rather than purely economic measures. It includes economic sanctions, export controls, supply chain restrictions, and currency manipulation to exert pressure on rival nations.
 - U.S. sanctions on Huawei to curb China's technological advancements.
 - Russia's gas supply cuts to Europe amid geopolitical tensions.
 - China's rare earth export controls to maintain dominance in technology manufacturing.
 - Recent U.S. tariffs - A 25% tariff on all imports from Canada and Mexico and a 10% levy on Chinese goods.
- **Trade Wars and Trade Weaponization in Global Politics:** *US-China Trade War* - The U.S. imposed tariffs on \$550 billion worth of Chinese goods. China retaliated with countermeasures, disrupting electronics, automobiles, and agriculture sectors.
US Sanctions on Russia (2022-Present) - Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. and the EU imposed sanctions restricting oil, gas, and banking transactions.
- **Impacts:** *Economic Disruptions* - Increased production costs, inflation, and energy price surges. Disruptions to global supply chains and trade flows.
Technology Wars - The U.S.-China chip war over semiconductor dominance. Rise of alternative payment systems (e.g., Russia's Mir, India's Rupee-Ruble trade).
- **Way ahead for India:** *Strengthening Trade Partnerships* - Expanding ties with the EU, ASEAN, and Africa.
Investing in Critical Sectors - Developing semiconductor, renewable energy, and AI industries.
Enhancing Supply Chain Resilience - Boosting indigenous manufacturing.
WTO Reform - Addressing challenges posed by unilateral trade actions.