



Current Affairs of the Day

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1. Virus researchers get Nobel for medicine

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1. DRDO successfully tests ASW missile system



Virus researchers get Nobel for medicine

- Two Americans and a Briton won the 2020 Nobel Prize for Medicine on Monday for identifying the Hepatitis C virus, in work spanning decades that has helped to limit the spread of the fatal disease and develop antiviral drugs to cure it.
- The discoveries by scientists Harvey J. Alter, Charles M. Rice and Briton Michael Houghton meant there was now a chance of eradicating the Hepatitis C virus.
- The three share the 10 million Swedish crowns (\$1.1 million) award for discovering and proving that a blood-borne virus could cause Hepatitis C, which afflicts more than 70 million people and causes about 4,00,000 deaths each year.
- Nominations for this year's award preceded the global spread of the new coronavirus pandemic, but the choice of winners recognises the importance of identifying a virus as the first step in winning the battle against a new disease, said Thomas Perlmann, secretary general of the Nobel Assembly.

Significance:

- It's the second Nobel Prize for Medicine for hepatitis research, after Baruch Blumberg won in 1976 for determining that one form of blood-borne hepatitis was caused by a virus that came to be known as Hepatitis B.
- The shared prize recognises research dating back to the 1960s when Dr. Alter, working at the U.S. National Institutes of Health, found liver disease could be spread by blood transfusions that weren't caused by Hepatitis A or B. It was a team led by Dr. Houghton, then working for pharmaceuticals firm Chiron, which was able in the mid-1980s to create a clone of a new virus from fragments found in the blood of an infected chimpanzee.
- This virus, belonging to the Flavivirus family, was named Hepatitis C.
- Its identification made it possible to develop tests to screen bloodbank supplies and greatly reduce the spread of the disease, which can cause cirrhosis and liver cancer.
- The final piece of the jigsaw puzzle came when Dr. Rice, then at Washington University in St. Louis, was able to use genetic engineering to generate a



version of the Hepatitis C virus and demonstrate that it alone could cause symptoms in a chimpanzee comparable to an infection in humans.

Quad will discuss vaccine, 5G

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will meet his counterparts in the Australia-India-Japan-United States Quadrilateral or Quad in Tokyo on Tuesday, which is seen as a significant turning point for the grouping, led by growing concerns over China in the region.

Key takeaways:

- Cooperation on 5G connectivity, cybersecurity, a supply chain initiative for manufacturing, maritime cooperation and infrastructure and connectivity, as well as distribution plans for the COVID-19 vaccine are all areas where alternatives to Chinese initiatives will be discussed.
- Beijing has already criticised the meeting as an “exclusive clique”, “an anti-China frontline” and even a “mini-NATO” led by the U.S.’s “Cold War mentality”, making it clear it will watch the outcomes closely, even as its tensions with each of the Quad countries grows.
- The meeting on Tuesday will begin with a “regional assessment”, including developments in the South and East China Sea, the six-month stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Hong Kong and Taiwan, where China’s aggressive moves have been most marked.
- The four Ministers will also discuss the issue of including Australia in the next edition of the Malabar naval exercises, scheduled to be held in November. However, there is still no clarity on the final decision. Any announcement on Malabar would be made by the Ministry of Defence, a government official said.
- Building trade ties is also on the agenda, as Japan is keen to push a plan for a trilateral “Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)” with India and Australia to reduce dependence on Chinese manufacturing, especially as India has refused to be a part of the ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).



- India will also discuss how other Quad countries can help with building “East-West” connectivity from India to ASEAN countries, to counter the “North-South connectivity” from China, as well as joint funding for infrastructure and connectivity projects in the Indo-Pacific region. A U.S. plan for a “Blue Dot Network” to rate infrastructure projects for funding, announced in January, is likely to be discussed as well.

DRDO successfully tests ASW missile system

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Monday successfully test-fired the missile-assisted release of a lightweight anti-submarine torpedo system for **anti-submarine warfare (ASW), Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART)**.
- The test was conducted at 11.45 a.m. from Wheeler Island off the coast of Odisha.

Objective:

- All the mission objectives including missile flight up to the range and altitude, separation of the nose cone, release of torpedo and deployment of velocity reduction mechanism have been met perfectly.

Significance:

- SMART is a game changer technology demonstration in ASW.
- SMART gives capability for ASW operations far beyond torpedo range.

FATF all set to decide on Pakistan's grey list status

- The Financial Action Task Force is all set to decide on Pakistan's grey list status in a virtual meeting scheduled later this month.
- The Paris-based global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog had placed Pakistan on the grey list in June 2018.

Atal Tunnel inaugurated



- Indian Prime Minister recently inaugurated the World's longest Highway tunnel – Atal Tunnel.

Key takeaways:

- **Location:** Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh
- **Constructed by:** Border Roads Organisation (BRO)
- The 9.02 Km long tunnel connects Manali to Lahaul-Spiti valley throughout the year.
- Earlier the valley was cut off for about 6 months each year owing to heavy snowfall.
- The tunnel reduces the road distance by 46 Kms between Manali and Leh and the time by about 4 to 5 hours.
- It will provide all weather connectivity to remote border areas of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh.
- It would also reduce the distance between Manali and Keylong by 3-4 hours.
- Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee laid the foundation of the approach road for this tunnel in 2002.