



Current Affairs of the Day

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- 'Health is not just about COVID-19'

GS III

- For affluent, EPF is not nest egg but goose that lays golden eggs
- HAL planning to export light combat aircraft
- 'This is the highest CAPEX ever over a 2-year period'
- One in five Indians exposed to novel coronavirus: serosurvey



'Health is not just about COVID-19'

Highlights:

1. Responding to critiques citing a 137% hike in allocations for health and well-being by including spending on water and sanitation, the Government said even the World Health Organisation stressed that water and sanitation were crucial for basic healthcare.
2. In a normal year, India doesn't suffer from COVID-19. It suffers from diarrhoea, malaria and dengue, with diarrhoeal diseases accounting for most of our child deaths.
3. Lack of sewerage, stagnant water, non-disposal of solid and liquid waste, and absence of clean water are very major problems in Indian health in a non-pandemic year. The government is building health infrastructure for the future, not for 2020.
4. The ₹35,000 crore allocation for vaccines could cover as many as 50 crore people at an estimated cost of ₹700 a person for administering both doses.
5. That would take us to 53 crore vaccinations, and it is possible we may have reached herd immunity, or maybe we would not. That is why the Finance Minister said we are committed to providing more if it is required.

For affluent, EPF is not nest egg but goose that lays golden eggs

News: More than 1.23 lakh "high net worth individuals" (HNIs) deposited more than ₹62,500 crores into their Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) accounts in 2018-19 alone, and the largest EPF account has a staggering ₹103 crore balance, defending the Budget move to tax the income on employees' PF contributions over ₹2.5 lakh a year.

Progressive taxation:

1. Since any tax exemption is provided through taxpayers' money, it was unfair to allow a small group of HNIs to misuse a welfare facility and earn wrongfully tax-free income as assured interest return.
2. Of an estimated 4.5 crore EPF accounts, the source said about 0.27% members had an average corpus of ₹5.92 crores and so were earning over ₹50 lakh a year as "tax-free assured interest".



HAL planning to export light combat aircraft

News: Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) is actively looking for exports of the Tejas light combat aircraft (LCA) with countries in South East Asia and West Asia showing interest in buying it. Each LCA MK1A jet would cost ₹309 crores.

Highlights:

1. The break-up of the ₹48,000-crore deal for 83 LCAs for the IAF: If we remove the tax part of it, it's worth about ₹36,000 crores, out of which close to ₹6,000 crore directly goes to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), and as we are supplying ground support equipment and other things, another ₹3,000 crores are expected to go towards Indian partners.
2. The indigenous content of the aircraft was about 52%. HAL was looking at ways to increase it to 65%. It would be offering the same version that was in service with the IAF to friendly foreign countries and at the same price.

Combat Air Teaming System (CATS)

HAL also announced an ambitious futuristic project for the development of an unmanned fighter jet, which would be controlled by a manned aircraft called 'manned-unmanned' teaming and be able to strike deep inside the enemy territory called Combat Air Teaming System (CATS).

It would consist of CATS Hunter, CATS Warrior and Alpha-S, all of which are unmanned systems and would be controlled by a manned mother aircraft, a fighter jet, being customised around an LCA and Jaguar aircraft.

The CATS warrior would be armed and be able to strike deep inside the enemy territory, while the mothership would be in the Indian territory. It would be powered by the HAL engine that was powering pilotless target aircraft Lakshya.

'This is the highest CAPEX ever over a 2-year period'

Highlights:

1. 2020-2021's spending had a big weight of welfare schemes and subsidies, and next year, many of those one-time expenditures disappear and get replaced by capital expenditure.
2. There are concerns the ₹73,000 crore allocation for the MGNREGS in FY22 may not suffice to meet the rural job distress.
3. But 2020-21 is not a guide to 2021-22, because that was a very special elevated situation due to the lockdown and the out-migration to rural areas, which I think is not a comparable or reasonable point of estimation for '21-22.



One in five Indians exposed to novel coronavirus: serosurvey

News: Nearly one in five Indians had been infected by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus until December 2020, the third round of the serological survey by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has found.

Highlights:

1. The message is that a large proportion of the population remains vulnerable. Vaccines are necessary and there can be no complacency with regards to masks, social distancing and hand hygiene.
2. Experts, however, have previously noted that serosurveys don't capture the extent of the spread, and other modelling studies have shown that as much as 50% of the population may have been exposed.

Children not immune

The higher prevalence among children or young adults showed that it was no longer true, as earlier believed, that children or the young were better protected. Several studies have now established this. They are much less likely to be severely sick but they can be infectious.

About Sero Surveys:

Sero-surveys use tests that examine the liquid part of blood, or 'serum', not nose, throat and mouth fluid. And these tests detect an immune response to the virus material, not SARS-CoV-2 virus material itself.


Upon virus infection, the body comes up with many immune responses. One of these is making proteins called antibodies that stick (or 'bind') to the virus – these show up within a few days after infection. The infection itself typically disappears after a couple of weeks. But the anti-virus antibodies, especially the IgG kind, stay around in the blood for a fairly long time, at least for months. These antibodies are made whether the infected person was asymptomatic or had any actual illness. And of course, nobody who has not encountered the virus will have these particular antibodies.

Sero-surveys test blood samples of healthy people for anti-SARS-CoV-2 IgG antibodies. Everybody cannot be tested, only a few people chosen at random are tested. The results are an estimate of the proportion of people who have been infected in the past. This information gives a wide-angle picture over time of how the virus has spread in the community, so help in surveillance and pandemic management.




COVID-19 serological tests


Serological tests for SARS-CoV-2 can show a person has been exposed to the virus, but authorities are warning that such tests have limits to what they can tell us






A serological test looks at blood **serum**, the fluid part of plasma that is left after cells have coagulated



It tells us about the presence of **antibodies** which are made in response to specific virus **antigens**



Scientists are yet to confirm how effective SARS-CoV-2 antibodies or **immunoglobulins** are in protecting from a second infection

Main types of tests available or in development	Time to results	How they work	
Rapid diagnostic tests	10-30 mins	 <p>Blood sample passes over a line that detects antibodies and changes colour</p>	These tests can indicate the presence or absence of antibodies of interest but they can't tell us about the quantity of antibodies or how effective they are at stopping virus growth
Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays	2-5 hours	 <p>Sample exposed to a plate coated with virus antigen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Colour is added to react with antibodies that attach to antigen ▶ Intensity of colour indicates presence of antibodies
Chemiluminescent immunoassays	1-2 hours	 <p>Sample exposed to a plate coated with virus antigen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Light-giving chemical added to react with antibodies that attach to antigen ▶ Intensity of light indicates presence of antibodies

Source: [centerforhealthsecurity.org/CDC.gov/medienet.com](https://www.cdc.gov/medienet.com)

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What do serosurveys not tell us?

1. All immune responses are not protective. The serosurvey test does not detect 'protective' antibodies, just all antibodies (the 'protective' ones are much harder to test for on a large scale).
2. Also, even if it detected 'protective' antibodies, we have no idea what levels of 'protective' antibodies are necessary for the actual protection.

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