



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper - II

- SC meeting on vacancies inconclusive

GS Paper - III

- 'Double mutant' strain named B.1.617
- 180 AEFI deaths reported in India



SC meeting on vacancies inconclusive

Highlights:

1. A meeting of the five-member Supreme Court Collegium led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad A. Bobde on names to fill the five judicial vacancies in the court ended on an inconclusive note. The top court, whose judicial strength now stands at 29, will see four retirements in 2021
2. Normally, the incumbent Chief Justice does not involve the collegium work during his final days in office and after the presidential appointment of his successor is notified. The time is used to effect a smooth transition.
3. The collegium has been discussing diverse opinions from within on issues such as proportionate representation from various High Courts and seniority among High Court judges before finalising the names to recommend to the government for the appointment.
4. Proportionate representation and seniority, though only conventions and not constitutional or legal mandates carry weight during the appointment process.

No ad hoc judges in High courts

1. The Supreme Court agreed that a plan to appoint retired judges on an ad hoc basis to reduce pendency in the High Courts should not become an excuse to stop or further delay the appointment process of regular judges.
2. As of April 2020, the High Courts have a total vacancy of 411 regular judges against the sanctioned judicial strength of 1,080. The working strength in the High Courts is 669.

'Double mutant' strain named B.1.617

Genome study: The "double mutant" virus that scientists had flagged last month as having a bearing on the spread of the pandemic in India, has a formal scientific classification: B.1.617.

Variants of concern (VOC):

1. The variant is common in India — how much in every State is unclear though — and has a couple of defining mutations, E484Q and L425R, that enable it to become more infectious and evade antibodies.



2. Certain variants of the coronavirus, for instance, B.1.1.7 and B.1.351 — have been termed the “United Kingdom” and “South Africa” variant, respectively, because they have mutations associated with large spikes in these countries or reduce the efficacy of vaccines and are termed “variants of concern (VOC)”.
3. So far, only three global VOCs have been identified: the U.K. variant, the South African and the Brazilian (P.1) lineage.
4. L452R, some studies show, could even make the coronavirus resistant to T cells, a class of cells necessary to target and destroy virus-infected cells.
5. India has not yet conducted studies on how vaccine efficacy is influenced by variants, except for limited laboratory trials, but international studies have shown reduced efficacy of vaccines — particularly those by Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax — to certain variants. However, the vaccines continue to be significantly protective in spite of this.
6. That’s the real purpose of genomic analysis. To design appropriate vaccines but so far there are hardly such studies out of India.

180 AEFI deaths reported in India

Keeping track: A total of 617 serious adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) cases were reported till march.

Serious adverse events following immunisation (AEFI):

1. According to the National AEFI Committee till march, there have been 617 severe and serious (including deaths) adverse events following immunisation (AEFI). A total of 180 deaths (29.2%) have been reported following vaccination across the country. Complete documentation is available only for 236 (38.3%) cases.
2. Weakness in one, two or all four limbs (mono/para/quadriplegia) seen in 17 people hospitalised is one indication of rare conditions triggering Serious adverse events following immunisation (AEFI).
3. Since Covishield is the same vaccine as AstraZeneca, updated warnings related to rare conditions, information for vaccine recipients and the public about when to seek medical attention, and information for health providers about how to identify and treat such occurrences needs to be done for the vaccine.