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Important Facts For Prelims (19th April 2019)

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Bubble Boy Disease

- As per a recent study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, **U.S. scientists used 'HIV' in making a gene therapy that cured eight infants of "bubble boy" disease.**

The study details how scientists turned the enemy virus (HIV) into a saviour, altering it so it couldn't cause disease and then using it to deliver a gene that babies with "bubble boy" disease lacked.

- Bubble Boy Disease, also **known as Severe Combined Immunodeficiency Syndrome (SCID)** is caused by a **genetic flaw that keeps the bone marrow from making effective versions of blood cells that comprise an immune system.**

An immune system is a complex network of cells, tissues, organs that helps the body in fighting infections and other diseases.

- It **affects 1 in 2,00,000 newborns, almost exclusively males.** Without treatment, it often kills in the first year or two of life.
- The nickname **'bubble boy disease' has come from a famous case in the 1970s-** a Texas boy with SCID, lived for 12 years in a protective plastic bubble for isolation from germs.
- A bone marrow transplant from a genetically matched sibling can cure SCID, but most people lack a suitable donor. Transplants are risky too; the Texas boy died after one.
- Doctors think **gene therapy** could be a solution. It **involves removing some of a patient's blood cells, using the modified HIV to insert the missing gene,** and returning the cells to the body.

Top U.K. honour for Indian Scientists

- **Scientist and businessman Yusuf Hamied is among a host of Indian-origin experts honoured in the 2019 list of new fellows of the U.K.'s Royal Society.**
 - The **Royal Society** is an independent scientific academy of the U.K. and the Commonwealth, **dedicated to promoting excellence in science.**
 - It is the **world's oldest scientific academy**, in continuous existence since the seventeenth century.
 - **Cipla Chairman, Hamied is a Padma Bhushan awardee**, and is known for efforts to produce low-cost drugs to treat diabetes, cancer and other diseases.
- Among **other Indian-origin scientists** elected as fellows this year are microbiologist Gurdyal Besra, mathematicians Manjul Bhargava and Akshay Venkatesh and health experts Gagandeep Kang and Anant Parekh.

Bloomberg Misery Index

- The South American nation, **Venezuela has topped the rankings of Bloomberg's Misery Index, which is calculated as the sum of a country's inflation and unemployment rates.**
 - It relies on the age-old concept that low inflation and unemployment generally illustrate how good an economy's residents should feel.
 - **This year's scores are based on Bloomberg economist surveys**, while prior years reflect actual data.
 - The index compared the median estimate of economists' forecasts for each country's rates in 2019 to 2018 published data. **There are total 62 countries in the index.**
- Joining Venezuela in the most-distressed countries are **Argentina, South Africa, Turkey, Greece and Ukraine -- each of which retained the same rank as last year**, showing intense economic stress and scant progress in taming price growth and getting people back to work.
- **Thailand** again claimed the title of the "**least miserable**" economy, though the government's unique way of tallying unemployment makes it less noteworthy than Switzerland's improvement to second-least and Singapore managing to stay in the bottom three.
- The **U.S.** moved six spots toward **13th least miserable**, and the **U.K.** improved four spots to **16th least.**
- **Russia's** 17-spot deterioration in its score, to the **17th most miserable economy**, is owed to projections of higher prices and stagnation in joblessness.

Nepal Launches its First Satellite

- Nepal has successfully launched its first satellite into space from Virginia in United States to gather detailed geographical information of the Himalayan nation.

- Developed by the Nepalese scientists, was launched at 2:31 am (Nepal time), according to Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).
- NepaliSat-1 satellite has been developed by the two Nepali scientists, Aabhas Maskey and Hariram Shrestha under the BIRDS project of the Kyushu Institute of Technology, Japan.
 - NAST initiated the launch of the country's own satellite under the BIRDS project of the Japanese Kyushu Institute of Technology.
 - The BIRDS project has been designed in association with the United Nations and aims at helping countries launch their first satellite.
- NepaliSat-1 is a low orbit satellite which will be in the 400-km distance from the Earth's surface.
 - It will be stationed at the **International Space Station (ISS)** for a month and then it will be sent to orbit the earth.
 - It is a small satellite weighing 1.3 kilograms, with limited capability.
- The satellite will take photographs on a regular basis to gather geographical information of Nepal.

GI Tags

- According to the data from **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, 14 products have received a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** from the government so far **in 2019**.
- Himachali Kala Zeera, Jeeraphool from Chhattisgarh, Kandhamal Haldi from Odisha, **Coorg Arabica coffee from Karnataka, Wayanad Robusta coffee from Kerala, Araku Valley Arabica from Andhra Pradesh, Sirsi Supari from Karnataka** and **Himachali Chulli oil** are among those 14 products.
- Once a product gets this tag, no person or company can sell a similar item under that name.
- This tag is **valid for a period of 10 years following** which it can be renewed. GI tags are covered under a law of the World Trade Organization.

Vasanthotsavam

- The annual 'Vasantotsavam' is being held at the temple of Lord Venkateswara in Tirumala, Andhra Pradesh.
- The Annual Vasanthotsavam is performed for 3 days of Trayodasi, Chaturdasi and Pournami in the month of Chaitra (March/April) every year.
- It is believed to be started by King Achyutaraya in 1460's to mark the arrival of Spring Season.
- Vasantotsavam is the combination of 2 words - "Vasantha" (Spring season in Sanskrit) and "Utsavam" (festival in Sanskrit).

Dastangoi

- An oral Urdu storytelling tradition.
- It has the dastango or storyteller whose voice is main artistic tool at the centre.
- While it originated in Persia, the art form travelled to Delhi and other parts of India, with the spread of Islam.
- It reached its pinnacle during the sepoy mutiny of 1857, when a number of Dastangos migrated to Lucknow, and popularized the art form in the city.
- The artform died for a while with the demise of Mir Baqar Ali in 1928, and was revived in 2005 only.

Simbakubwa Kutokaafrika

- Researchers have discovered the fossils of an enormous carnivore who lived in Kenya 22 million years ago.
- It has been named as **Simbakubwa kutokaafrika**, Swahili for “**big lion**”. It weighed about a tonne and was 8 feet long.
- Simbakubwa is **neither a bear nor a member of the extended feline family (big cat family)**.
- The massive mammal was a **Hyaenodon**, a now-extinct lineage of carnivores. **Hyaenodon are** not, by the way, related to modern hyenas, but they do have similar dentition (the arrangement or condition of the teeth in a particular species).