



India-Australia Interim Trade Agreement

For Prelims: Location of Australia and the Neighbourhood, Early Harvest Agreements, Free Trade Agreements, Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, World Trade Organisation, CECA, CEPA.

For Mains: International Treaties & Agreements, Government Policies & Interventions, Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests, India-Australia Relation, Significance of Trade Agreements.

Why in News

Recently, India and Australia have announced that they are set to **conclude an Interim Trade Agreement** in March 2022 and a [Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement \(CECA\)](#) 12-18 months thereafter.

- The agreement **will cover “most areas of interest for both countries”** including goods, services, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and customs procedures.
- Earlier, India, Japan and Australia have formally launched the [Supply Chain Resilience Initiative \(SCRI\)](#).

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What is an Interim Trade Agreement?

- An interim or **early harvest trade agreement** is used to liberalise tariffs on the trade of certain goods between two countries or trading blocs before a comprehensive **FTA (Free Trade Agreement)** is concluded.
- Government's emphasis on interim agreements may be **tactical so that a deal may be achieved with minimum commitments** and would allow for contentious issues to be resolved later.
- The problem, though, is that these **early harvest schemes potentially target the low-hanging fruits**, leaving the tougher goods and services for later.
- This strategy **can lead to significant delays in wrapping up the more broad-based FTAs**, which could potentially lead to impediments.
 - India had concluded an early harvest agreement with **Thailand in 2004** but has not been able to conclude a comprehensive FTA with the country.
 - India also has a trade agreement with **Sri Lanka** dealing with goods but was not able to conclude an agreement on services and investments.
- Early harvest agreements that do not graduate into full-scale FTAs are **exposed to legal challenges from other countries** that are members of the **World Trade Organisation (WTO)**.
- It is often beneficial to negotiate the entire deal together, as an **early harvest deal may reduce the incentive for one side to work towards a full FTA**.

What are Free Trade Agreements?

- It is a **pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers** to imports and exports among them.
- Under a free trade policy, goods and services can be bought and sold across international borders

with **little or no government tariffs, quotas, subsidies, or prohibitions to inhibit their exchange.**

- The concept of free trade is the **opposite of trade protectionism or economic isolationism.**
- FTAs can be categorised as Preferential Trade Agreement, **CECA** , [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement \(CEPA\)](#).

What is India's Current Trade Relation with Australia?

- Bilateral trade between the two countries stood at about **USD 12.5 billion in Financial Year (FY) 21** and has already surpassed USD 17.7 billion in the first 10 months of FY22.
- India has **imported merchandise worth about USD 12.1 billion from Australia** in the first 10 months of the fiscal and has exported merchandise worth USD 5.6 billion in the same period.
- **Key imports from Australia** include coal, gold and [Liquified Natural Gas](#) while **key exports to the country from India** include diesel, petrol and gems and jewellery.

What Opportunities does the Agreement Brings?

- The agreement with Australia is set to **bring opportunities across sectors** including mining, pharmaceuticals, health, education, renewables, railways, gems and jewellery, tourism, defence and textiles.
 - India is also likely to **seek easier visa access for both students and professionals** visiting Australia.
 - **Australia is likely to seek market access** for wines and agricultural products which are not produced on a large scale in India.
- Both countries are also **looking at mutual recognition of educational qualifications** to boost the number of Indian students seeking education in Australia and vice versa and boost tourism in both countries.
 - India and Australia have also **signed an MoU to boost tourism between the two countries.**
- The agreement would lead to **deeper cooperation between the two countries in critical minerals and [rare earth elements](#)** which are critical to future industries including renewable energy and electric vehicles.
 - As Australia has plentiful supplies of rare earths and critical minerals in but it needs places for them to be processed.

What is QUAD's Impact on Trade Relations between India and Australia?

- India and Australia are both members of the [QUAD \(Quadrilateral Security Dialogue\)](#) along with the US and Japan.
 - Recently, the [fourth meeting of the foreign ministers of the QUAD](#) grouping (India, the US, Australia and Japan) was held in Melbourne, Australia.
- Both countries have noted that **the coalition has given impetus to increasing trade relations** between all members of the QUAD.
- Australia noted that **it already had FTAs with both the US and Japan and that all four countries could start building a framework for economic cooperation** within the countries of the QUAD after they announced a deal with India.

What Other Free Trade Agreements is India Currently Negotiating?

- India is currently in the process of negotiating **FTAs with the UAE, the UK, Canada, the [European Union](#) and [Israel](#)**, besides Australia.
- India is also looking to complete an **early harvest agreement with the UAE and the UK in the first half of 2022.**

[Source: IE](#)

Intensified Mission Indradhanush 4.0

For Prelims: UIP, Mission Indradhanush, IMI.

For Mains: Health, Government Policies and Interventions, Immunisation Programme.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Health** virtually launched **Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 4.0**.

- India is implementing the largest immunisation programme globally where it annually covers more than three crore pregnant women and 2.6 crore children through the **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)**.

What is IMI 4.0?

- It will ensure that **Routine Immunization (RI) services reach unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children and pregnant women**.
 - Children up to two years** will be covered in this drive.
- While the **pace of routine immunisation has slowed down due to Covid-19 pandemic**, IMI 4.0 will immensely contribute in filling the gaps and make lasting gains towards universal immunisation.
- Three rounds of IMI 4.0 will be conducted in 416 districts, including 75 districts identified for Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav across 33 States/UTs.
 - These districts have been identified based on vaccination coverage as per the latest [National Family Health Survey-5 report](#), Health Management Information System (HMIS) data and burden of vaccine-preventable diseases.

What is the Universal Immunisation Programme?

- The Immunization Programme in India was **introduced in 1978 as 'Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI)** by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- In 1985, the Programme was **modified as 'Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)'**. UIP prevents mortality and morbidity in children and pregnant women **against 12 vaccine-preventable diseases**.
 - But in the past, it was seen that the increase in immunization coverage had slowed down and it increased at the rate of 1% per year between 2009 and 2013.
- To accelerate the coverage, Mission Indradhanush was envisaged** and implemented since 2015 to rapidly increase the full immunization coverage to 90%.

What is Mission Indradhanush (MI)?

- It was launched **to fully immunize more than 89 lakh children who are either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated under UIP**.
- It **provides vaccination against 12 Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPD)** i.e. diphtheria, Whooping cough, tetanus, polio, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, meningitis and pneumonia, Haemophilus influenzae type B infections, Japanese encephalitis (JE), rotavirus vaccine, pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) and measles-rubella (MR).
 - However, vaccination against Japanese Encephalitis and Haemophilus influenzae type B is being provided in selected districts of the country.
- Mission Indradhanush was also identified as **one of the flagship schemes under [Gram Swaraj Abhiyan](#) and Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan**.

What is Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)?

- It was **launched in October 2017**.
- Under IMI, **greater focus was given on urban areas** which were one of the gaps of Mission Indradhanush.
- It **focused to improve immunisation coverage in select districts and cities** to ensure full immunisation to more than 90% by December 2018 instead of 2020.

What is Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0?

- It was a nationwide immunisation drive **to mark the 25 years of [Pulse polio programme \(2019-20\)](#)**.
- It had targets of full immunization coverage in 272 districts spread over 27 States.
- It aimed to achieve at least 90% pan-India immunisation coverage by 2022.

What is Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0?

- IMI 3.0 was **launched in 2021**.
- Focus of the IMI 3.0 was the children and pregnant women who had missed their vaccine doses during the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - **Beneficiaries from migration areas and hard to reach areas** were targeted as they might have missed their vaccine doses during Covid-19.

What are the Achievements So Far?

- As of April 2021, during the various phases of Mission Indradhanush, **a total of 3.86 crore children and 96.8 lakh pregnant women have been vaccinated**.
- The **first two phases of Mission Indradhanush resulted in 6.7% increase in full immunisation coverage in a year**.
 - A survey (IMI- CES) carried out in 190 districts covered in Intensified Mission Indradhanush (5th Phase of Mission Indradhanush) shows 18.5% points increase in full immunisation coverage as compared to National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4.
- The **Full Immunisation Coverage among children aged 12-23 months of age has increased from 62% (NFHS-4) to 76.4%(NFHS-5)**.

[Source: PIB](#)

Reduction of Agri-cess for Crude Palm Oil

For Prelims: Agricultural Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC), Crude Palm Oil (CPO), National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) scheme, NFSM (National Food Security Mission), Kharif Strategy 2021 for oilseeds.

For Mains: Edible Oils Production in India and reason for the low self-sufficiency, Steps taken in this direction.

Why in News?

The central government has **reduced Agricultural Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC) for**

Crude Palm Oil (CPO) from 7.5% to 5% with effect from 12th February, 2022.

What is Palm Oil?

- Palm oil is currently the **world's most consumed vegetable oil**.
- It is used extensively in the production of detergents, plastics, cosmetics, and biofuels.
- **Top consumers** of the commodity are India, China, and the [European Union \(EU\)](#).

What is AIDC?

- Cess is a kind of special-purpose tax which is levied over and above basic tax rates.
- The purpose of the new AIDC is to **raise funds to finance spending on developing agriculture infrastructure**.
- The AIDC is **proposed to be used to improve agricultural infrastructure** aimed at not only boosting production but also in helping conserve and process farm output efficiently.

How will this Step be Beneficial?

- This decision is in view to **provide further relief to consumers** and to **keep in check any further rise in the prices of domestic edible oils** due to rise in the prices of edible oils globally.
 - After reduction of the agri-cess, the **import tax gap between CPO (Crude Palm Oil) and Refined Palm Oil has increased to 8.25%**.
 - The **increase in the gap between the CPO and Refined Palm Oil** will benefit the domestic refining industry to import Crude Oil for refining.

What other Steps are taken to Check the Prices of Edible Oils?

- **Extended the Current Basic Rate:**
 - The government has **extended the current basic rate of import duty of zero percent** on Crude Palm Oil, Crude Soyabean oil and Crude Sunflower Oil upto 30th September, 2022.
 - The rate of import duty on Refined Palm Oils at 12.5%, Refined Soyabean oil and Refined Sunflower Oil at 17.5% will remain in force up to 30th September, 2022.
 - This measure will **help in cooling down the prices of edible oils** which are witnessing an upward trend in the international market due to lower availability and other international factors.
- **Imposed Stock Limit Quantities:**
 - The government had earlier **imposed stock limit quantities on edible oils and oilseeds** for a period upto 30th June, 2022 under the [Essential Commodities Act, 1955](#) to check hoarding.
 - This measure is **expected to curtail any unfair practices** like hoarding, black marketing etc. of edible oils and oilseeds in the market which may lead to any increase in the prices of edible oils.
- **National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP):**
 - In August, 2021, the government has announced the [National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm \(NMEO-OP\) scheme](#) for self-reliance in edible oil and involves investment of over Rs. 11,000 crore (over a five year period).

What about the Edible Oil Economy in India?

- There are two major features, which have significantly contributed to the development of this sector. One was the setting up of the **Technology Mission on Oilseeds in 1986** which was converted into a **National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP) in 2014**.
 - Further it was merged with [NFSM \(National Food Security Mission\)](#).
 - This gave a thrust to **Government's efforts for augmenting the production of**

oilseeds.

- The other dominant feature which has had significant impact on the present status of edible oilseeds/oil industry has been the **program of liberalization** under which the Government's economic policy allows greater freedom to the open market and encourages healthy competition and self regulation rather than protection and control.
- The **Yellow Revolution** is one of the color revolutions that was launched to **increase the production of Edible oilseeds** in the country to meet domestic demand.
- The government has also launched the [Kharif Strategy 2021 for oilseeds](#).
 - It will bring an additional 6.37 lakh hectare area under oilseeds and is likely to produce 120.26 lakh quintals of oilseeds and edible oil amounting to 24.36 lakh quintals.
- **Oils Commonly Used in India:** The major edible oils consumed in the country are mustard, soyabean, groundnut, sunflower sesame oil, niger seed, safflower seed, castor, and linseed (primary source) and coconut, palm oil, cottonseed, rice bran, solvent extracted oil, tree and forest origin oil.

Why is India not Self Sufficient in Edible Oils Production?

- **Micro-irrigation, quality seeds, marketing infrastructure and government policies** are the four main concerns for oil seed and oil producers in India.
- According to the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution** the **total domestic demand of edible oils in the country** is approximately **250 lakh metric tonnes per year**.
 - From which around **60% of the edible oils** consumed in the country is met through imports. **Palm oils (crude + refined) import** constitutes around 60% of the total edible oil imported, out of which **54% is imported from Indonesia and Malaysia**.

Way Forward

- As of now, there is **no comprehensive strategy** when it comes to the production of oil seeds.
 - Farmers cultivate as per the trends in the market rate. But when there is bumper production, the government imports oils and other products which results in a fall in prices.
- It is high time that **the government has a plan in place regarding cultivation, marketing and import-export**.
 - The government should approve [Genetically Modified cultivation for oil seeds](#) to increase production.
- **Policy is the major problem** when it comes to increasing seed oil production. For years, farmers produced groundnuts and sunflowers but with unseasonal rains and pests, they have turned to soya.
- Thus, there must be a **micro-level plan with technological support**. The world has accepted GM oilseed cultivation and now its high time India takes a call on this matter.

[Source: PIB](#)

Earth Observation Satellite EOS-04

For Prelims: Indian Space Research Organisation, earth observation satellite, EOS-04, PSLV, Cartosat, RISAT-2B, SSLV (Small Satellite Launch Vehicle), EOS-03, RISAT-1, India-Bhutan Joint Satellite (INS-2B).

For Mains: Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology, ISRO and its achievements, current issues with ISRO.

Why in News?

Recently, [Indian Space Research Organisation's earth observation satellite EOS-04](#) and two small satellites (INSPIRESat-1 and INS-2TD) were successfully placed into the intended orbit by the **PSLV-C52 rocket**.

- This launch was the **54th flight of the [Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle \(PSLV\)](#) rocket**, and the **23rd** of its most powerful **XL-version** that has six strap-on boosters.

What are Earth Observation Satellites?

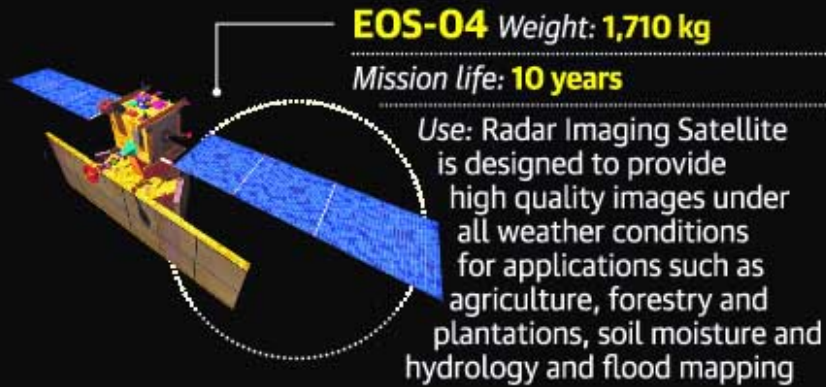
- Earth observation satellites are the **satellites equipped with remote sensing technology**. Earth observation is the gathering of information about Earth's physical, chemical and biological systems.
- Many earth observation satellites have been employed on [sun-synchronous orbit](#).
- Other earth observation satellites launched by ISRO include **RESOURCESAT- 2**, 2A, CARTOSAT-1, 2, 2A, 2B, RISAT-1 and 2, OCEANSAT-2, Megha-Tropiques, SARAL and SCATSAT-1, INSAT-3DR, 3D, etc.

First launch of 2022

On Monday, Earth Observation Satellite **EOS-04** and two small satellites – **INSPIRESat-1** and **INS-2TD** – were placed in the orbit by the **PSLV-C52** rocket. A detailed look at the payload

DETAILS OF THE LAUNCH

- 1** Monday's was the 54th flight of PSLV and 23rd mission using PSLV-XL configuration with six PSOM-XLs (strap-on motors)
- 2** After a flight of about 18 minutes, the vehicle injected the satellites into their intended orbit
- 3** Primary satellite EOS-04 was put into the intended sun synchronous polar orbit of 529 km altitude at 6.17 a.m.



What are the Three Satellites Launched?

▪ EOS-04:

- EOS-04 weighing 1,710 kg and with a **mission life of ten years designed to provide high quality images** under all weather conditions for applications such as Agriculture, Forestry and Plantations, Soil Moisture and Hydrology and Flood mapping.
 - It will complement the data from **Resourcesat, Cartosat and RISAT-2B** series of satellites that are already in orbit.
 - The first of these newly named satellites, **EOS-01**, launched in November 2020, is in orbit right now. **EOS-02**, a micro-satellite to be flown on a new launch vehicle called **SSLV (Small Satellite Launch Vehicle)** is yet to be launched, while launch of **EOS-03** had ended in a failure in **August, 2021**.
- It will be placed in a **sun synchronous polar orbit** of 529 km, is a radar-imaging satellite which would have made it a part of the **RISAT series earlier**.
- In fact, it would **replace the RISAT-1** which was launched in 2012 but has been non-functional for the last few years.
 - RISATs use **synthetic aperture radars** to produce high-resolution images of the land.
 - **One big advantage that radar imaging has over optical instruments** is that it is **unaffected by weather, cloud or fog**, or the lack of sunlight.
 - It can **produce high-quality images** in all conditions and at all times, making it suitable for surveillance.

▪ INSPIRESat-1:

- INSPIRESat-1 is **part of a constellation of satellites planned under the International Space Program in Research and Education (INSPIRE)** involving the Small-spacecraft Systems and Payload Centre (SSPACE) at IIST, University of Colorado (US), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, and National Central University (NCU), Taiwan.
- Two scientific payloads on INSPIRESat-1, with a mass of 8.1 kg and mission life of one year, are **aimed at improving the understanding of ionosphere** (part of Earth's upper atmosphere) **dynamics** and the **sun's coronal heating processes**.

▪ INS-2TD:

- INS-2TD is a **technology demonstrator for the first India-Bhutan joint satellite** that is scheduled to be launched in March, 2022.
 - The two countries had **signed a space agreement last year**, and its first outcome would be the launch of **BhutanSat, or INS-2B, on a PSLV rocket** in March, 2022.
- The **thermal imaging cameras of the INS-2TD** are meant for **earth observation purposes**, like assessment of land and water surface temperature, and identification of forest and tree cover.

How many satellites does India have in space?

- India currently has **53 operational satellites**, of which 21 are earth observation ones and another 21 are communication-based.
- Eight are navigation satellites, while the remaining three are science satellites.

[Source: IE](#)

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana & NFSA Integration

For Prelims: Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011, National Food Security Act (NFSA) portal, Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Health Ministry has said that the **National Health Authority (NHA)** is working to integrate the database of [Socio-Economic Caste Census \(SECC\) 2011](#) beneficiaries with the [National Food Security Act \(NFSA\) portal](#).

- This step envisages that beneficiaries can seek information regarding their entitlements under the [Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana \(AB PM-JAY\)](#) using their ration card number.

What is NHA?

- The **National Health Authority (NHA)** has been constituted as an autonomous entity under the **Society Registration Act, 1860** for effective implementation of PM-JAY in alliance with state governments.
 - Inter-alia, this will include, formulation of AB PMJAY policies, development of operational guidelines, implementation mechanisms, coordination with state governments, monitoring and oversight of AB PMJAY amongst other.
- The **State Health Agency (SHA)** is the apex body of the State Government responsible for the implementation of AB PM-JAY in the State.

What are the Intended Benefits of this Proposal?

- **Integrating Fair Price Shops With Health:** The proposal will allow NHA to use Fair Price Shops or ration shops for providing information related to the scheme and entitlement under the scheme to eligible beneficiaries.
- **Developing More Service Points:** This will provide an additional avenue to beneficiaries along with the existing Common Service Center for card creation.
 - This will make the beneficiary identification process very convenient.
- **Common Identity Enabler:** [Aadhaar](#) being a common identity across the majority of government databases will enable this integration.
 - Further, Aadhaar also ensures certainty regarding beneficiary identification through e-KYC.
 - e-KYC enables paperless delivery of services in a targeted manner.
- **Cross-Platform Integration:** The NHA will collaborate with various ministries implementing welfare schemes to **strengthen the different aspects of scheme** implementation including beneficiary awareness campaigns, beneficiary database (SECC 2011) enrichment etc.
- **Towards Universal Health Coverage:** The vast ambition of the **AB-PMJAY programme** presents an opportunity to **pursue the systemic reform** that India requires to meet its [Universal Health Coverage \(UHC\)](#) aims.

What are the Major Provisions of AB PM-JAY?

- **AB PM-JAY** offers a sum insured of **Rs.5 lakh per family** for secondary care as well as tertiary care, **under a cashless and paperless access to health services framework**.
- Under PMJAY, cashless and paperless access to services are provided to the beneficiaries at the point of service.
- **Health Benefit Packages** covers surgery, medical and day care treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.
 - **Packaged rates** (Rates that include everything so that each product or service is not charged for separately).

- They are **flexible**, but they can't charge the beneficiary once fixed by the hospitals.
- The scheme also has prescribed a **daily limit for medical management**.
- It is an **entitlement-based scheme** that targets the beneficiaries as identified by latest SECC data.

What are the Main Features of the NFSA 2013?

- **Objective:** To provide **for food and nutritional security** in the human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantities of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.
- **Coverage:** 75% of the rural population and upto 50% of the urban population for receiving subsidized foodgrains under **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**.
 - Overall, NFSA caters to 67% of the total population.
- **Major Provisions:**
 - 5 Kgs of foodgrains per person per month at **Rs. 3/2/1 per Kg for rice/wheat/coarse grains**.
 - Meal and maternity benefit of not less than **Rs. 6,000** to pregnant women and lactating mothers during pregnancy and six months after the child birth.
 - **Meals** for children upto 14 years of age.
 - **Food security allowance** to beneficiaries in case of non-supply of entitled foodgrains or meals.
 - Setting up of **grievance redressal mechanisms** at the district and state level.

[Source: TH](#)

Repo Rate Unchanged

For Prelims: RBI, Repo Rate, Reverse Repo Rate, Monetary Policy, Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

For Mains: Monetary Policy, Growth & Development, RBI and its Monetary Policy Tools.

Why in News?

Recently, the six-member **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** kept key policy rates - **Repo rate**, **Reverse repo rate** and the **Bank rate** - unchanged and retained the **accommodative policy stance**.

- This is the **tenth consecutive time** that the repo rate has **remained unchanged**. The central bank had last revised the policy rate on **22nd May 2020**.
- Global central banks, including the **US Federal Reserve** and the **European Central Bank (ECB)** have turned hawks and are also **expected to hike rates soon**.

What is the Monetary Policy Committee?

- It is a **statutory and institutionalized framework** under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, for maintaining price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- The **Governor of RBI** is ex-officio Chairman of the committee.
- The MPC determines the policy interest rate (repo rate) required to achieve the inflation target (4%).

- An RBI-appointed committee led by the then deputy governor Urjit Patel in 2014 recommended the establishment of the Monetary Policy Committee.

What are the Key Announcements?

- **Repo Rate:**
 - It has been retained at **4% to boost growth.**
 - This means banks won't hike lending and deposit rates and EMIs on loans will remain unchanged.
 - Repo rate is the rate at **which the central bank of a country (RBI in case of India) lends money** to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds. Here, the central bank purchases the security.
- **Reverse Repo Rate:**
 - It has been retained at **3.35%.**
 - Reverse repo rate is the rate at which the RBI borrows money from commercial banks within the country.
- **Bank Rate:**
 - The **Bank Rate** unchanged at **4.25%.**
 - It is the rate charged by the RBI for lending funds to commercial banks.
- **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate:**
 - This rate has also been retained at **4.25%.**
 - MSF is a **window for scheduled banks** to borrow overnight from the RBI in an emergency situation when interbank liquidity dries up completely.
- **Inflation:**
 - The RBI has projected a **5.3% consumer price (retail) inflation** for the current financial year 2021-22 (FY22) despite [rising crude oil prices](#).
 - The [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\)](#) monitors retail prices at a certain level for a particular commodity; price movement of goods and services at rural, urban and all-India levels. The change in the price index over a period of time is referred to as **CPI-based inflation, or retail inflation.**
 - **Retail inflation for the next fiscal (FY23)** is projected at **4.5%**, below the earlier projections.
 - The MPC noted that **inflation is likely to moderate** in the first half of 2022-23 and move closer to the target rate, thereafter providing room to remain accommodative. Timely and apposite supply side measures from the government have substantially helped contain inflationary pressures.
 - An **accommodative stance** means the **MPC is willing to either lower rates or keep them unchanged.**
- **Growth Forecast:**
 - The central bank has projected the **real GDP growth at 7.8%** for the next financial year (2022-23).
 - Real GDP is a **measurement of economic output** that accounts for the effects of inflation or deflation.
 - The **difference between nominal GDP and real GDP** is the **adjustment for inflation.** Since nominal GDP is calculated using current prices, it does not require any adjustments for inflation.

Why were Rates kept Unchanged?

- MPC was of the view that **continued policy support** – status quo on interest rates – was warranted for a **durable and broad-based recovery** after taking into consideration the outlook for inflation and growth, in particular the comfort provided by the improving inflation outlook, the uncertainties related to [Omicron](#) and global spill-overs.

[Source: TH](#)

Lassa fever

Why in News?

Recently, three persons diagnosed with **Lassa fever** in the UK died. The cases have been linked to **travel to west African countries**.

What is Lassa Fever?

▪ About:

- The Lassa fever-causing virus is found **in West Africa and was first discovered in 1969 in Lassa, Nigeria**.
- The fever is spread by rats and is primarily found in countries in **West Africa including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and Nigeria** where it is endemic.
 - **Matomys rats** has the potential to spread the deadly Lassa virus.
- The **death rate associated with this disease is low, at around 1%**. But the death rate is higher for certain individuals, such as pregnant women in their third trimester.
- According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, **about 80% of the cases are asymptomatic** and therefore remain undiagnosed.

▪ Transmission:

- A person can become infected if **they come in contact with household items of food that is contaminated with the urine or feces of an infected rat (zoonotic disease)**.
- It can also be spread, though rarely, **if a person comes in contact with a sick person's infected bodily fluids** or through mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose or the mouth.
 - Person-to-person transmission is more common in healthcare settings.

▪ Symptoms:

- **Mild symptoms include** slight fever, fatigue, weakness and headache.
- **Serious symptoms include** bleeding, difficulty breathing, vomiting, facial swelling, pain in the chest, back, and abdomen and shock.
- Death can occur from two weeks of the onset of symptoms, usually **as a result of multi-organ failure**.

▪ Treatment:

- The **antiviral drug ribavirin** seems to be an effective treatment for Lassa fever if given early on in the course of clinical illness.

[Source: IE](#)

Medaram Jathara Festival

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has sanctioned Rs 2.26 Crores for various activities pertaining to

Medaram Jathara 2022.

- Medaram Jathara is the **second-largest fair of India, after the [Kumbh Mela](#)**, celebrated by the **second-largest Tribal Community of Telangana- the Koya tribe** for four days.

What are the Key Points?

- Medaram Jathara is **also known as Sammakka Saralamma Jathara**.
- It is a tribal festival honoring the **fight of a mother and daughter, Sammakka and Saralamma, with the reigning rulers against an unjust law**.
- It is celebrated **in the state of Telangana**. The Jatra begins at Medaram in Tadvai Mandal in Warangal district.
 - Medaram is a remote place in the **Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, a part of Dandakaranya**, the largest surviving forest belt in the region.
- It is celebrated once in two years in the month of **“Magha” (February)** on the full moon day.
- People offer bangaram/gold (jaggery) of a quantity equal to their weight to the goddesses and take holy bath in Jampanna Vagu, a tributary to River Godavari.
- It was declared a **State Festival in 1996**.

What are the Important things about the Koya Tribe?

- **About:**
 - Koya tribe is the **largest adivasi tribe of Telangana** and listed as [Scheduled Tribe in Telangana](#).
 - The community is **spread across Telugu speaking states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh**.
 - Koyas popularly call themselves as **Dorala Sattam (Lords group) and Putta Dora (original lords)**. Koyas call themselves “Koitur” in their dialect, like Gonds.
- **Habitat and livelihood:**
 - The Godavari and Sabari rivers which are flowing through their area of habitation exercise profound influence on Koyas’ economic, social and cultural life.
 - The Koyas are **mainly settled cultivators**. They grow Jowar, Ragi, Bajra and other millets.
- **Language:**
 - Many koya People have forgotten their Koya Dialect and adopted Telugu as their mother tongue but some in other parts still speak Koya dialect.
- **Religion and festival:**
 - Lord Bhima, Korra Rajulu, Mamili and Potaraju are the important deities to Koyas.
 - Their main festivals are Vijji Pandum (seeds charming festival) and Kondala Kolupu (festival to appease Hill deities).
 - Koyas perform a robust colourful **dance called Permakok ata** (Bison horn dance) during festivals and marriage ceremonies.

[Source: PIB](#)

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