

### WTO PANEL RULES AGAINST INDIA

#### Why in news?

- The dispute settlement panel of the World Trade Organization (WTO) had ruled that India had violated global trading rules in a dispute with the European Union (EU), Japan and Taiwan over import duties on IT products.

#### World Trade Organization (WTO)

- **About**
  - WTO is an international organization that promotes and regulates global trade among nations.
  - The WTO was established on January 1, 1995 by replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
  - GATT had been in existence since 1948.
  - It has 164 member countries, representing over 98% of global trade.
  - It is **headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland**, and operates on a consensus-based decision-making process.
- **Objective**
  - Its main objective is to promote free and fair trade by eliminating barriers to trade, such as tariffs and quotas, and by ensuring that trade disputes are resolved through a transparent and predictable process.
- **Functions**
  - The WTO is responsible for:
    - setting the rules of international trade,
    - negotiating and implementing trade agreements,
    - providing a forum for trade negotiations, and
    - monitoring national trade policies.
  - The WTO also works closely with other international organizations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to promote global economic development and reduce poverty.

#### Dispute Settlement Body of WTO

- The General Council convenes as the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to deal with disputes between WTO members.
  - The DSB has authority to:
    - establish dispute settlement panels,
    - refer matters to arbitration, adopt panel, Appellate Body
    - maintain surveillance over the implementation of recommendations and rulings contained in arbitration reports, and
    - authorize suspension of concessions in the event of non-compliance with those recommendations and rulings.
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## SAME-SEX MARRIAGE: ISSUES IN THE PLEA, CENTRE'S VIEW AND SC VERDICTS

### Why in News?

- A five-judge Supreme Court Bench, headed by the Chief Justice of India, is scheduled to hear a series of petitions seeking legal recognition of same sex marriage.

### What is the Case of the Same-sex marriage in India?

- Several petitioners have asked the court to recognise the same-sex marriages under the **Special Marriage Act (SMA) 1954**.
  - The Act (Section 4) provides for the conditions relating to solemnization of special marriages **between any two persons**.
- The court had referred the pleas to a Constitution Bench, **saying questions of seminal importance** (an interplay of constitutional rights, specific legislative enactments and the rights of transgender couples).

### What are the Arguments of Petitioners?

- **Same-sex couples do not enjoy the rights of married couples** even though the SC has repeatedly said that all adults have the right to marry a person of their choice.
  - These rights include the **right to adopt or have children by surrogacy, automatic rights to inheritance, pension, maintenance and tax benefits, etc.**

- They will not be able to avail of legally accrued benefits of laws such as -
  - **The Transplantation of Human Organs Act**, as it only allows near relatives to object to the use of a deceased's body for therapeutic purposes or organ donation.
  - **The Section 80 of the Income Tax Act 1961**, which provides for deduction of certain sums for computing the total income of an assessee, when such sums are paid on behalf of a spouse.
- **Marriage is a social status** which is bestowed by law and through which society accepts, respects and validates a couple.
- **By excluding same-sex couples from the realm of marriage**, the law places a burden on same-sex couples that it is constitutionally impermissible.
- **Equality** extends to all spheres of life, such as the home, workplace and public places, making the case for **structural changes along with attitudinal ones**.
- **Non-recognition of same-sex marriage violates fundamental rights** under -
  - Articles 14 (right to equality before law),
  - Article 15 (right against discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth),
  - Article 19 (freedom of speech and expression), and
  - Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution.

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## [BUY MID-DAY MEAL PULSES FROM NAFED, CENTRE TELLS STATES; UP, BENGAL SAY NO](#)

### Why in News?

- The Union Ministry of Education has written to State governments to procure pulses (chana dal) for the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN) from NAFED.
- However, major states like Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal has rejected the Union Ministry's recommendation.
- West Bengal government has argued that **during the Covid-19 pandemic, the chana supplied by NAFED was of extremely inferior quality, mixed with dust and gravel**.
- Uttar Pradesh government has argued that the **state has plenty of local supply and hence in need to procure pulses from NAFED**.

## About Mid-Day Meal Scheme:

- The Mid-Day Meal Scheme was started in India on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1995 as ‘**National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE)**’.
- It was renamed as ‘**National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools**’ in October 2007, also known as the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme.
- Under the scheme, hot cooked meal per day is provided to all children (**studying in Class I to VIII**) enrolled in government schools, local body schools, government-aided schools, special training centres (STC), maktabas and madrasas supported under the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**.

## Objectives of Mid-Day Meal Scheme:

- To increase the enrolment in the schools of the children who belong to disadvantaged sections of the society.
- To increase the attendance of the children in government and government-aided schools.
- To retain the children studying in class I to VIII.
- To give nutritional support to the children studying in the elementary stage, especially in the drought-affected areas.
- To address hunger and malnutrition and improve socialisation among castes.

## Features of Mid-Day Meal Scheme:

- Every school should have a hygienic cooking infrastructure for hygienically cooked mid-day meals.
- The Food and Drugs Administration Department of the State can collect samples for ensuring the quality and nutritional value of the meals.
- **Food allowance is provided to the children when the cooked meals cannot be provided because of unforeseen circumstances** in the following manner:
  - Quantity of the food grains according to the entitlement of a child, and
  - Cooking cost prevailing in the respective state.

## About NAFED:

- National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd.(NAFED) was established in October 1958.
- It is registered under the **Multi State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002**.

- NAFED is now one of the largest procurement as well as marketing agencies for agricultural products in India.
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## WHAT IS HEMOPHILIA?



World Hemophilia Day was recently observed to raise awareness about the rare blood disorder and help those suffering from it lead a better life.

### Why in News?

- Hemophilia Day was first **commemorated by the World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH) in 1989** in remembrance of **Frank Schnabel**, who was born on April 17, 1942, and spent his entire life working to make the lives of those who were affected by Hemophilia.
- The **theme** for World Hemophilia Day 2023 is “**Access for All: Prevention of Bleeds as the Global Standard of Care**”.

### About Hemophilia:

- **What is it?** It is a **genetic disorder** that affects the body’s ability to form blood clots.
  - People with hemophilia have **deficiencies or abnormalities in certain clotting factors**, which are proteins that help the blood clot.
  - **Causes:** It is caused by a **mutation or change, in one of the genes, that provides instructions for making the clotting factor proteins needed to form a blood clot.**
  - **Symptoms:** Signs and symptoms of hemophilia vary, **depending on the level of clotting factors.**
  - **Males are much more likely** to have hemophilia than are females.
  - **Treatment:**
    - It typically involves **replacement therapy**, which involves infusing clotting factor concentrates into the bloodstream to help the blood clot.
    - Other treatments may include **medications to promote clotting or surgery** to repair damage caused by bleeding.
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## A CULTURE OF COHESION TO SAVE YOUNG LIVES ON CAMPUSES

### Context

During 2018-23, **61 students committed suicide** - 33 in the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), 24 in the National Institute of Technology (NITs), and 4 in the Indian Institute of Management (IIMs) – and the majority of these belonged to SC, ST, OBC and EWS categories.

### Factors leading to the suicide in campuses

- **Marginalisation and deprivation:** Caste-based discrimination, academic pressure and many different forms of harassment.
- **Impersonal spaces:** Campuses have become large and impersonal spaces; **there is very little space for emotional vulnerabilities.**
- **Institutions' reluctance to address the problems:**
  - Institutions are in **denial mode** and they prefer to hush things up.
  - They expect parents to deal with the situation.
  - In some instances, students **in emotional distress have been advised to spend time with their families.**
- **Lack of Communication:**
  - There is hardly any free and fair **communication between students, their seniors, teachers, and the administration.**
  - As a result, the concept of "A Home Away from Home" is almost nonexistent.
  - Classroom interactions are **confined to academics.**
  - The continuous struggle to stay committed, dedicated, and hard-working, **adds to the emotional stress students are already under.**
  - Teachers may hardly have the time, inclination, or even expertise to **notice and address any disturbing traits among their students.**
  - Consequently, students are **deprived of much-needed preventive measures.**

### Other contributing factors

- Many sources of distress lie **outside the purview of higher education institutions** and have their genesis in the **larger economic and societal contexts** like **family circumstances, financial distress, etc.**

- **Family System:**

- The family support system is dwindling with the **rising concept of the nuclear family.**
- Working parents are **unable to provide the parenting and mentoring** that joint families provide.
- This has made **Individualism** prevalent in society.
- As a result of this, **early signs of emotional distress go unnoticed, unrecognised, and unaddressed.**

### **Existing Mechanism to Address the Problem**

- There are formal mechanisms in place to **provide personal, cultural, and psychological counseling to students.**
- Most of the IITs, NITs, and other institutions have put in place (or beginning) online and offline mechanisms for students to access **personal counseling and therapies confidentially.** Apps such as **Dost, Saathi, and Mitr** have been launched for the purpose.
- Most of these institutions also organise **awareness and sensitisation programmes** for students.

### **Drawbacks of the existing mechanism**

- The **onus is on students 'in need' to seek help.** It is they who must seek an appointment.
- Another drawback is **the inability of institutions to respond in a prompt manner.**

### **What should be done?**

- Each of the above issues must be addressed **at their source by the government, society, institutions, parents and families.**
- Create conditions for forming an **assimilative culture of cohesion** and **promote respect for academic and socio-economic diversity.**
- Institutions must deter and curb all **forms of discrimination.**
- Institutions should be **discreet about some sensitive information about a student such as his category.**
- There's a **need to evolve a code of campus ethics** prescribing standards and protocols of **what can and cannot be discussed even in informal social settings.**

- The first step for the standardization is by giving equal importance to student's mental health aspect while processing approval and accreditation of institutions.
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## IBSA FORUM



The trilateral India-Brazil-South Africa forum is likely to receive increased diplomatic focus, according to persons aware of the matter.

### About IBSA Forum:

- It is a Trilateral Dialogue Forum of **India, Brazil and South Africa** which was created in the year 2003.
  - The grouping was formalised under the name of the IBSA Dialogue Forum under the **Brasilia Declaration**.
  - **Objective:** Promoting ever closer **coordination on global issues** between the three large multicultural and multiracial democracies of Asia, South America and Africa, and contributing to enhancing trilateral India-Brazil-South Africa cooperation in sectoral areas.
  - **IBSA Fund:**
    - It was **established in 2004** which facilitates the execution of human development projects to advance the **fight against poverty and hunger** in developing countries.
    - It is managed by the **UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)**.
  - **IBSAMAR** is a joint **multinational maritime exercise**, among the Indian, Brazilian and South African navies which is an important part of defence cooperation among these countries.
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## HEATSTROKE DEATHS IN MAHARASHTRA

### Why in news?

- Thirteen people died from an apparent heatstroke while attending a government award function in an open space in Navi Mumbai.
- This is possibly the biggest-ever heatwave-related death toll from a single event in the country.



- It brings back the spotlight on potential risks from heatwaves, whose intensity and frequency is expected to rise because of climate change.

## What is heat wave?

- A Heat Wave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature.
- **Qualitatively**, heat wave is a condition of air temperature which becomes fatal to human body when exposed.
- **Quantitatively**, it is defined based on the temperature thresholds over a region in terms of actual temperature or its departure from normal.

## What is criterion for declaring heat wave?

- As per IMD, heat wave is considered if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions.
  - IMD uses following criterion to declare the occurrence of heat wave in the region:
    - **Based on Departure from Normal Temperature:**
      - **Heat Wave** - Departure from normal is 4.50°C to 6.40°C;
      - **Severe Heat Wave:** Departure from normal is >6.40degree C
    - **Based on Actual Maximum Temperature:**
      - **Heat Wave** - When actual maximum temperature  $\geq 45^{\circ}\text{C}$ ;
      - **Severe Heat Wave:** When actual maximum temperature  $\geq 47$
    - If above criteria met at least in 2 stations in a Meteorological sub-division for at least two consecutive days then heat wave occurrence is declared on the second day.
  - **Heat Wave in coastal region**
    - When maximum temperature departure is 4.5°C or more from normal, Heat Wave may be described provided actual maximum temperature is 37°C or more
- ## Why do heat waves occur in the first place?
- Heat waves are formed for one of two reasons: because **warmer air is flowing in from elsewhere** or **because something is producing it locally**.
    - Air is warmed locally when the air is warmed by higher land surface temperature; or



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- because the air sinking down from above is compressed along the way, producing hot air near the surface.

### **More intense heatwaves**

- The summer this year is predicted to be excessively hot because of the end of the strong La Nina phase in equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- New forecasts suggest that El Nino, which has the opposite impacts of La Nina, is expected to kick in from the May-July period itself
- The El Niño is a complementary phenomenon in which warmer water spreads west-east across the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

### **What is a heat stroke?**

- A heat stroke or sunstroke is the result of overheating of the body as a result of exposure to high temperatures and humidity, or due to prolonged physical exertion at high temperatures.
- A heat stroke is considered to be a medical emergency that requires prompt attention.
- Persons suffering from heat exhaustion experience fatigue, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting, hypotension (low blood pressure) and tachycardia (increased heart rate).

