

PANEL CALLS FOR BOOSTING PROTEIN, NUTRIENTS IN GOVERNMENT MEAL PROGRAMMES

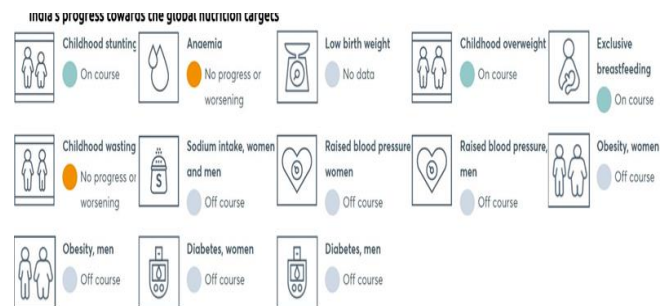
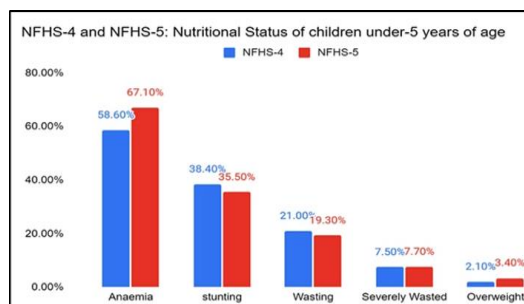
In News:

- An inter-ministerial committee has observed that the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have aggravated the silent crisis of under nutrition in India.

In Focus: Nutritional status in India

Statistics

- According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019-21, India has seen no significant improvement in nutritional status among its population.
- According to NFHS 5 report
 - 7% of children are severely wasted, 19.3% are wasted and 35.5% are stunted.
 - At the same time, 3.4% children are overweight.
 - Anaemia among children under-5 has become significantly worse with the current prevalence as 67.1%



Global Nutrition Report 2021 and India's progress

Various factors behind the present nutritional situation in India:

- Poverty Trap**
 - Poor people do not have enough money to buy or produce enough food. In turn, they tend to be weaker and get trapped into poverty-hunger nexus.
- Dietary Ignorance**

- Due to dietary ignorance, many people do not complement their children's diet with sufficient nutritional components.
- As a result, we see the incidents of child stunting, child wasting etc.
- **Socio-Cultural Factors**
- Hunger in India also has age, gender and caste dimensions. Compared to men, women more often forgo meals to feed their children.
- **Caste and tribe are structural factors**
- These factors predispose certain groups to long term poverty and deprivation which ultimately gets translated into hunger and malnutrition.
- **Politics of Distribution**
- According to Amartya Sen, hunger usually arises from food distribution problems, or from governmental policies in the developing world, and not from the insufficiency of food production.
- This is true for India as well. Corruption, leakages, exclusion-inclusion error etc. makes the PDS inefficient in addressing the issue of hunger and malnutrition.
- **Food wastage**
- Be it the cold storage of Food Corporation of India or the extravaganza shown in marriages and rituals, food/food grains wastages are the common thing in India.
- These wastages distort the food availability making difficult for poor and vulnerable to buy food from market.
- **Natural Disaster**
- Erratic monsoon, incidence of draughts, unseasonal rainfall, cyclones etc. and the recent COVID – 19 pandemics has affected the food grain production and hence affects the food security in India.

Key observations

- **Pandemic aggravated the crisis of undernutrition in India**
- The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have aggravated the silent crisis of undernutrition in India.
- **Protein rich food items be legally included in meals**

- It recommended that protein-rich food items as well as micronutrients be legally mandated in meals given through food safety programmes in schools and anganwadis.
 - Protein-rich food items - eggs, nuts and legumes;
 - Micronutrients - calcium, iron, zinc, folate and vitamin A.
- This could be done by revising Schedule II of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013.
 - **Schedule II** of the NFSA lays down nutritional standards for government food safety programmes like mid-day meal, PM Poshan and Integrated Child Development Services scheme.
 - Currently, it quantifies nutrition per meal in terms of calories and protein only.
 - However, the inter-ministerial panel has called for micronutrients also to be taken into account.
- The report states that those who do not consume eggs may be provided double the proposed quantity of nuts and seeds.
- **Recommended new standards of kilocalories and protein per meal**
 - It recommended new standards of kilocalories and protein per meal, along with fixing proposed intake of micro-nutrients for all categories of beneficiaries.
 - It also recommended the food items required to achieve those standards.
 - According to the cost implications of the recommendations, the cost per meal in lower primary classes will be Rs 9.6 and Rs 12.1 in upper primary.
 - This excludes milk and fruits.
 - Currently, the cooking costs are Rs 4.97 and Rs 7.45 respectively.

INDIA'S FLORA AND FAUNA

India added 540 species to its faunal database in 2021 taking the total number of animal species to 1,03,258. The country also added 315 taxa to the Indian flora during 2021, taking the number of floral taxa in the country to 55,048.

About:

- Of the 540 faunal species, 406 are new discoveries and 134 new records to India. Thirteen new genera were



also discovered in 2021. Among the new species discovered is one species from mammal, 35 reptiles and 19 species of pisces.

- The new mammal species discovered is *Crocidura narcondamica*, a white-toothed shrew, from Narcondam Island of the Andaman and Nicobar group of islands.
- Among the reptiles discovered in 2021, notable is *Boiga whitakeri*, or Whitaker's cat snake, from the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu.
- The most number of new discoveries was from the faunal group Hymenoptera, an order of insects, comprising the sawflies, wasps, bees, and ants, in which 80 species, including one new genus, were discovered.
- With 1.03 lakh species of fauna, India contributes to 6.1% of faunal diversity in the world.

GST ON DAIRY PRODUCTS

The decision of the GST Council at its 47th meeting to impose a 5% tax on dairy products such as “pre-packed, pre-labelled curd, lassi and butter milk” and to increase the tax on dairy machinery and milking machines from 12% to 18% has drawn criticism from farmers' organisations and milk cooperatives.



About:

- Various cooperatives are waiting for the notification of the Centre to take the next step, while farmers fear that the decision will result in an increase in the price of the products.
- The Pradeshik Cooperative Dairy Federation (PCDF) of Uttar Pradesh, the largest milk-producing State in the country, will meet soon to assess the impact of GST on dairy products and the machinery.

KAI CHUTNEY

In Odisha, scientists are now fine-tuning their research to make a presentation for the Geographical Indications (GI) registry of Kai chutney.



About:

- Applied under food category, the GI tag will help develop a structured hygiene protocol in the preparation of Kai chutney for standard wider use. Geographical Indications labels enhance the reputation and value of local products and support local businesses.
- People often keep a safe distance from red weaver ants as their sting inflicts a sharp pain and reddish bumps on the skin. Despite this, weaver ants are popular among the tribes of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha for the mouth-watering dish made of them — the Kai chutney.
- This savoury food item, rich in proteins, calcium, zinc, vitamin B-12, iron, magnesium, potassium, sodium, copper, fibre and 18 amino acids, is known to boost the immune system.
- Weaver ants, *Oecophylla smaragdina*, are abundantly found in Mayurbhanj throughout the year. They make nests with leaves of host trees.