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Daily News Analysis

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1. Rotavirus

- Prelims - Rotavirus
- Mains - GS 3 - Science and Technology

Why in the news?

- A recent study assessing India's indigenous rotavirus vaccine revealed significant declines in rotavirus-related gastroenteritis across multiple sites nationwide.

Rotavirus

- **What is it?:**
 - Rotavirus is a very contagious virus that causes diarrhea, vomiting, and dehydration, particularly in young children.
 - It's the most common cause of severe diarrhea among infants and young children worldwide.
 - It is one among the top causes of Under-five mortality.
- **Causes:** Rotavirus is a highly contagious spread through contact with infected stool (poop) or vomit. It can live on surfaces for days and easily spread on unwashed hands.
- **Symptoms:** Severe watery diarrhea, Vomiting, Fever, Belly pain and Dehydration (loss of fluids).
- **Complications:** Dehydration is the most serious complication of rotavirus infection, especially in young children.
- **Treatment:** There's no specific medicine to treat rotavirus itself. Treatment focuses on preventing dehydration and managing symptoms.
- **Vaccine Availability:** Rotavac and Rotasil are two vaccines available against Rotavirus- both indigenously developed.



2. Exercise Samudra Shakti 2025

- **Prelims** - Exercise Samudra Shakti 2025
- **Mains** - GS 2 - International Relations

Why in the news?

- The 5th edition of Exercise Samudra Shakti held at Vishakapatnam.

Exercise Samudra Shakti 2025

- **What is it?**: It is a bilateral naval exercise between India and Indonesia.
- **Foundation**: Exercise Samudra Shakti was initiated in 2018 under India's Act East Policy.
- **Objective**: To improve coordination in maritime operations, strengthen defence cooperation, and reaffirm the shared commitment to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Features**
 - The exercise focuses on complex maritime operations including Military Interdiction Operations (MIO), Cross Deck Landings, and Air Defence drills.
 - It also involves Practice Weapon Firings, Replenishment Approaches, and Tactical Manoeuvres, enhancing operational interoperability between the two navies.



3. Caribbean Sea

- Prelims - Caribbean Sea
- Mains - GS 1 - Geography

Why in the news?

- Venezuela deployed thousands of troops along its border with Colombia in reaction to the U.S. military buildup in the Caribbean Sea

Caribbean Sea

- **Location:** The Caribbean Sea is a large tropical sea of the western Atlantic Ocean.
- **Boundaries:** It is bounded by the Greater and Lesser Antilles to the north and east, Central America to the west, and the northern coast of South America to the south, covering an area of about 2.7 million sq. km.
- **Major Islands:** Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic), Puerto Rico, and Trinidad & Tobago are located in the Caribbean Sea.
- **Ocean Features:**
 - The sea floor consists of five deep basins separated by underwater ridges: Yucatán Basin, Cayman Basin, Colombian Basin, Venezuelan Basin, and Grenada Basin.
 - The **Cayman Trench** is the deepest part of the Caribbean Sea.
- **Ocean Currents:** The **Caribbean Current**, a branch of the North Equatorial Current, flows westward through the sea and eventually contributes to the **Gulf Stream**.
- **Climate:**
 - The region has a **tropical maritime climate** with warm temperatures year-round.
 - It is prone to **hurricanes**, especially from **June to November**.
- **Economic Importance:**
 - Major activities include **tourism, shipping, fishing, and oil extraction**.
 - The **Panama Canal** connects the Caribbean Sea to the Pacific Ocean, making it a vital **global trade route**.
 - Ports like **Kingston (Jamaica), Havana (Cuba), and Cartagena (Colombia)** are key maritime hubs.



4. MERCOSUR Grouping

- **Prelims** - MERCOSUR Grouping
- **Mains** - GS 2 - International Relations

Why in the news?

- India and Brazil on Thursday (October 16, 2025) agreed to expand the scope of the existing preferential trade pact between New Delhi and four South American nation bloc Mercosur to boost economic ties.

MERCOSUR Grouping

- **Full form**: Mercado Común del Sur (Spanish) / Mercosul (Portuguese) — meaning Southern Common Market.
- **Established**: 1991 through the Treaty of Asunción (entered into force in 1995).
- **Headquarters**: Montevideo, Uruguay.
- **Nature**: A regional trade bloc and customs union in South America aimed at promoting free trade and regional integration.
- **Objectives**
 - Promote free trade and fluid movement of goods, people, and currency among member states.
 - Establish a common external tariff (CET) and adopt a common trade policy toward non-members.
 - Coordinate macroeconomic and sectoral policies (e.g., agriculture, industry, transportation).
 - Strengthen regional competitiveness and collective bargaining power in global trade negotiations.
- **Members**
 - **Founding Members**: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay
 - **Venezuela**: Admitted in 2012 but suspended in 2016 for violating democratic norms.
 - **Associate Members**: Chile, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, and Suriname.
 - **Observer States**: Mexico, New Zealand.



- **Challenges**

- Asymmetrical economies: Brazil and Argentina dominate, leading to imbalances.
- Political divergence: Regime changes and domestic policies affect integration.
- Slow progress on common currency or deeper economic union.
- Suspensions: Venezuela (2016), Paraguay (temporarily in 2012).
- Dependence on primary exports and limited industrial complementarity.



5. Fiscal Challenges of Urban Local Bodies

- Prelims - Fiscal Challenges of Urban Local Bodies
- Mains - GS 2 - Polity

Why in the news?

- Urban India contributes nearly two-thirds of the nation's GDP, yet its municipalities manage less than one per cent of total tax revenue.

Fiscal Challenges of Urban Local Bodies

- **Context:**
 - The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 empowered Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to perform 18 functions listed in the 12th Schedule, including water supply, waste management, and public health.
 - However, fiscal devolution has not kept pace with functional devolution.
 - Urban India contributes nearly two-thirds of the national GDP, but municipalities control less than 1% of the country's tax revenue.
- **Major Fiscal Challenges:**
 - **Weak Own Revenue Base:**
 - ★ Property tax, user fees, and local cesses form only 20–25% of potential municipal income.
 - ★ Low collection efficiency, outdated valuation, and political reluctance to hike rates further weaken revenue.
 - **Dependence on Higher Level Transfers:**
 - ★ ULBs depend on tied grants from State and Central governments through schemes like AMRUT, Smart Cities Mission, etc., reducing fiscal autonomy and flexibility.
 - ★ Intergovernmental transfers often lack predictability and are scheme-based, limiting local innovation.
 - **Impact of GST:**
 - ★ Introduction of GST abolished key local taxes like octroi, entry tax, and advertisement tax, leading to a loss of around 19% of municipal revenue sources.
 - ★ Promised compensation mechanisms do not reach ULBs directly.
 - **Limited Access to Credit Markets:**
 - ★ Poor creditworthiness and unclear accounting frameworks restrict ULBs' ability to borrow.



- ★ Only 13 ULBs have issued municipal bonds totaling about ₹2,833 crore (2017–2025), indicating minimal penetration.
- ★ Credit rating agencies undervalue cities by ignoring regular grants, calling them “non-recurring income,” leading to skewed credit ratings.
- **Over Centralisation of Taxation Powers:**
 - ★ ULBs lack independent taxation authority beyond minor taxes.
 - ★ Most buoyant taxes — income tax, GST, excise — are controlled by the Union and States.
- **Weak Administrative and Institutional Capacity:**
 - ★ CAG audit (2024) revealed a 42% mismatch between ULB financial requirements and their actual income; 37% staff vacancies across ULBs limit fiscal efficiency.
- **Underlying Structural Issues:**
 - Fragmented fiscal federalism: Decentralisation without financial empowerment.
 - Inadequate intergovernmental coordination: Poor linkage between planning and funding.
 - Low credit culture and transparency: Weak financial reporting systems in ULBs.
- **Reforms Needed:**
 - **Strengthening Own Revenue Generation:**
 - ★ Implement GIS-based property valuation and digital payment systems for better tax compliance.
 - ★ Regularly revise property tax rates linked to market valuation.
 - **Rational Fiscal Transfers:** States should operationalize the State Finance Commissions (SFCs) regularly to provide predictable, untied grants.
 - **Reforming Municipal Bond Market:**
 - ★ Include regular grants and shared tax revenues as part of income metrics for credit ratings.
 - ★ Develop pooled financing models and allow ULBs to use part of GST share or state allocations as collateral.
 - **Enhancing Institutional and Human Resource Capacity:**
 - ★ Fill staffing gaps and train local officials in financial management.
 - ★ Integrate Urban Outcome Framework (UOF) data for performance-based funding.



6. Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)

- **Prelims** - Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)
- **Mains** - GS 2 - Social Justice

Why in the news?

- Annual report on AB-PMJAY released by National Health Authority.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)

- **Launched**: 2018 under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- **Implementing Agency**: National Health Authority (NHA).
- **Objective**: To provide universal health coverage for poor and vulnerable families by reducing catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditure.
- **Coverage**: ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.
- **Nature**: Cashless and paperless health insurance at both public and private empanelled hospitals.
- **Coverage & Expansion**
 - **Total Families Covered**:
 - ★ 15.14 crore eligible families under AB-PMJAY.
 - ★ 8.57 crore additional families under State-specific schemes.
 - **States/UTs Covered**: 35 (except West Bengal).
 - **Newly Onboarded (2024–25)**: Odisha and Delhi.
 - **Empanelled Hospitals**: 31,005 (55% public, 45% private).
 - **Total Admissions**: 9.19 crore hospitalisations worth ₹1,29,386 crore.
 - **Ayushman Cards Issued**: 40.45 crore cards, covering 14.69 crore families.
- **Gender and Inclusivity Milestones**
 - **Women's Share in Admissions**: 49% — indicates improved institutional health access for women.
 - **Inclusion Initiatives**:
 - ★ **Aapke Dwar Ayushman (ADA 3.0)**: Tech-enabled, community-based self-registration outreach.
 - ★ **2023 Interim Budget**: Inclusion of 37 lakh frontline worker families (ASHAs, Anganwadi workers & helpers).



★ **October 2024 Expansion:** All citizens aged 70+ included, irrespective of income or socio-economic category.

- **Top Medical Treatments Aailed**

- **Haemodialysis:** 14% (highest share).
- **Multiple package treatments:** 7%.
- **Acute febrile illness:** 4%.
- **Acute gastroenteritis and cataract procedures:** 3% each.

- **Significance**

- Strengthens India's path towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) under SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being).
- Promotes gender equity and inclusion of elderly and frontline workers.
- Acts as a safety net against health-related poverty for millions of families.
- Enhances federal cooperation through convergence of State and Central health insurance schemes.

- **Challenges**

- Awareness gaps in rural and remote regions.
- Delayed reimbursements to private hospitals.
- Quality variation across empanelled facilities.
- Need for stronger fraud detection systems and data privacy frameworks.



7. IN-RoKN Exercise

- Prelims - IN-RoKN Exercise
- Mains - GS 2 - International Relations

Why in the news?

- The first edition Exercise IN–RoKN began at South Korea’s Busan Naval Base.

IN-RoKN Exercise

- **What is it?:** The first-ever bilateral naval exercise between Indian and South Korean Navies.
- **Venue:** Busan Naval Base, South Korea
- **Structure of the Exercise:**
 - **Harbour Phase:** Focused on building mutual understanding and camaraderie.
 - **Sea Phase:** Designed to strengthen tactical coordination and operational interoperability.
 - ★ Complex joint maritime manoeuvres
 - ★ Operational and tactical drills between INS Sahyadri and ROKS Gyeongnam
 - ★ Focus on joint operations, HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) preparedness, and maritime security cooperation.
- **Participating Vessels:**
 - **Korean Ship:** ROKS Gyeongnam
 - **Indian Ship:** INS Sahyadri (Shivalik-class stealth frigate)
- **Strategic Significance:**
 - **Strengthens Indo-Pacific Cooperation:** Promotes a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.
 - **Bolsters India–South Korea Strategic Partnership:** Reinforces defence ties established under the Special Strategic Partnership (2015).
 - **Enhances Maritime Security:** Focus on securing Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) and combatting non-traditional threats like piracy and smuggling.
 - **Supports Shared Democratic Values:** Upholds international law, freedom of navigation, and regional peace.



- **Policy:** Reflects Korea's 'New Southern Policy' and India's 'Act East Policy' converging toward Indo-Pacific stability.
- **Builds upon past engagements such as:**
 - ★ ADMM-Plus Exercises (ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus)
 - ★ Joint participation in multilateral drills like RIMPAC and INDO-PACIFIC ENDSTATE initiatives.