

# WEEKLY NEWS

March 17-23, 2024

## Egypt-European Union Financial Partnership



► *More Details in Page 1*

## HbA1c Test





► *More Details in Page 4*

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Election Commissioner
- Disease Elimination

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# Egypt-European Union Finance Partnership

## ● Why in News?

- ⇒ European Union (EU) chief and five European leaders visited Egypt to announce a financial package worth €7.4 billion.
- ⇒ The package aims to **boost energy trade and address irregular migrant flows to the EU.**

## ● Egypt and European Union Relations:

- ⇒ The EU is offering financial assistance to Egypt, which is facing economic challenges.
- ⇒ The agreement includes €5 billion in loans over four years, €1.8 billion in investments, and funding for bilateral projects, including migration-related initiatives.
- ⇒ Energy sales are highlighted as a focus, **potentially helping Europe reduce its dependence on Russian gas.**
- ⇒ Cooperation on **security, counter-terrorism, and border protection**, particularly the southern border with Sudan, is emphasized.
- ⇒ Egypt already hosts a significant number of migrants and refugees, including millions from Sudan and Syria.
- ⇒ The partnership agreement indicates collaboration on various fronts, including **security and migration issues**, with a focus on the Southern Mediterranean region.



● **Participants and Significance:**

- ⇒ European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen led the delegation, which included leaders from **Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, and Italy.**
- ⇒ The agreement underscores the importance of regional cooperation and stability, with a focus on addressing migration challenges and enhancing energy security.

● **Broader Context:**

- ⇒ Egypt's **strategic location**, bordering conflict zones like Libya and regions of ongoing conflict like the Gaza Strip, **adds significance to the partnership.**
- ⇒ The EU has pursued similar agreements **with other North African countries**, such as **Libya, Tunisia, and Mauritania**, to manage irregular migration flows across the Mediterranean Sea.
- ⇒ The visit and financial package reflect the EU's efforts to engage strategically with neighbouring countries **to address shared challenges and promote stability in the region.**



# Hb1c Test

## ● Why in News?

- ⇒ A nationwide study published in 2023 estimates that India has a significant burden of diabetes and pre-diabetes.
- ⇒ Over 35% of Indians suffer from hypertension, and nearly 40% have abdominal obesity, both risk factors for diabetes.
- ⇒ India accounts for 17% of all diabetes patients globally.

## ● What is HbA1C?

- ⇒ The haemoglobin A1C (HbA1C) test measures **the percentage of red blood cells with sugar-coated haemoglobin**.
- ⇒ Haemoglobin is a protein that transports oxygen, and sugar attaches to it in the bloodstream.
- ⇒ Elevated HbA1C levels indicate higher blood glucose levels, associated with pre-diabetes and diabetes.

## ● Usage and Evolution of HbA1C Test:

- ⇒ Initially discovered in 1955, the correlation between elevated HbA1C levels and diabetes was established in 1968.
- ⇒ HbA1C was approved by the American Diabetes Association as a diagnostic tool in 2009.
- ⇒ The test's accuracy improved significantly from 1993 to 2012 due to standardization efforts.
- ⇒ It's recognized as a diagnostic tool by the World Health Organization, provided stringent quality assurance measures are in place.



### ● **Interpretation of HbA1C Test Results:**

- ⇒ Results are provided as a percentage or in **mmol/mol**.
- ⇒ Levels below 5.7% are considered normal, 5.7%-6.4% may indicate pre-diabetes, and 6.5% or higher can indicate diabetes.
- ⇒ Results may vary under certain conditions like kidney or liver failure, severe anaemia, or certain medications.

### ● **Who Needs to Take the Test and When?**

- ⇒ Individuals over 30 years old should be screened for diabetes, especially those with risk factors like **obesity, hypertension, or heart disease**.
- ⇒ Retesting intervals vary based on initial results and risk factors, with annual tests for pre-diabetic individuals.
- ⇒ Diabetic individuals may need the test every three to six months to monitor blood sugar levels and treatment effectiveness.

### ● **Differences and Limitations of HbA1C Test:**

- ⇒ Unlike fasting or post-meal blood sugar tests, HbA1C reflects **average blood glucose levels over the past two to three months**.
- ⇒ It's independent of recent meals, making it **more reliable for long-term monitoring**.
- ⇒ However, it **doesn't replace other tests** and may need to be used alongside traditional blood sugar tests.
- ⇒ Its sensitivity is relatively low, necessitating additional tests in some cases for accurate diagnosis, particularly in populations with certain conditions like thalassaemia or iron-deficiency anaemia.



# Appointment of Election Commissioner

## ● Why in News?

- ⇒ Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, retired IAS officers, appointed as Election Commissioners (ECs) by the President to fill vacancies in the Election Commission of India.
- ⇒ Their appointment is the first under the new law governing appointments to the Election Commission, the Chief Election Commissioner, and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.

## ● How were they selected?

- ⇒ Selection done by a three-member Selection Committee comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Leader of the Indian National Congress in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.
- ⇒ Chosen from a shortlisted panel of six names, shortlisted by a committee headed by the Union Minister for Law and Justice, as per the Act.

## ● What was the process before this?

- ⇒ Article 324 of the Constitution grants the power to appoint the **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other ECs to the President, subject to any law made by Parliament.**
- ⇒ Prior to the enactment of the **Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, the President appointed ECs without a specific process.**
- ⇒ Conventionally, the Law Ministry presented a panel of names to the Prime Minister, who recommended one for appointment as EC to the President.
- ⇒ The appointment process evolved over time, with officials typically being appointed as ECs first, then the senior EC elevated as CEC upon the CEC's completion of tenure.



### ● **Supreme Court Ruling on the Process:**

- ➡ In *Anoop Baranwal versus Union of India*, a Constitution Bench ruled that the appointment power **shouldn't be exclusively vested in the executive**.
- ➡ The court outlined an interim arrangement for appointments, involving a three-member committee comprising the **Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha** (or leader of the largest opposition party), and the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**.
- ➡ This arrangement prompted Parliament to enact the **2023 Act, which removed the CJI** from the selection panel and included a Union Minister instead, drawing criticism.

### ● **Criticism against the Act:**

- ➡ Critics argue that the Act's exclusion of the CJI from the selection panel **gives the executive a two-one majority, contrary to the intent of the Constitution Bench ruling**.
- ➡ The government contends that the Act **doesn't eliminate the CJI from the appointment process, as the CJI's inclusion was temporary until Parliament enacted its own law**.
- ➡ Attempts to obtain a stay on the Act have been rejected by the Supreme Court, with petitioners challenging the Act's compliance with the Constitution Bench judgment's principle of **freeing the appointment process from executive influence**.



# Karnataka's Regulatory Measures on Harmful Coloring Agents in Food Products

## ● Why in News?

- ⇒ Karnataka joins Tamil Nadu and Goa in banning harmful colouring agents in cotton candy and gobi manchurian.

## ● Survey Results

- ⇒ Public Health Department survey revealed harmful chemicals in food samples.  
Out of 25 cotton candy samples, 15 were unsafe due to added colours; 171 gobi manchurian samples showed 107 unsafe due to added colours.

## ● Harmful Chemicals Detected

- ⇒ Unsafe samples contained sunset yellow, tartrazine, and rhodamine-b.  
Tartrazine usage restricted to certain packed food items; **not allowed in freshly prepared food.**

## ● Penalties

- ⇒ Food Safety and Standards Act imposes fines and jail terms for offenders.  
Offenders using banned chemicals face **finest of at least 10 lakh and jail terms from seven years to life imprisonment.**





## ● Way Forward

- ➔ **Immediate ban implementation:** Swift enforcement measures put into action without delay to ensure **immediate cessation of harmful chemical usage** in food products.
- ➔ **Manufacturer awareness campaigns:** Government-led initiatives aimed at **raising awareness** among food product manufacturers regarding regulatory requirements and the potential repercussions of non-compliance.
- ➔ **Consumer vigilance encouraged:** Efforts to **empower consumers by emphasizing the importance of carefully examining food product labels** to identify and avoid items containing harmful colouring agents.
- ➔ **Regular compliance checks:** Ongoing and systematic inspections conducted by regulatory authorities to **verify adherence to the ban on harmful chemicals**, with random checks enhancing vigilance.
- ➔ **Extended scrutiny to other food products:** Widening the scope of regulatory oversight to **encompass additional food items susceptible to containing harmful colouring agents**, extending beyond cotton candy and gobi manchurian.



# Disease Elimination Strategy

## ● **Why in News?**

- ⇒ The Carter Center reports significant progress towards the eradication of guinea worm disease.
- ⇒ Focus on disease elimination gains attention as a critical step towards eradicating various diseases.

## ● **Focus on Disease Elimination**

- ⇒ Distinction between **elimination of transmission and eradication clarified.**
- ⇒ Disease elimination emerges as a **crucial public health strategy to enhance overall population health.**
- ⇒ Benefits of disease elimination highlighted, including energizing public health systems, and increasing international support.

## ● **Challenges of Disease Elimination**

- ⇒ **Resource-intensive** nature of disease elimination.
- ⇒ **Potential strain on health systems and neglect of other health functions** due to the focus on elimination.
- ⇒ **Need for careful analysis of costs and benefits before planning disease elimination strategies.**

## ● **Strategic Approach to Disease Elimination**

- ⇒ **Feasibility of disease elimination** for various pathogens in India considered.
- ⇒ Strategic focus recommended on diseases with **high population impact and low prevalence for feasible elimination.**
- ⇒ **Gradual reduction of disease prevalence to practical levels** before aiming for elimination suggested as a preparatory step.

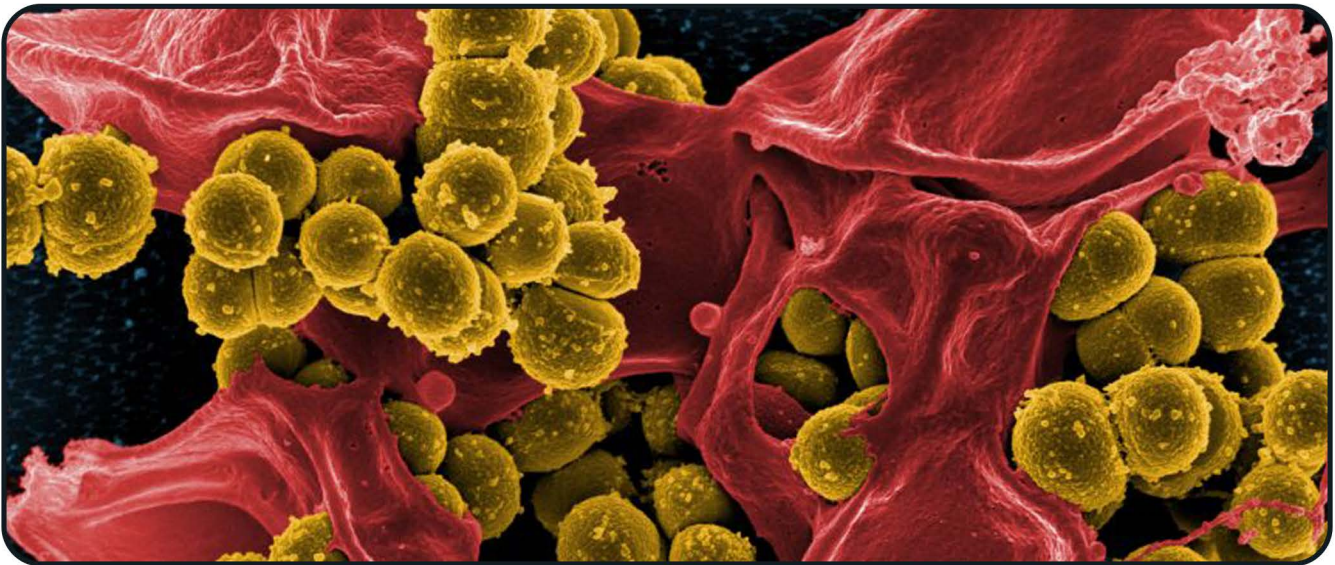


● **Importance of Surveillance Systems**

- ⇒ Investment in robust surveillance systems essential for **disease detection and monitoring**.
- ⇒ **Continued surveillance necessary** even after elimination to prevent reintroduction of pathogens.

● **Regional Approach to Elimination**

- ⇒ **Regional collaboration and innovation encouraged** for more effective disease elimination.
- ⇒ **Phased regional elimination strategies proposed**, followed by national scaling-up.
- ⇒ National and State governments urged to **take ownership of the elimination process**.







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