



# IAS PARLIAMENT

*Information is Empowering*

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

## The Protest in Sri Lanka

### What is the issue?

There have been violent scenes in Sri Lanka, with mobs targeting the homes of prominent political figures including the ruling Rajapaksa family.

### Why have people taken to the streets?

- Protests over rising prices and shortages flared up in early April in the capital and have grown in size and spread across the country.
- People are furious because the cost of living has become unaffordable.
- People are now paying up to 30% more for food than a year ago which has forced many people to skip meals.
- There are also fuel shortages and power cuts.
- The lack of medicines has brought the health system to the verge of collapse.
- The daily demonstrations and attacks have forced at least some, including Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, to resign.
- Sri Lankan citizens have also been protesting and asking the current President to step down.

### Why is there an economic crisis in Sri Lanka?

- **Neglect of foreign market**- At the end of its civil war in 2009, Sri Lanka chose to focus more on its domestic markets instead of selling to foreign ones.
- So income from exports remained low, while the bill for imports kept growing.
- **Debt crisis**- The government racked up huge debts with countries including China, to fund what critics have called unnecessary infrastructure projects.
- Sri Lanka's government has racked up \$51bn in foreign debt and the government failed to make repayments totalling \$78m.
- **Reduced forex reserves**- Sri Lanka's problems come down to the fact that its foreign currency reserves have virtually run dry.
- **Affects tourism**- The government blames the Covid pandemic, which killed off Sri Lanka's tourist trade - one of its biggest foreign currency earners.
- **Tax cuts**- President Rajapaksa decided to offer big tax cuts because of which the government now has less money to buy foreign currency.
- **Banning chemical fertilisers**- Banning all imports of chemical fertiliser and promoting the use organic fertilisers instead led to widespread crop failures.
- An IMF report said the fertiliser ban (reversed in November 2021) had also hurt tea and

rubber production, leading to substantial export losses.

## What is the current movement about?

- Young social activists had been organising things over the last year for a new political culture.
- Inspired by the Occupy Wall Street movement, Black Lives Matter, the Arab Spring, the Indian farmers' movement and Shaheen Bagh, they created an enclave for an alternative vision of Sri Lanka.
- The emphasis was on non-violence, democracy, ethnic harmony and creative expression.
- Trade unions, the environmental movement, professional associations, all-island student, academic unions, civil society groups and religious leaders of all faiths also made their way.
- Lawyers also mingled with the protesters and intervened if there was any tension or difficulty.

## What about the participation of people from north and the east?

- The protests have celebrated the Tamil culture and language as never before in a Sri Lankan gathering but there is no discussion of devolution or a Tamil nation.
- There is also deference to the rank and file of the army .
- Many from the Jaffna University Students Union and women from the north and the east have been quite active in their participation.
- Tamils have participated at the local level and were a part of the hartals that have taken place throughout the island but it is not the fullest active participation.

## What lies ahead?

- There will be no stability until the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.
- Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in as Prime Minister and he should command not only the confidence of Parliament but also the confidence of the protesters as well.
- Bar Association in Sri Lanka has proposed to return to the 19th Amendment, especially its provisions on
  - the independent judiciary and independent commissions
  - abolishing of the executive presidency through a 21st Amendment
  - setting up of the economic framework for International Monetary Fund (IMF) negotiations
- The IMF has signalled that it will go ahead with its negotiations since there seems to be an all-party consensus for that to happen.

## References

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-kernel-of-sri-lankas-waterfront-protests/article65411713.ece>
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-61028138>
3. <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/sri-lanka-economic-crisis-why-is-the-island-nation-in-deep-waters-explained/2520495/>

# Reforming WHO

## What is the issue?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi once again brought up the issue of reforming the WHO while addressing the heads of countries at the second global COVID-19 summit.

## What is the global COVID-19 summit?

- The first global virtual summit on Covid-19 was hosted by President Biden in 2021.
- The second summit was held virtually and was co-hosted by United States, Belize, Germany, Indonesia, and Senegal.
- It included the participation of more than 30 countries.
- The 2nd summit brought in more than \$3 from the participants, multilateral and philanthropic organisation in addition to commitments made in 2021 and 2022.

To know about WHO, click [here](#)

## What issues in WHO spurred the criticism?

- **Declaration of pandemic**- The world body's delay in declaring the pandemic a global emergency has spurred criticisms worldwide.
- **Preventing the spread**- There were many early steps that could have prevented the spread of the virus, but the WHO failed to advise governments correctly.
- **Patent waivers**- The [issue of patent waivers](#), where a joint India-South Africa proposal made in 2020 has not yet been adopted.
- **Methodology on data estimation**- [WHO's methodology and model for estimating the Covid deaths](#) was also challenged by India.
- **Approval of vaccines**- India also protested the long delay in obtaining WHO approval for the Indian-made Covaxin developed by Bharat Biotech, which was finally given in November 2021.
- **Free and fair investigation**- The reluctance of China to share vital information regarding the novel coronavirus and its refusal to allow WHO to investigate freely and fairly on the origin of the virus have highlighted the need to strengthen WHO.

## How can the body be strengthened?

- **Increased mandatory funding**- For several years, the mandatory contribution has accounted for less than a fourth of the total budget, thus reducing the level of predictability in WHO's responses.
- The agency must be equipped with more powers to demand that member states comply with the norms and to alert WHO in case of disease outbreaks that could cause global harm.
- **Penalties for non-compliance**- Under the legally binding international health regulations, member states are expected to have in place core capacities to identify, report and respond to public health emergencies.
- But non-compliance does not attract any penalties which need to be changed for any meaningful protection from future disease outbreaks.
- **Vaccine approvals**- There has been a demand for a review of the health agency's processes on vaccine approvals.

## References

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/reforming-who-the-hindu-editorial-on-enhancing-the-un-bodys-ability-to-respond-to-disease-outbreaks/article65410794.ece>
2. <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/opinion/dc-comment/130522/dc-edit-who-reform-urgent-need-after-poor-covid-handling.html>

## The Fertiliser Challenge

### What is the issue?

Ahead of kharif sowing, India faces the challenge of meeting its requirement of fertilisers, supply of which has been disrupted in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

### How have the pandemic and the war impacted the supply of fertilisers?

- The pandemic has impacted the fertiliser production, import and transportation across the world.
- Major fertiliser exporters such as China have gradually reduced their exports which has impacted countries such as India, which sources 40-45% of its phosphatic imports from China.
- There has been a surge in demand in regions like Europe, America, Brazil and Southeast Asia but the supply side has faced constraints.

### How is fertiliser requirement determined in India?

- The kharif season requires sizeable quantity of fertiliser as it accounts for almost half the year's production of foodgrains, one-third of pulses and about two-thirds of oilseeds.
- **Determination of fertiliser requirement**- Every year, before the start of the cropping season, the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare assesses the requirement of fertilisers.
- It then informs the Ministry of Chemical and Fertilizers to ensure the supply.
- The requirement varies each month according to demand, which is based on the time of crop sowing, which again varies from region to region.
- The government uses the two months (March and April) to ensure the supply of fertilisers for the kharif season.
- As per data, the opening stock of fertiliser available for the kharif season is 125.5 LMT, or 35% of the requirement.
- **Domestic production**- Theoretically, the opening stock and the expected domestic production would be sufficient to meet the requirement.
- However, the war in Ukraine has disrupted the supply of raw materials that Indian companies import, which is expected to impact domestic production.

### How have the disruptions in supply impacted prices?

- There has been a steady increase in prices of raw material as well as logistics and freight costs in recent months.
- The disruption in the logistics chain during Covid has caused the average freight rates for

ships to jump up to four times.

- The prices of fertilisers such as DAP and urea, and raw materials such as ammonia and phosphatic acid, have risen up to 250-300%.
- India depends on imports for potash for manufacturing fertilisers but the sanctions on Belarus and Russia has risen the international prices of potash.
- The government is exploring the option of domestically mining raw materials such as rock phosphate.

## How is the government augmenting fertiliser supply?

- **Price control**- In efforts at price control, the government has increased the Nutrients Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for kharif 2022.
- The total fertiliser subsidy bill is expected to reach to Rs 2.5 lakh crore this financial year, up from Rs 1.62 crore in the revised estimates for the previous fiscal.
- **Ramping up the production**- India has entered into a C2C (corporation to corporation) supply arrangement with Russian companies for 3 years.
- India has made efforts to secure fertiliser supply from alternative sources such as Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- For domestic production of urea, the government is focusing on the Matix (West Bengal), Ramagundam (Telangana) and Gorakhpur (UP) plants, and is reviving two other units.
- India has also signed a long-term supply deal with Oman to get 10 LMT of urea per year.
- **Directive to states**- The Centre has asked the states to ensure micro-planning of fertiliser movement as per requirement.
- It has asked them to promote use of alternative fertilisers such as nano urea, and to take strict action against diversion, hoarding and black marketing of fertilisers.

*Under the NBS scheme, a fixed amount of subsidy, decided on an annual basis, is provided on each grade of subsidised phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers, **except for urea**, based on the nutrient content present in them.*

### Reference

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/kharif-sowing-fertilisers-requirement-ukraine-war-explained-7916350/>

## Prelim Bits 14-05-2022 UPSC Daily Current Affairs

### Albino striped narrow snake

A specimen of an albino Striped Narrow Headed Snake ( Xylophis perroteti) was collected from the Nilgiris forest division in Tamil Nadu.

- **Habitat** - The snake is endemic to the Southern Western Ghats.
- It usually occupies Shola-grassland mosaic ecosystems above 1,000 meters above sea level.
- It is also known as Striped wood-snake.

- **Food** - It feeds on earthworms, insect larvae and caecilians.
- For the first time albinism has been recorded in the species collected from Nilgiris forest.

Protection status	
Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972	Schedule- IV
IUCN	Least Concern

## Albinism

- Albinism is an inherited disease characterized by a substantially lower rate of melanin production.
- People with albinism often have lighter colored skin and hair.
- Melanin normally protects the skin from damage due to UV radiation exposure, so people with albinism are more sensitive to sun exposure.
- Albinism has two main types:
  - Ocular albinism (OA) which primarily affects the eyes.
  - Oculocutaneous albinism (OCA) which affects the skin, hair, and eyes.

## Reference

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/albino-striped-narrow-snake-recorded-in-the-nilgiris/article65410364.ece>
2. <https://indiabiodiversity.org/species/show/238780>
3. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/245861#symptoms>

## Buddhavanam Project

- Buddhavanam is a Buddhist heritage theme park developed by the Telangana State Tourism Development Corporation at Nagarjunasagar in Nalgonda district.
- It is the largest Buddhist tourism centre in Asia spread across 274 acres.
- The park is divided into 8 segments
  1. Buddhacharitavanam (elegant entrance plaza)
  2. Jatakavanam (Bodhisattva Park)
  3. Dhyanavanam (Meditation Park)
  4. Stupavanam
  5. Mahastupa
  6. Buddhist education centres such as monasteries, educational institutions
  7. Buddhist art and craft village
  8. Traditional Buddhist medical centre.
- **Main Tourist attractions -**
- Amaravati Stupa - At the Centre of Buddhavanam is a replica of the original Amaravati Stupa in its original dimensions, shape, and design.
- The Mahastupa is the main attraction of the Buddhist Theme Park.
- The Stupa is embellished with sculptures depicting major events from the life of Gautama Buddha and his previous birth stories and miniature stupas.
- Inside of Mahastupa upper-level dome ceiling is decorated with lotus petals and sky panels made in an aluminum acoustic system
- Under the dome of Maha Stupa, stands a massive brass-coated mandapam with eight statues of Buddha in five postures facing eight directions.
- 40 famous sculptures from Jataka tales, models of 13 Buddhist stupas from various countries, a 100-foot-tall Buddhist Stupa and 200-foot-wide Pradakshina Padam with thousands of

sculptures can be seen.

- The Government of Sri Lanka has donated a replica of the Avukana Buddha statue and Dhamma bell under Indo-Sri Lankan Cultural Exchange programme.
- The Sri Lankan Government has also evinced interest in building 'Simhala Vihara' complex on the premises of the Buddhavanam.
- The theme park was developed to attract local as well as foreign tourists, particularly those coming from South-East Asian countries.

#### Reference

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tehangana/buddhavanam-project-unveils-an-exciting-prespect/article38321432.ece>
2. <https://telanganatoday.com/ktr-to-inaugurate-buddhavanam-project-on-may-14>

## 35 million years old rare snake fossil

- Scientists have discovered a 35 million years old Madtsoiidae snake fossil from the molasse deposits of Ladakh.
- This reveals their prevalence in the subcontinent for much longer time than previously thought.
- Madtsoiidae is an extinct group of medium-sized to gigantic snakes.
- They first appeared during the late Cretaceous and mostly distributed in the Gondwanan landmasses.
- Their Cenozoic record is extremely scarce.
- From the fossil record we infer that the whole group disappeared in the mid-Paleogene across most Gondwanan continents.
- However in Australia the species survived with its last known taxon Wonambi till late Pleistocene.
- Geological Time Scale -

Eons	Era	Period	Epoch	Age/ Years Before Present
C A M B R I A N	Cainozoic (From 65 million years to the present)	• Quaternary	• Holocene • Pleistocene	• 0-10,000 • 10,000 - 2 million
		• Tertiary	• Pliocene • Miocene • Oligocene • Eocene • Palaeocene	• 2 - 5 million • 5 - 24 million • 24 - 37 million • 37 - 58 Million • 57 - 65 Million
	Mesozoic 65 - 245 Million Mammals	• Cretaceous • Jurassic • Triassic		• 65 - 144 Million • 144 - 208 Million • 208 - 245 Million

#### Reference

1. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1825096>
2. NCERT book

## Rural Tribal Technical Training Program

- **Objective** - The Project envisages Skilling of Tribal Youth through Technical Training Program.
- It is implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship.
- Training is provided for about 250 beneficiaries in 17 clusters of 17 districts selected from 6 states of India - Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Odisha and will be organized at Vikas Bharti, Gumla, Jharkhand.
- Training will be provided to the beneficiaries in 5 disciplines
  - electrical and solar energy
  - agricultural mechanization
  - e-governance
  - plumbing and masonry
  - two wheeler repair and maintenance.
- This training will enable the youth to start their own business, thus generating more employment opportunities for other youth as well.

### Reference

1. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1825147>

## National Data & Analytics Platform

- NITI Aayog has launched the National Data & Analytics Platform (NDAP) for open public use.
- Objective - To improve access and use of government data.
- It is a simple, interactive, visual, and robust platform that will host various Central and state government datasets.
- The platform aggregates and hosts datasets from across India's vast statistical infrastructure

### Key Features -

- **Making data accessible** - Democratize access to public government data.
- **Interoperable** - This enables users to merge datasets from different sectors and sources for easier cross-sectoral analysis.
- **Interactive function** - users can create flexible tables and visualizations like maps, bar charts, line charts, pie charts for easy exploratory analysis.
- **User-friendly platform** - The platform follows a use-case based approach. This ensures that the datasets available on NDAP are relevant to the needs of real-life data users like government, academia, journalism, civil society, and the private sector.

### Reference

1. <https://ndap-beta.niti.gov.in/info?tab=about>
2. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1825145>