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## 1. Why Centre wants states to make snakebites notifiable disease

### Introduction



The Union Health Ministry has urged states to make snakebites a notifiable disease — a disease that is legally required to be reported to the government by both private and public hospitals.

Snakebites are a major public health challenge in the country. Some three to four million cases of snakebites are reported every year, and an estimated 58,000 persons die because of them annually, according to the 2020 Indian Million Death Study, a largescale study that examined the causes of premature

death in India.

Earlier this year, the government launched the National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAPSE) with the aim of halving snakebite deaths by 2030. NAPSE recommended that snakebites should be made a notifiable disease.

### Which types of diseases are considered notifiable?

Usually, infections that are likely to cause an outbreak, lead to deaths, and those that need to be investigated quickly to take appropriate public health measures, are declared as notifiable diseases.

While the list of notifiable diseases differs from state to state — state governments are responsible for bringing out the notification — most of them consider infections such as tuberculosis, HIV, cholera, malaria, dengue, and hepatitis among others to be notifiable.

### Why is snakebite considered a 'disease'?

Snakebites can lead to acute medical emergencies that require immediate care. They can cause severe paralysis that can prevent breathing, can lead to a fatal haemorrhage, and damage different tissues.

Snakebites need to be treated with antivenoms to prevent death and severe symptoms.

### **The bites of which snakes can be fatal?**

There are more than 310 species of snakes in India — 66 of them are venomous and 42 are mildly venomous. Twenty-three snake species are considered to be of medical importance as their venom can kill. However, almost 90% of snakebites in the country are caused by the 'Big Four' — the Indian cobra, common krait, Russell's viper, and saw-scaled viper.

The commercially available polyvalent antivenom contains venom from all four species, and is effective against 80% of snakebites.

### **Why does the Centre want snakebites to be made notifiable?**

Making snakebites notifiable is expected to lead to proper surveillance, and to help determine the precise numbers of snakebite cases and deaths across India. The government can then use this information to effectively manage, prevent, and control cases of snakebites. Adequate antivenoms can be provided to various regions, and proper training can be imparted in areas where snakebites are frequent.

In a letter to all state health secretaries, Union Health Secretary Punya Salia wrote: "A mandatory notification of all snakebite cases and deaths is required to strengthen snakebite surveillance. It will help stakeholders gauge accurate burden, high-risk areas, factors responsible for deaths of snakebite victims etc resulting in improved clinical management."

Most snakebites happen in densely populated, low-altitude, agricultural areas in states including Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, according to NAPSE.

### **What are the challenges of treating snakebites?**

The challenges are mainly on three fronts.

**Treatment:** Snakebite victims either do not reach a healthcare centre in time or do not go there at all — and many reach out to faith-based healers instead.

In many cases, staff at healthcare centres are not adequately trained in treating snakebites. Tests for confirming snakebites are also not available.

**Antivenoms:** Almost all the venom that is used to develop the antivenom in the country comes from snakes caught by the Irula tribe, who live in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala. This is a major challenge, as the biochemical constituents and the effect of the venom from the same snake species may differ based on geography.

"These differences result in the commercial ASV (anti-snake venom) prepared against the venom samples from a particular geographical location of the country showing poor immune

cross-neutralisation and toxicity neutralisation,” according to a 2020 paper published in the Indian Journal of Medical Research (IJMR).

Studies also show that the venom potency changes with age. For instance, the venom of Russell’s viper neonates is far more toxic for mammals and reptiles than that of the adult ones, according to a 2024 study.

Besides, antivenoms themselves cause various reactions.

There are also local snake species — such as the banded krait, monocled cobra, and green pit viper in the Northeast — against which the commercially available antivenom does not work.

Due to these limitations of antivenoms, researchers are now developing artificially produced antibodies that can help neutralise the toxins across various snake species. They are also looking at artificially designed peptides to fight the toxin.

**Venom collection:** Experts have suggested setting up zonal venom collection banks across the country to develop antivenoms that can cover the regional differences. However, The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, limits access to snakes, making it difficult to set up such banks.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology  
Source: Indian Express

## 2. New Delhi’s Engagement with Post-Hasina Bangladesh

### Why in News?



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri’s recent visit to Dhaka, where he met his Bangladeshi counterpart Mohammad Jashim Uddin, signals India’s intent to engage with the new political landscape in Bangladesh following Sheikh Hasina’s departure.

### Strained Bilateral Relations

The political upheaval in Bangladesh has strained ties with India. Following a street uprising that ousted Hasina in August, attacks on Hindus and the arrest of a Hindu monk on sedition charges have heightened tensions. Misri’s visit emphasized India’s concerns over these developments and urged Bangladesh to maintain the bilateral development partnership.

### Turmoil Post-August 5

The fall of Sheikh Hasina’s government led to widespread unrest.

- **Widespread Chaos:** Protests targeted the police, politicians, and bureaucrats aligned with Hasina's regime.

- **Civil Unrest:** Homes and offices of Awami League leaders were attacked, while protesters looted valuables, some of which were later returned.

### **Communal Violence Against Hindus**

In the aftermath of Hasina's exit, incidents of communal violence surged:

- **Reported Attacks:**

- 2,010 incidents, including 9 deaths and 4 rapes, were reported by minority rights groups.

- Over 900 homes, businesses, and places of worship were vandalized.

- **Islamist Hardliners:** As law enforcement withdrew, religious extremists escalated attacks, often targeting Hindus for their historical alignment with Hasina's secular politics.

### **Anti-India Sentiments**

Indian establishments became targets of public anger:

- The Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre in Dhaka was looted and set on fire.

- Indian diplomats required evacuation after facing threats.

- Bangladesh Army provided refuge to over 600 individuals, including prominent figures targeted by mobs.

### **Response from the Transitional Government**

Bangladesh's transitional leadership, headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, attempted to address minority concerns but faced ongoing challenges:

- **Outreach to Minorities:** Yunus visited Dhaka's Dhakeshwari Temple to show solidarity with Hindus.

- **Media Dynamics:** Bangladeshi media criticized alleged bias in Indian reporting on the violence, while fact-checkers debunked misinformation.

### **India-Bangladesh Diplomatic Exchange**

- **India's Concerns:** Misri highlighted the need to ensure the safety of minorities and protect cultural, religious, and diplomatic properties.

- **Bangladesh's Pushback:** Jashim Uddin rejected external interference, framing the issues as internal matters.

### **A Forward-Looking Partnership**

Despite the tensions, India emphasized its commitment to the "people of Bangladesh," focusing on connectivity, trade, and development cooperation. Misri conveyed a desire to work constructively with the interim government to sustain mutually beneficial relations.

Relevance: GS Prelims

### 3. Opposition moves no-confidence motion against RS Chair – what is the procedure, and why the attempt is unlikely to succeed

#### Overview



The Opposition gave notice for a motion of no-confidence against Rajya Sabha chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar, the first such action in India's parliamentary history.

A similar motion had been considered by the Opposition during the Budget Session in August, but was not followed through on that occasion.

What is the process and the requirements for impeaching the chairperson of Rajya Sabha, who is also the Vice President of India? How did the framers of the Constitution view this action?

#### **What does it take to remove the Rajya Sabha chairman from his position?**

Under Article 64 of the Constitution of India, the Vice President "shall be ex officio Chairman of the Council of the States".

Since the Vice President and Rajya Sabha chairperson must be the same individual, the process for their removal is also the same – and is laid down under Article 67.

Under this provision, the Vice President "shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office" unless the Vice President resigns before that by sending a letter to the President, or is removed from office.

The requirements for removing or impeaching the Vice President are provided under Article 67(b).

It states that the Vice President may be removed if a majority "all the then members of the Council (Rajya Sabha)" passes a resolution for his removal, which must then be "agreed to" by the House of the People (Lok Sabha).

Under this provision, "no resolution...shall be moved unless at least fourteen days' notice has been given of the intention to move the resolution".

#### **What happens after the notice for impeachment is given?**

Upon the expiry of the 14-day period, Rajya Sabha will take up the resolution for discussion. The procedure outlined in Article 67(b) will then follow.

In the present case, it is unclear if the resolution will be taken up by the House. This is because the Winter Session of Parliament is scheduled to conclude on December 20, which is less than 14 days away. There are no precedents to determine whether this same resolution can be considered in the next Session of the House.



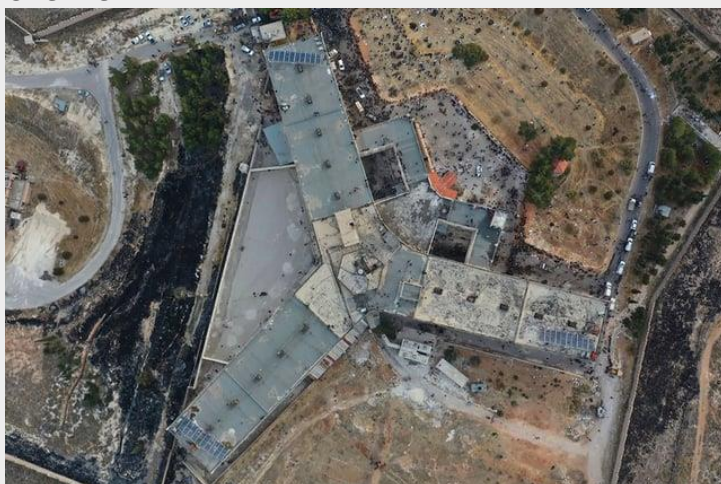
In any case, given the arithmetic in Parliament, it is almost certain that the resolution will be defeated. This is largely a symbolic move of protest by the Opposition that alleges the Vice President is unfair and partisan in the way he conducts the House.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Polity

Source: Indian Express

#### 4. Thousands Freed from Syria's Saydnaya Prison

##### Overview



In a significant event during the anti-Assad rebellion in Syria, militants from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) stormed the infamous Saydnaya Prison near Damascus, freeing thousands of detainees. These included political prisoners held since the 2011 Syrian uprising in what Amnesty International once described as a "Human Slaughterhouse."

##### About Saydnaya Prison

- **Location and Establishment:** Located 30 kilometers north of Damascus, Saydnaya Prison was built in the 1980s and began housing detainees in 1987. It was operated by the Syrian military police.
- **Structure:** The prison consists of two detention centers:
  - Red Building: Detained civilians, especially political prisoners arrested during the civil war.
  - White Building: Housed disloyal Syrian military personnel and suspected members of Islamist groups.
- **Capacity:** Each building could hold 10,000 to 20,000 people.

##### Why Saydnaya is Called the "Human Slaughterhouse"

- **Extrajudicial Executions:** Between 2011 and 2015, an estimated 5,000 to 13,000 detainees were executed. Reports suggest over 30,000 deaths since the civil war began.
- **Execution Process:** Prisoners were transferred at midnight to an execution room with multiple nooses. The facility expanded in 2012 to accommodate more executions.
- **Horrific Conditions:**
  - Detainees faced starvation, torture, dehydration, and disease.
  - Many were forced to drink their own urine to survive.
  - Cells were overcrowded and unsanitary, leading to high mortality rates.

### **Allegations of a Crematorium**

In 2017, the US State Department alleged that a crematorium had been built in Saydnaya to dispose of the bodies of executed prisoners. Satellite imagery was cited as evidence of modifications to a building that could support such a facility.

### **Search for Hidden Underground Cells**

- **White Helmets Investigation:** The Syrian Civil Defence, also known as the White Helmets, conducted searches for undiscovered cells and basements in Saydnaya Prison after the prison was stormed.

- **Findings:** No evidence of secret underground cells was uncovered. The group urged the public to avoid spreading misinformation about hidden prisoners.

### **A Dark Symbol of Repression**

Saydnaya Prison stands as a grim reminder of the Syrian regime's brutal tactics against dissent. While thousands have now been freed, the atrocities committed within its walls underscore the long struggle for justice in the region.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Issues