

1. 'Wonder drug' Ozempic could reverse liver disease

Why in News?

A drug originally developed to treat diabetes, and now prescribed for weight loss, may have yet another significant application: stopping, perhaps even reversing, liver disease.



Findings

In a phase 3 clinical trial researchers found that a weekly dose of semaglutide was effective at treating Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatohepatitis (MASH), a serious form of fatty liver disease. Semaglutide is the key component of diabetes drug Ozempic and weight loss drug Wegovy.

Fatty Liver

MASH describes a spectrum of conditions marked by fat buildup in the liver not caused by alcohol use. It is a metabolic syndrome usually caused by overnutrition, and leads to inflammation and scarring of the liver.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

2. Starbase

Why now?

Residents of a 3.5 sq km area in Cameron County, Texas, approved the formation of a new municipality called Starbase. The area surrounds the SpaceX facility in the region and most of these residents are SpaceX employees.

So, What Is Starbase?

Starbase is the newest 'city' in Texas, coming up in the area where Elon Musk-owned SpaceX operates. Essentially, it is the latest company town.

And What is a Company Town?

A company town is a township where a single company employs most of the residents and owns the majority of the housing and stores. Jamshedpur in Jharkhand is one example.

In the US, company towns call back to a bygone era where industrialists held the kind of power to physically concentrate their workforce around their site of operations. Pullman in Illinois is one such example, named after industrialist and rail mogul, George Pullman.



Relevance: GS Prelims; Miscellaneous
Source: Indian Express

3. UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed: the key goods included, what it means

UK India trade deal

India and the United Kingdom inked a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). India and UK are the world's fifth and sixth largest economies, respectively.



FTAs are arrangements between two or more countries or trading blocs that primarily agree to reduce or eliminate customs tariff and non tariff barriers on substantial trade between them.

The timing of the India-UK FTA matters. While the US's high tariffs have now been paused temporarily, a flat 10% rate is still applicable to all countries, and the general sentiment of uncertainty continues to prevail.

As a result, countries around the world have been looking at strengthening trade relations with non-US partners and hedging against future shifts in US policy.

What's in the UK-India trade deal?

Trade Boost: Trade between the two nations totalled £42.6 billion in 2024. Total UK exports to India amounted to £17.1 billion, while total UK imports from India amounted to £25.5 billion in 2024. The deal is expected to boost the exports of both the countries.

Goods in focus: Whisky and gin tariffs will be halved from 150% to 75%, before falling to 40% by the tenth year of the deal, benefiting Britain's Scotch whisky industry and making the beverage cheaper in the world's largest whisky market.

India will also cut automotive tariffs to 10% under a quota from over 100% currently. Other British goods categories which will face lower tariffs include cosmetics, aerospace, lamb, medical devices, salmon, electrical machinery, soft drinks, chocolate and biscuits. Indian workers will also see increased quotas to work in the UK in certain sectors.

What led to the deal, and what issues emerged during negotiations?

The need for a trade deal between the countries was felt because of multiple factors.

1. The disruption of supply chains during the pandemic brought home to Western companies the risks of over-dependence on China and the need for a 'China-plus one' policy.
2. For the UK, the size and potential of the Indian market offered a way to compensate for the loss of access to the European Single Market after Brexit. Under European Single Market mechanism, EU countries could freely access each others markets and their residents could easily move between countries to work.
3. Further, UK has suffered from a "cost of living" crisis in recent years. The UK can benefit by importing cheap goods from India.

Points of contention

Some issues that took a while to be ironed out included work permits for Indian service sector workers under the FTA. Immigration is a major issue in UK.

Another point was the UK's carbon tax. It was looking to impose a levy on metal imports based on carbon emissions, which would have hurt Indian exporters. India had originally proposed

larger quotas for professionals, particularly in sectors like IT and healthcare. However, the new rules will lead to “only around 100 new visas” for Indian workers each year.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

‘Join PrepMate IAS’

WhatsApp ‘Name’ and ‘State’ on 75979-00000 to receive daily current affairs in simple and concise language.

Shubham's IAS