

Parameswaran Iyer will be new NITI Aayog CEO

(GS Paper 2, Governance)

Why in news?

- Recently, V. Parameswaran was appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the NITI Aayog.
- He replaces Amitabh Kant, who completes his term in the office on June 30.



About V. Parameswaran:

- At present, he functions as the Programme Manager of the 2030 Water Resources Group, a platform hosted by the World Bank for water conservation.
- He is a Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad in management practices.
- In 2016, the government appointed Iyer to implement its Swachh Bharat Mission.
- In 2021, he resigned as Secretary of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation at the Jal Shakti Ministry.

About: Amitabh Kant

- He was appointed CEO of the National Institutions for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog on February 17, 2016, for two years. He **got three extensions during his tenure**.
- Under him, the NITI Aayog helped the Centre launch several programmes such as Digital India and Make in India.

NITI Aayog:

- NITI AAYOG is a premiere policy think tank of the Government of India established in 2015 via an executive resolution by replacing the Planning Commission of India.
- This institution is chaired by the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Ministers of all states and Union territories along with the legislatures and Lt. Governors of other Union Territories.
- CEO will be appointed by the Prime Minister who is the chairman of NITI Aayog for a fixed tenure. He will be in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.

Largest bacteria ever to exist discovered

(GS Paper 3, Environment)

Why in news?

- Recently, scientists have discovered the largest bacterium, a vermicelli-shaped organism in **the Caribbean**. While most bacteria are microscopic, this unique organism is big enough to be seen by the naked eye.



What are bacteria?

- Bacteria are single-celled organisms that reside nearly everywhere on the planet, vital to its ecosystems and most living things.
- Bacteria are thought to have been the first organisms to inhabit Earth and remain quite simple in structure billions of years later.
- The bodies of people are teeming with bacteria, only a relatively small number of which cause disease.

Characteristic features:

- The organism, named *Thiomargarita magnifica*, is roughly 50 times larger than all other known giant bacteria and is the first to be visible with the naked eye.
- It's **approximately the size of human eyelashes** and is nearly a centimeter long.
- A normal bacterial species measures 1-5 micrometers long. This species averages 10,000 micrometers (four-tenths of an inch/1 cm) long, with some twice that length.
- The bacterium has an **average cell length greater than 9,000 micrometers**.
- Using a range of microscopy techniques, they observed highly polyploid cells with DNA and ribosomes compartmentalized within membranes.
- Single cells of the bacterium, dubbed Candidatus *Thiomargarita magnifica*, although thin and tubular, stretched more than a centimeter in length.

How it is different from others?

- Scientists have not yet been able to grow it in lab culture, but the researchers say the cell has a structure that's unusual for bacteria.
- One key difference:** It has a **large central compartment, or vacuole**, that allows some cell functions to happen in that controlled environment instead of throughout the cell.
- The researchers said they aren't certain why the bacterium is so large, but hypothesized it may be an adaptation to help it avoid being eaten by smaller organisms.

VL-SRSAM missile system successfully test-fired (Page no. 8)

(GS Paper 3, Defence)

Why in news

- Recently DRDO successfully flight tested Vertical Launch Short Range Surface to Air Missile (VL-SRSAM).



About VL-SRSAM

- It is an indigenously developed shipborne weapon system.
- It is a Vertical Launch Short Range Surface to Air Missile.
- It has been designed to strike at the high-speed airborne targets at the range of 40km to 50km and at an altitude of around 15km.
- It features mid-course inertial guidance through active radar and fiber optic gyroscope. Its launch was conducted to validate integrated operation of all the components of the system.
- The VL-SRSAM missile has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL) in coordination with the Research Centre Imarat (RCI) besides the Research & Development Establishment (Engineers), based at Pune.

Way forward

- The success test of this missile will further enhance the defence capability of Indian Naval Ships against the aerial threats.

Roe v. Wade, the case overruled by US Supreme Court after 50 years

(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

Why in news?

- The **Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS)** has privately voted to strike down the constitutional right to abortion as determined by the landmark *Roe vs Wade case in 1973*, according to a leaked draft opinion from February 2022.
- Also overturned, was *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, a 1992 case that upheld Roe.

- Almost fifty years, after an American woman’s constitutional right to abortion was recognised, the Supreme Court has effectively eliminated the right altogether, allowing states to enforce ban on abortions.

What is the *Roe vs. Wade* case?

- Roe, short for Jane Roe, is the **pseudonym for a Texas woman named Norma McCorvey** who in 1970 sought to have an abortion when she was five months pregnant, notwithstanding Texas’ ban on abortions except to save a mother’s life.
- Wade refers to Henry Wade, the district attorney in Dallas County, Texas, at the time, who was the defendant in the case.
- The **7-2 majority opinion of the SCOTUS was written on January 22, 1973**, by Justice Harry Blackmun, paving the way for the recognition of abortion as a constitutional right in the U.S., effectively striking down a wide range of state-level abortion limitations applied before foetal viability.
- Foetal viability is the point at which a foetus can survive outside the womb, at the time considered to be around 28 weeks, but today is closer to 23 or 24 weeks owing to advances in medicine and technology.



Judgment in *Roe vs Wade* case:

- Based on the *Roe vs Wade case*, the framework of regulations that applied towards the right to abortion required that **in the first trimester, almost no limitations could be placed on that right**; in the **second trimester**, only limitations to abortion rights that were aimed at protecting a woman’s health were permitted; and in the **third trimester**, state governments had greater leeway to limit the right to abortion except for cases in which the life and health of the mother were endangered.
- However, *Roe vs Wade* was not the last word on abortion rights in the U.S. even before the latest SCOTUS opinion.
- In the 1992 *Planned Parenthood vs Casey* case, the SCOTUS threw out the so-called trimester framework yet retained the *Roe vs Wade* case’s “essential holding,” which established women’s constitutional right to abortion until foetal viability.

Why is there a possibility of the judgment being overturned?

- The overturning of the *Roe vs Wade* case has not yet been formally announced and thus not yet a part of settled law, although most legal experts believe it is only a matter of time before it becomes so.
- It remains to be seen whether the leaked text of the private opinion of the SCOTUS, believed to be authored primarily by Justice Samuel Alito, will be the same as the final version that enters the statute books.
- Nevertheless, the conservative majority of the court, to which former President Donald Trump successfully nominated three justices, regarded *Roe vs Wade* to lack any jurisprudential basis within the U.S. Constitution.
- Hence in the first draft of their opinion, dated February 2022, the justices of the SCOTUS said, “We hold that *Roe* and *Casey* must be overruled. The Constitution makes no reference to abortion, and no such right is implicitly protected by any constitutional provision... It is time to heed the Constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people’s elected representatives.”

What impact will the opinion have if it passes into law?

- Based on analysis of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reports have shown that the typical patient seeking an abortion in the U.S. is already a mother, is in her late 20s, has obtained some college education, is relatively poor, is unmarried, is in her first six weeks of pregnancy, is seeking a first abortion, and lives in a Democratic Party-ruled state.
- At a broad level, therefore, the SCOTUS opinion will disproportionately affect poorer women if it becomes law.
- For example, in 2014, nearly 50% of women who went in for abortions were below the poverty line, with another 25% said to be relatively close to the poverty line.
- Reports quoted researchers saying that the growing share of poorer women in the abortion demographic “reflects improved access to effective contraception among higher-earning women, and a recognition of the growing costs of raising children among poorer women. It may also reflect the growing presence of charities that help poor women pay for abortions in states where public programs don’t.”

What’s next?

- However, all is not lost for the pro-choice side of the debate, because even if the SCOTUS successfully strikes down *Roe vs Wade* U.S. President Joe Biden has called upon Congress to pass legislation codifying the right to abortion, which lawmakers have every right to do.
- Yet, given the 50-50 split of Democratic and Republican Senators on Capitol Hill, it is near impossible to rally together the requisite 60-member supermajority required to pass abortion rights into law in the face of lock-step opposition from conservatives.
- Democrats are likely pinning their hopes on the November mid-term election sweeping more of their members into the Senate and thus restoring a constitutional right to abortion.