

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Himachal Grihini Suvidha Yojana**

In December 2019, the Himachal Pradesh state government declared that the state had become the first state in the country to have “100% LPG gas coverage”.

About:

- Following the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, the state government launched its own Himachal Grihini Suvidha Yojana in May 2018 to cover the remaining households.
- Except families having a pensioner, income taxpayer or any member employed with the government, board, corporation etc, all households of the state without an LPG connection were eligible.

Draft New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (Ndiac) Rules

Draft New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC) Rules have been issued for public consultation with the timeline of submission of comments by 14th March, 2020.

New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC), Act 2019

- The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC), Act 2019 was enacted to establish and make NDIAC a hub for institutional arbitration and to declare it as an institution of national importance.
- NDIAC will be headed by a Chairperson, who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court or a Judge of a High Court or an eminent person appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- Besides, it will also have two Full-time or Part-time Members from amongst eminent persons having experience in institutional arbitration, both domestic and international.
- In addition, one representative of a recognized body of commerce and industry shall be nominated on rotational basis as a Part-time Member.
- The Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law & Justice; Financial Adviser nominated by Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance and Chief Executive Officer, NDIAC will be ex-officio Members.
- Section 23 of the Act provides for the Secretariat to the Centre inter-alia comprising Registrar, Counsel and other officers & employees etc.

In this regard, the Department of Legal Affairs has prepared the following draft Rules:

- The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (the terms and conditions and the salary and allowances payable to the Chairperson and Full-time Members) Rules 2020.
- The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (the travelling and other allowances payable to Part-time Members) Rules 2020.
- The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (the number of officers and employees of the Secretariat of the Centre) Rules 2020.
- The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (the qualifications, experience, method of selection and the functions of the Registrar, Counsel and other officers and employees of the Centre) Rules 2020.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**BLUE DOT NETWORK**

The proposed Blue Dot network is expected to be discussed between visiting US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

About:

- The Blue Dot network is “a multi-stakeholder initiative to bring together governments, the private sector and civil society to promote high-quality, trusted standards for global infrastructure development.”
- The proposal, which is part of the US’s Indo-Pacific strategy, will evaluate projects on various parameters, including level of public consultation, transparency in funding, debt traps and basic environment norms.
- Projects that meet the norms will get a “blue dot”, which will enable them to attract private funding and not have to depend on state-funding alone.
- The US, which is leading the proposal, has already got Japan and Australia as partners in this idea.

Comparison with One Belt One Road initiative (OBOR):

- The proposal is aimed at countering Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambitious One Belt One Road initiative.
- Under Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's government and state-owned enterprises finance international projects by providing logistical support — from concrete and steel to workers and cash. This approach, however, has been labelled by some experts as “debt-trap diplomacy”.
- Blue Dot will be about “supporting alternatives to predatory lending” by facilitating foreign investment in projects that come under this network.

A future for the world's children

The report, titled “A Future for the World's Children?” was recently released by a Commission of more than 40 child and adolescent health experts from around the world. The Commission was convened by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and The Lancet.

Key Findings:

- Health and future of every child and adolescent worldwide is under immediate threat from ecological degradation, climate change and exploitative marketing practices that push heavily processed fast food, sugary drinks, alcohol and tobacco at them.
- The index shows that children in Norway, the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands have the best chance at survival and well-being, while children in the Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia, Niger and Mali face the worst odds.
- In the report assessing the capacity of 180 countries, India stands 77th (sustainability index) and is at 131st position on a ranking that measures the best chance at survival and well-being for children.
- Globally, the number of children and adolescents who are obese has increased from 11 million in 1975 to 124 million in 2016 — an 11-fold increase.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**LPG Prices**

LPG prices, which are revised on a monthly basis, went up again. In February 2020 the rate for unsubsidised, 14.2 kg cylinders has risen by a steep ₹ 144.50 in Delhi, at ₹ 858.50. In January 2020, a non-subsidised LPG cylinder cost ₹ 714 in Delhi. The recent price hike has been the sharpest since January 2014.

Methodology:

- Domestic prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) are based on a formula — the import parity price (IPP), which is based on international LPG prices.
- Saudi Aramco's LPG price acts as the benchmark for the IPP and includes the free-on-board price, ocean freight, customs duties, port dues and the like.
- This dollar-denominated figure is converted into rupees before local costs — such as local freight, bottling charges, marketing costs and the GST — are added. This helps the government arrive at the retail selling price for LPG.
- The government resets the LPG price every month, the decision being influenced by international prices and how the rupee has behaved against the dollar in the immediately preceding weeks.

Subsidy by government:

- LPG price for cooking for consumers under PAHAL (DBTL) is subsidized by the Government of India.
- On account of a sharp increase in the international price of LPG, for a 14.2 kg cylinder, the subsidy borne by Government to domestic users is increased from Rs. 153.86 per cylinder to Rs. 291.48 per cylinder.
- For the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) consumers, the subsidy borne by Government has increased from Rs. 174.86 per cylinder to Rs. 312.48 per cylinder.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**Cop 13 On Conservation Of Migratory Species (CMS)**

The Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP13) concluded in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Key highlights:

- Logo: The Great Indian Bustard was the mascot of COP13. The CMS COP 13 Logo was also inspired by the traditional 'KOLAM' from southern India, which has a profound significance in the context of living in harmony with nature.
- The theme for the CMS COP 13 was: "Migratory species connect the planet and together we welcome them home."
- Ten new species were added to CMS Appendices at COP13.
 - Seven species were added to Appendix I: Asian Elephant, Jaguar, Great Indian Bustard, Bengal Florican, Little Bustard, Antipodean Albatross and the Oceanic White-tip Shark.
 - Three species were added to Appendix II: Urial, Smooth Hammerhead Shark and the Tope Shark.
- New and extended Concerted Actions with targeted conservation plans were agreed for 14 species.
- CMS COP13 also adopted the Gandhinagar Declaration, which calls for the concept of 'ecological connectivity' to be integrated and prioritized in the new Framework, which is expected to be adopted at the UN Biodiversity Conference in October.
- The first ever report on the Status of Migratory Species, presented to CMS COP13, shows that despite some success stories, the populations of most migratory species covered by CMS are declining.
- Three CMS Ambassadors - for terrestrial, avian, and aquatic species - were named at the relaunch of the CMS Ambassadors Programme: Ian Redmond OBE (for terrestrial), Sacha Dench (for avian), and Indian actor Randeep Hooda (for aquatic).
- Seven new Migratory Species Champions including the Government of India were named at a special high-level event organized on the sidelines of the conference.
- India, as COP13 host, will assume the role of COP Presidency for the next three years.
- The Conference kicked off "Super Year for Environment", which will include a UN Summit in September and culminate in the UN Biodiversity Conference at the end of 2020, when a new global biodiversity strategy for the next decade will be adopted - the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Announcements by Prime Minister Modi:

- He pledged to focus on the conservation of migratory birds along the Central Asian Flyway. India has already prepared a 'National Action Plan for conservation of Migratory Birds along the Central Asian Flyway'.
- India by 2020, will be launching its Marine Turtle Policy and Marine Stranding Management Policy.
- Reiterating the Union Government's commitment to the path of sustainable development, the Prime Minister mentioned the release of the Linear Infrastructure Policy Guidelines to tailor development in ecologically fragile areas.

Craspedotropis Gretathunbergae

A new species of snails have been named *Craspedotropis gretathunbergae*, in honour of Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. The species has been described in the Biodiversity Data Journal.

About:

- The new species comes from tropical rainforests and is sensitive to drought and extreme temperatures, which are likely to be more frequent as climate change continues.
- Hence the honour to Thunberg, who has been making efforts to raise awareness about climate change.
- The two-millimetre-long snails have dark grey tentacles, a pale body and a concave shell, whose outer part is greenish-brown.

Pakke Tiger Reserve

The BJP government in Arunachal Pradesh is planning to build a 692.7 km highway through the 862 sq km Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR).

About:

- Named the East-West Industrial Corridor, the highway aims to connect Bhairabhunda in West Kameng district and Manmao in Changlang district along Arunachal Pradesh's border with Assam.

- According to environmentalists, the project makes no mention of compensation for people likely to be displaced. This corridor will also be a threat to the adjoining Nameri Tiger Reserve in Assam.

Pakke Tiger Reserve:

- Names: Pakke Tiger Reserve, also known as Pakhui Tiger Reserve, is a Project Tiger reserve.
- Location: It is located in the East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Neighbouring areas and rivers: Towards the south and south-east, the sanctuary adjoins Nameri National Park of Assam. To the east lies the Pakke River and to the west, the park is bounded by the Bhareli or Kameng River.
- Biodiversity: It falls within the Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

MicroRNAs

Researchers from National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, and SASTRA University, Thanjavur, have discovered how microRNAs are made in plants. This finding makes it much easier for studying processes in plants.

About:

- MicroRNAs are small molecules, about 21 nucleotides long, and help in controlling the levels of proteins in the cell.
- In order to decrease the level of a particular protein in specific cells, the microRNAs destroy the messenger RNA molecules that help with the production of that specific protein in the cell.
- The microRNA molecules do this by cutting down that particular messenger RNA thereby destroying it. This process is called the silencing of the messenger RNA.
- Similarly, the best way to study the effect of a gene in the DNA is to silence or “knockout” the gene. In knocking out processes, those RNA that induce the gene to produce proteins are destroyed or their levels are reduced by the microRNA as described earlier.

PRELIMS SPECIFIC FACTS- INDICES, DAYS, EVENTS, AWARDS ETC

Serb Women Excellence Award-2020

Dr. Niti Kumar, Senior Scientist from Division of Molecular Parasitology and Immunology, CSIR-CDRI, Lucknow has received SERB Women Excellence Award-2020.

About:

- Award will be conferred by the President of India during National Science Day (NSD) 2020 Celebrations on February 28, 2020, in Vigyan Bhawan. This year's theme for NSD is "Women in Science"
- This award is given to women scientist below 40 years of age who have received recognition from national academies.
- The women researchers will be supported by research grant of 5 lakhs per annum for 3 years by Science and Engineering Research Board, Department of Science & Technology, Government of India (SERB-DST).

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. The present-day food system is one of the main drivers of deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Examine.

Ans:

Forests cover about 30% of the world's land area, but they are disappearing at an alarming rate. According to the World Bank, between 1990 and 2016, the world lost 502,000 square miles (1.3 million square kilometers) of forest—an area larger than South Africa.

Biodiversity loss means a decrease in biodiversity within a species, an ecosystem, a given geographic area, or Earth as a whole. Up to 28,000 species are expected to become extinct by the next quarter of the century due to deforestation.

Food system as the Driver of Deforestation and Biodiversity loss:

- Agriculture has historically been the biggest driver of deforestation, responsible for about 80% of deforestation in the key tropical regions of the world (Africa, Latin America and subtropical Asia). The main driver of deforestation in Latin America has been commercial agriculture, but in Africa and subtropical Asia, even subsistence farming has played a significant role.

- Agricultural production is the greatest threat for the species classed as threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.
- Increased demand for food, and in particular for resource-intensive food such as meat leads to significant and continued biodiversity losses. This primarily arises from agricultural expansion into new areas to grow crops (often to feed livestock), from the creation of new pasture lands, and encroachment on and fragmentation of ecosystems.
- For marine ecosystems, the most important direct driver of change in the past 50 years, in the aggregate, has been fishing. Fishing is the major direct anthropogenic force affecting the structure, function, and biodiversity of the oceans.
- Clearing of natural vegetation for agriculture promotes habitat loss of species, thus a driver of Biodiversity loss.
- Overexploitation remains a serious threat to many species and populations. Among the most commonly overexploited species or groups of species are marine fish and invertebrates, trees, and animals hunted for meat.

Forward

- Reducing the consumption of animal products : It would reduce the land and water use required for growing feed for livestock, thereby potentially alleviating water stress and sparing land for natural habitats.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Climate Change and Land (SRCCL) highlights that vegan and vegetarian diets have a large climate-mitigation potential and show no negative impacts across other challenges associated with food production—such as stopping land degradation and ensuring food security.
- Reduce Food Loss and Waste: Reducing food loss and waste could decrease food production as well as its environmental impacts.
- Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture: Increasing land productivity (e.g., closing yield gaps) with minimal additional environmental impacts can help reduce current and future damages to biodiversity and water.
- Closing yield gaps means that less land will be needed for producing the same amount of agricultural products, thereby reducing deforestation and degradation, which will alleviate pressures on biodiversity.

Conclusion: By 2050, almost 10 billion people will need to access an adequate quality and quantity of food. This must be done while minimizing the environmental damage caused by the food system

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

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| <p>1. With reference to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP13), consider the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asian Elephant was the mascot of COP13. 2. CMS COP13 adopted the Gandhinagar Declaration. <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2</p> | <p>High Court or an eminent person appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.</p> |
| <p>2. With reference to the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC) Act 2019, consider the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC) will be headed by a Chairperson, who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court or a Judge of a | <p>2. It will also have two Full-time or Part-time Members from amongst eminent persons having experience in institutional arbitration, both domestic and international.</p> <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2</p> |
| | <p>3. With reference to the LPG prices, consider the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Domestic prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) are based on a formula — the import parity price (IPP), which is based on international LPG prices. |

2. Saudi Aramco's LPG price acts as the benchmark for the import parity price (IPP).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) **Both 1 and 2**
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

4. With reference to the MicroRNAs, consider the following statements:
1. They are small molecules, about 21 nucleotides long, and help in controlling the levels of proteins in the cell.
 2. Recently researchers from National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, and SASTRA University, Thanjavur, have discovered how microRNAs are made in plants.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) **Both 1 and 2**
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. With reference to the report "A Future for the World's Children?", consider the following statements:
1. It was recently released by World Economic Forum.
 2. India stands 77th on sustainability index and is at 131st position on a ranking that measures the best chance at survival and well-being for children.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) **2 only**
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

6. Pakke Tiger Reserve, recently seen in news, is located in:

- (a) **Arunachal Pradesh**
(b) Kerala
(c) Mizoram
(d) Sikkim

7. With reference to the Himachal Grihini Suvridha Yojana, consider the following statements:

1. Himachal Pradesh state government recently declared that the state had become the first state in the country to have "100% LPG gas coverage".

2. All households of the state without an LPG connection were eligible for LPG connection.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) **1 only**
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

8. What is Craspedotropis gretathunbergae, recently seen in news?

- (a) Recently founded fossil of Dinosaur
(b) **New species of snails from tropical rainforests**
(c) Earth-size planet discovered by Kepler space telescope.
(d) None of the above

9. With reference to the Blue Dot network, consider the following statements:

1. It is a multi-stakeholder initiative to bring together governments, the private sector and civil society to promote high-quality, trusted standards for global infrastructure development."
2. It is an initiative taken by China.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) **1 only**
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

10. With reference to the SERB Women Excellence Award-2020, consider the following statements:

1. Dr. Niti Kumar, Senior Scientist from Division of Molecular Parasitology and Immunology, CSIR-CDRI, Lucknow has received SERB Women Excellence Award-2020.
2. This award is given to women scientist below 25 years of age who have received recognition from national academies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) **1 only**
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2