

CURRENT AFFAIRS

MONTH OF APRIL-2019



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Monthly Current Affairs for UPSC IAS Preparation

01.04.2019

1. Dhole –The Asiatic Wild Dog

A new study has found that expansion of protected areas in the Western Ghats has not helped the lot of Dhole, commonly known as the Asiatic wild dog.

Related Information

Dhole

Dhole is an apex social carnivore in the tropical forests of South and South East Asia.

Dhole is found in landscapes covering Karnataka portion of Western Ghats of India.

The IUCN status of this Asiatic Wild Dog as 'Endangered'.

They generally hunt in packs and tend to venture into forested landscapes adjoining protected areas.

Anthropogenic factors, which fragment and alter landscapes, affected these wild Asiatic dogs.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Down to Earth

2. Dhanush Howitzers guns inducted into Indian Army

Indian Army inducted its domestically developed and manufactured Dhanush artillery howitzer at a ceremony held the Ordnance factory in Jabalpur.

Related Information

Dhanush Howitzers Guns

Dhanush' is the first long-range artillery gun to be produced in India.

It has been developed by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), Kolkata based on requirements of Indian Army and manufactured by Jabalpur-based Gun Carriage Factory (GCF).

It is also known as desi Bofors because it is an upgraded version of Swedish Bofors howitzers, which India procured in the mid 1980s, based on its original designs.

It has a strike range of 40 kilometres with accuracy and precision.

It also has night firing capability in direct fire mode. Topic-

GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- The Hindu

3. India's marine meadows

The tape seagrass ecosystem under waters is known as India's marine meadows.

These grasses can be found in India along the southeast coast (Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay) and in the lagoons of islands from Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea to Andaman and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal.

Tape seagrass which has the longest leaves among its kind found in Indian waters is a major carbon sink.

The grass can bury carbon in underwater sediments 40 times faster than tropical forests bury under the soil, thus acts as a major carbon sink.

The seagrass ecosystem is threatened by trawl fishing, cyclone, sand mining, coastal construction, sewage and other pollutants.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Environment & Biodiversity

Source- Down to Earth

4. Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary

'Alemba Yimchunger' a forest guard at the Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary has been recognised with Earth Day Network Star.

Earth Day Network Star award is awarded by a U.S.-based international environmental organisation that engages with green groups in 195 countries.

Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary

The Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in Kiphire district of Nagaland.

The sanctuary is considered to be an abode for many wildlife animals such as leopards, tigers, wild buffaloes, hoolock gibbons and mithun.

Hornbill, the most popular bird in Nagaland is also abundantly found in the Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Environment & Ecology

Source- Indian Express

5. Government has awarded GI tag to five varieties of Indian coffee

Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has recently awarded this tag to —

- (a) Coorg Arabica coffee from Karnataka
- (b) Wayanad Robusta coffee from Kerala
- (c) Chikmagalur Arabica from Karnataka
- (d) Araku Valley Arabica from Andhra Pradesh- It is produced by the tribals, who follow an organic approach in which they emphasise management practices involving substantial use of organic manures, green manuring and organic pest management practices.
- (e) Bababudangiris Arabica coffee from Karnataka- It is selectively hand-picked and processed by natural fermentation.

Related Information

India is the only country in the world where the entire coffee cultivation is grown under shade, hand-picked and sun-dried.

India produces some of the best coffee in the world, grown by tribal farmers in the Western and The Eastern Ghats, which are the two major bio-diversity hotspots in the world.

Indian coffee is highly valued in the world market and sold as premium coffee in Europe.

In India, coffee is cultivated in about 4.54 lakh hectares by 3.66 lakh coffee farmers of which 98% are small farmers.

Coffee cultivation is mainly done in the Southern States of India:

- (i) Karnataka – 54%
- (ii) Kerala – 19%
- (iii) Tamil Nadu – 8%

Coffee is also grown in non-traditional areas like Andhra Pradesh and Odisha (17.2%) & North East States (1.8%).

The Monsooned Malabar Robusta Coffee, a unique speciality coffee from India, was given GI certification earlier.

Topic- GS-1-Art and Culture
GS-3- Agriculture
Source- The Hindu

6. India's Trade and Economic relations with European and Oceania Countries

European and Oceania countries are major trading partners and major sources of investments for India and there is the huge untapped potential that can be achieved.

Related Information

India – Europe

Bilateral trade between India and Europe crossed the USD 150 billion mark in 2011-12.

The extent of investment linkages is evident from the fact that nearly one-fourth of FDI inflows into India are from Europe and around 29.8 per cent of India's overseas direct investments and directed towards Europe.

India – Oceania

India is the fifth largest export market for Australia, with coal, education-related travel, vegetable and gold being some of the major items of imports by India.

Major exports from India to Australia include refined petroleum, business services and pharmaceuticals.

New Zealand is also an important market for India in the Oceania region, especially for its exports of pharmaceuticals, gems and jewellery, machinery and textiles and apparel.

Nearly, USD 1034.2 million was invested by companies from Oceania in the Indian market from April 2000 to December 2018.

The Oceania region also accounts for nearly 1.7 per cent of India's overseas FDI, with Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu being the key investment destinations.

Oceania countries

There are 14 countries in Oceania today, according to United Nations official statistics.

These are Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Relation

Source-PI B

7. Induction of LCU L-56 in the Navy

The sixth indigenously designed and built transport ship, LCU L56, has been inducted into the Navy.

It has been built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd.

Related Information

Landing Craft Utility

The Landing Craft Utility (LCU) is a type of boat used by amphibious forces to transport equipment and troops to the shore.

It will enhance the operations capability including transport of troops, tanks and equipment and it will be based at Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd.

Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd is the state-owned company situated in Kolkata.

It builds and repairs commercial and naval vessels.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Defence Source- The Hindu

8. The hump-backed mahseer is now 'critically endangered'

The hump-backed mahseer a large freshwater fish also called 'the tiger of the water'.

These fish are found only in the Cauvery river basin (including Kerala's Pambar, Kabini and Bhavani rivers).

The fish has been recently added to the Red List of IUCN as 'Critically Endangered' from the endangered species earlier.

Related Information

Other species whose IUCN status changed

The great hornbill (found in India and Southeast Asia) was earlier categorised as "Near Threatened".

It is now "Vulnerable" due to high hunting pressure coupled with habitat loss and deforestation.

The wreathed hornbill has moved from "Least Concern" to "Vulnerable".

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

9. 737 MAX: the MCAS was activated before the crash

The Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS), the flight stabilization system that prevents a Boeing 737 MAX aircraft from stalling, was activated shortly before the crash of Ethiopian Airlines.

Related Information

Manoeuvring Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS)

It is a system that automatically lowers the nose of the plane when it receives information from its external angle of attack (AOA) sensors that the aircraft is flying too slowly or steeply, and at risk of stalling.

The system is designed to be activated only when the angle of attack, measuring the way the wing cuts through the air, has become too high to avoid the plane stalling or losing lift.

The software tells the flight control system to change its Angle of Attack (AOA) downward if a stall risk is perceived, which the computer initiates automatically.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

02.04.2019

1. SFIO arrested ex-chairman of IL&FS

Serious Fraud Investigation Office arrested ex-chairman of Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS).

Related Information

Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO)

It is a statutory corporate fraud investigating agency in India which works under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

It is involved in major fraud probes and is the coordinating agency with the Income Tax Department and the Central Bureau of Investigation.

It is headquartered in New Delhi.

It was established in January 2003 based on the recommendation of Naresh Chandra Committee on corporate governance and in the backdrop of stock market scams due to the failure of non-banking companies resulting in huge financial loss to the public.

It is a multi-disciplinary organization having experts from the financial sector, capital market, accountancy, forensic audit, taxation, law, information technology, company law, customs and investigation.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important agencies Source- The Hindu

2. Ramappa temple for world heritage site

Telangana may get its first Unesco World Heritage Site which will be the Ramappa Temple at Palampet near Warangal.

Most of the Qutub Shahi era sites in Hyderabad like Golconda Fort, Qutb Shahi Tombs and Charminar have been on the tentative list of World Heritage Sites from September 2010.

Related Information

Ramappa Temple

Ramappa Temple also known as the Ramalingeswara temple situated in Palampet near Warangal near the ancient capital of the Kakatiya dynasty.

It is a Siva temple and perhaps the only one in the country that is known by the name of the architect rather than the king who commissioned it or its presiding deity.

The temple was built by a General Recherla Rudra, during the period of the Kakatiya ruler Ganapati Deva.

The dance sculptures and friezes of the temple chiselled on black dolomite.

The temple is built on a valley and it rests on bricks that are scientifically shown to float in water.

Selection Process of World Heritage Site

The first step involves creating a detailed dossier showing the outstanding universal value of the site, besides meeting a few other criteria.

Once the documentation is complete, it requires a push by the State party or the country where the site is located.

The property is then evaluated by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) then provides advice on conservation of the site and training.

After all these steps, the World Heritage Committee evaluates the site and decides to inscribe it or send back the nomination.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

3. India, US renew triangular development cooperation in Asia and Africa

India and the United States signed the First Amendment to the Statement of Guiding Principles (SGP) on Triangular Cooperation for Global Development in Asia and Africa as part of their Indo-Pacific cooperation.

The Statement of Guiding Principles Agreement signed in November 2014.

The agreement provides a framework for promoting cooperation between the two countries to meet the developmental aspirations of partner countries, particularly in Asia and Africa.

The validity of this First Amendment of SGP Agreement is up-to 2021.

Under the agreement, India and US will continue to offer capacity building assistance to partner countries in multiple sectors, focusing primarily on agriculture, regional connectivity, trade and investments, nutrition, health, clean and renewable energy, women empowerment, disaster preparedness, water, sanitation, education and institution building.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Relation

Source- Economics Times

4. Phayeng village: India's first carbon-positive settlement

The Phayeng village in Manipur develops itself as India's first carbon-positive settlement.

A village is given the carbon-positive tag if it sequesters more carbon than it emits, slowing the accumulation of greenhouse gases and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Phayeng, which is surrounded by three densely forested hillocks which have been, has been resurrected from the dry and denuded village in the late 1970s and 80s by the funding under National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change.

Related Information

National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC)

It is a Central Sector Scheme which was set up in the year 2015-16.

The overall aim of NAFCC is to support concrete adaptation activities which mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

The activities under this scheme are implemented in a project mode.

The projects related to adaptation in sectors such as agriculture, animal husbandry, water, forestry, tourism etc. are eligible for funding under NAFCC.

NABARD is the National Implementing Entity (NIE).

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Environment Source-Live Mint

5. ISRO launched EMISAT satellite along with 28 nano satellites

ISRO launched the PSLV-C45 rocket that carried one Indian and 28 international satellites into space.

It was the first time ISRO launched a rocket that injected satellites in three different orbits.

Related Information

The fourth and last stage of the rocket will function as a satellite itself for some time, instead of being rendered junk after ejecting its payloads.

The fourth stage is what remains of the rocket after most of it is discarded — in three stages — during the flight to reduce weight, after running out of the propellant they carry.

The rocket carried four strap-on motors.

Strap-ons are booster rockets attached externally to the main rocket, and provide additional thrust, or energy, by firing themselves midway during the flight.

In earlier flights, ISRO has used two or six strap-on motors. The four extra-large strap-ons used this time reduced the overall weight while still delivering the power equivalent to six motors.

PSLV C-45 placed the primary satellite, EMISAT, a piece of surveillance equipment to be used by the DRDO, to the 748 km sun-synchronous polar orbit.

It then made one complete revolution around Earth, over the poles, while lowering its orbit to 504 km height, after which it deposited the 28 international customer satellites — 24 from the US, two from Lithuania, and one each from Switzerland and Spain.

It then made a further round of Earth while attaining an even lower orbit of 485 km, where the fourth stage of the rocket will continue for some time.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- Indian Express

6. Climate change may hit India's wind power

In a recent study, it has found that increased warming in the Indian Ocean and the resultant weakening of the Indian summer monsoon may come in the way of India's goal of leading the world's wind power generation.

In the researchers, it is found that the potential electricity production of windmills across India had decreased by about 13% which might get continue.

The researchers showed a decline in electricity production in the States of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka.

Factors affecting Wind

The researchers showed that 63% of the annual production of electricity from wind is contributed by winds in spring.

Due to the weakening of the Indian summer monsoon during this period researcher found a decrease in wind power during these months.

In India, Summer winds are driven by the temperature contrast between the Indian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean, and the warming in the Indian Ocean reduced this contrast.

The warming of the Equatorial Indian Ocean also resulted in a decline in the wind speed.

India's future Targets

The Government has set a target of 60 GW of cumulative wind power capacity by 2022.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Environment Source- TOI

7. Electronic voting machine (EVM)

EVMs replaced the paper ballot system in the Kerala State elections in 1982 and are now used during Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

EVMs are easy to operate, reliable, eliminate the possibility of invalid votes, make the process of counting faster, and are easier to transport compared to ballot boxes.

Only two Indian public sector units manufacture EVMs: Bharat Electronics Limited & the Electronics Corporation of Indian Ltd.

EVMs contains a control unit, which is with the polling officer, and a balloting

unit, which the voter enters in order to cast her vote.

Names and symbols of parties are shown on the machine and the voter presses the button next to the party of her choice.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

8. Australia launched a seven-nation Indian Ocean military exercise

Australia is conducting Seven nation Indian Ocean military exercise in the Indian Ocean.

The seven nations include with Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Singapore.

The exercise is aimed to counter the growing Chinese influence in the India Ocean.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- Indian Express

03.04.2019

1. Odisha receives GI tag for 'Kandhamal Haldi'

'Kandhamal Haldi', a variety of turmeric indigenous to southern Odisha, has earned the Geographical indication (GI) tag from Intellectual Property India.

Kandhamal in Odisha's southern hinterland is famed for its turmeric, a spice that enjoys its pride of place in an array of cuisines.

Kandhamal Haldi (turmeric) has more oleoresin and volatile oil contents compared to other turmeric varieties.

It gives a strong aroma and has a high medicinal value.

Related Information
 Recently Awarded GI Tag

Name	Commodity/handicraft / food item	Place
Alphonso	Food	Konkan (Western Indian states of Maharashtra, Goa, and the South Indian state of Karnataka)
Kadaknath chicken	Food (meat)	Madhya Pradesh
Shahi litchi	food	Bihar
Patola Sarees	Handicraft	Rajkot (Gujarat)
Boka Chaul	food	Assam
Katarni Rice	food	Bihar
Pethapur Printing Blocks	Handicraft/textile making	Gujarat
Tulapanji rice	food	Bengal
Pochampally Ikat	Handicraft	Telangana
Durgi Stone Carvings	Handicraft	Guntur District (Andhra Pradesh)
Chakshesang Shawl	Handicraft	Nagaland
Etikoppaka Toys	Handicraft	Andhra Pradesh
Sangli Turmeric	Food item	Maharashtra
Marayoor Jaggery	Food Item	Idukki, Kerala
Coorg Arabica coffee	Food Item	Karnataka
Wayanad Robusta coffee	Food Item	Kerala
Chikmagalur Arabica	Food Item	Karnataka
Araku Valley Arabica	Food Item	Andhra Pradesh
Bababudangiris Arabica coffee	Food Item	Karnataka

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art & Culture
 Source- Indian Express

2. RBI circular to banks on loan defaulters quashed

The Supreme Court struck down an RBI circular giving lender banks 480 days to resolve their stressed assets or move under the Insolvency Code against private entities who have defaulted on loans worth over 2,000 crore.

The court also drew a distinction between the powers conferred on the RBI under Sections 35AA and 35AB. The RBI can only direct banking institutions to move under the Insolvency Code if two conditions

precedent are specified, namely, (a) When there is a Central Government authorisation to do so; and (b) It should be in respect of specific defaults.

Related Information

Banking Regulation Act of 1949

It is a set of rules which govern the banking sector in India.

This act was legislated in 1949.

It empowers the Reserve Bank of India to license banks and work as a banking regulator in India.

Two new sections (viz. 35AA and 35AB) are inserted in the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017.

Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, this act enables the Central Government to authorize the RBI to direct banking companies to resolve specifically stressed assets by conducting insolvency resolution process, where required.

This ordinance also empowers the RBI to issue other directions for resolution, and approve or appoint or for appointment, authorities or committees to advise banking companies for stressed asset resolution.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy

Source- Economics Times

3. Special Category Status

Union Finance Minister has said the special financial package given to Andhra Pradesh was in lieu of the Special Category Status (SCS) as the 14th Finance Commission had removed the granting of SCS to any State.

Related Information

What is Special Category Status?

The Constitution does not include any provision for categorisation of any State in India as a Special Category Status (SCS) State.

Central plan assistance to the SCS States has been granted in the past by the erstwhile Planning Commission body, National Development Council (NDC).

The NDC granted this status based on a number of features of the States which included:

- Hilly and difficult terrain
- Low population density or the presence of sizeable tribal population
- Strategic location along international borders
- Economic & infrastructural backwardness
- Non-viable nature of State finances.

What kind of assistance does the SCS States receive?

The SCS States used to receive block grants based on the Gadgil-Mukherjee formula, which effectively allowed for

nearly 30 percent of the Total Central Assistance to be transferred to the SCS States as late as 2009-10.

The 14th Finance Commission (FFC) recommended that Central plan assistance to the SCS States has been subsumed in an increased

devolution of the divisible pool to all States (from 32% in the 13th FC recommendations to 42%).

The FFC also recommended variables such as “forest cover” to be included in devolution, with a weightage of 7.5 in the criteria and which could benefit north-eastern States that were previously given SCS assistance.

Besides, assistance to Centrally

Sponsored Schemes for the SCS States was given with 90% Central share and 10% State share.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- Indian Express

4. Thakurani Jatra and Danda Nata festival

Related

Information

Thakurani Jatra

During the festival, Goddess Budhi Thakurani is taken from the main temple at Thakurani Temple Street to her temporary abode at Desi Behera Street, Odisha where she stays till the festival ends.

The festival goes on for 32 days.

The goddess is considered to be a family member of Desibehera, the leader of the Dera community, the weaver clan that has made Berhampur famous as the silk city.

Danda Nata festival

Danda Nata or Danda Jatra is one of the most important traditional dance festivals organized in different parts of South Odisha and particularly in the Ganjam District.

The festival goes on for 21-days.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and

Culture Source- The Hindu

5. AFSPA scaled back in Arunachal

After 32 years, the controversial Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, scaled back in Arunachal Pradesh which was partially removed from three of the nine districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy

committee had recommended scrapping of the Act from the State.

Related Information

What does the AFSPA mean?

AFSPA gives armed forces the power to maintain public order in “disturbed areas”.

They have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving a due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law.

If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search premises without a warrant; and ban the possession of firearms.

What is a “disturbed area” and who has the power to declare it?

A disturbed area is one which is declared by notification under Section 3 of the AFSPA.

An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.

The Central Government or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.

As per Section 3, it can be invoked in places where “the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary”.

The Ministry of Home Affairs would usually enforce this Act where necessary, but there have been exceptions where the Centre decided to forego its power and leave the decision to the State governments.

Which States are, or had come under this Act?

It is effective in the whole of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur (excluding seven assembly constituencies of Imphal), Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

The Centre revoked it in Meghalaya on April 1, 2018.

Tripura withdrew the AFSPA in 2015.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

6. Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) Scheme

The commerce ministry has laid out a detailed procedure for claiming benefits under the Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA) scheme, which aims at boosting agricultural exports.

In March 2019, the government announced this scheme for providing financial assistance for transport and marketing of agriculture products to boost exports of such commodities to certain countries in Europe and North America.

About Scheme

The “Transport and Marketing Assistance” (TMA) for specified agriculture products.

The scheme aims to provide assistance for the international component of freight and marketing of agricultural produce which is likely to mitigate the disadvantage of the higher cost of transportation of export of specified agriculture products due to trans-shipment.

It also promotes brand recognition for Indian agricultural products in the specified overseas markets.

The scheme would be suitably included in the Foreign Trade Policy (2015-20).

It covers all exporters, duly registered with relevant Export Promotion Council as per Foreign Trade Policy, of eligible agriculture products shall be covered under this scheme.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Scheme

Source- The Hindu Business Line

7. First secure link between India, US navies set up

India and the US have set up the first ever secure communication link between the naval headquarters.

The US Central, as well as Pacific Naval Commands under the landmark Indo-US COMCASA pact in the year 2018.

The US has also activated the Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Module GPS system in some of C-130 and C-17 transport aircraft as a result

of the implementation of the COMCASA (Communications, Compatibility & Security Agreement). In the case of the C-130s and C-17s, the systems were purchased but not activated because the US said it could not part with the encryption codes until the enabling COMCASA pact is signed.

In a major boost to India's defence diplomacy, the two upgrades will allow both sides to share real-time operational intelligence.

The establishment of a secure active link between the two navies is being seen as a significant step forward as India will gain access to latest US naval intelligence besides conducting joint operations in the future.

Topic- GS-3- Defence

Source- Economics Times

04.04.2019

1. MH-60R Multi-Mission Helicopters

The United States Department of State has approved the sale of 24 MH-60 'Romeo' Seahawk multi-mission helicopters to India at an estimated cost of \$2.4 billion under its Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program.

MH-60R multi-mission helicopters are designed to operate from frigates, destroyers, cruisers and aircraft carriers.

MH 60R helicopters will provide India with the capability to undertake anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare missions.

These helicopters will also provide India with the ability to perform secondary missions, including vertical replenishment, search and rescue, and communications relay.

The US provided India as a Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1) status in 2018 and became the third Asian country after South Korea and Japan (and 37th country globally) to acquire it.

The Seahawk helicopters would replenish India's ageing fleet of British-made Sea King helicopters.

Related Information

India also signed the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) agreement with the U.S.

It will help to provide a legal basis for the U.S. to transfer secure communication equipment to India, increasing military equipment interoperability and real-time data sharing.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- TOI

2. Bleaching hits the world's southernmost coral reef

Australian Scientist found that the world's southernmost coral reef has been hit by bleaching during summer.

Related Information

Coral reef

A coral reef is an underwater ecosystem characterized by reef-building corals.

Reefs are formed of colonies of coral polyps held together by calcium carbonate.

Most coral reefs are built from stony corals, whose polyps cluster in groups.

Coral bleaching-

The Coral bleaching occurs when coral polyps expel algae that live in their tissues.

Normally, coral polyps live in an endosymbiotic relationship with the algae and that relationship is crucial for the coral and hence for the health of the whole reef.

Bleached corals continue to live. But as the algae provide the coral with 90% of its energy, after expelling the algae the coral begins to starve.

The pale white colour is of the translucent tissues of calcium carbonate which are visible due to the loss of pigment-producing zooxanthellae.

Reason for Coral Bleaching

Elevated sea temperature.

El Nino elevates the sea temperature and destroys coral reefs.

Ocean Acidification

Solar radiation and ultraviolet radiation

Consequences of Coral Bleaching

Coral reefs described as the “rainforests of the seas”.

The death of corals and the resulting disappearance of reefs would result in the loss of a number of marine animals that rely on the reef for survival.

The entire food chain gets disturbed then.

The elimination of coral reefs would also result in great losses of income and resources from tourism.

Coral reefs also protect coastlines by absorbing constant wave energy from the ocean, thereby protecting people living near the coast from increased storm damage, erosion and flooding.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

3. Observer nominated by EC to watch the conduct of the election

An Observer is an officer of the government, is nominated by the Election Commission (EC) to watch the conduct of the election in a constituency or a group of constituencies.

The Observer has the power to direct the returning officer of the constituency or group of constituencies to stop the counting of votes before the declaration of the result or not declare the result at all if he or she believes that

- o booth capturing has taken place
- o the ballot has been tampered with accidentally
- o Otherwise to an extent where the result at the polling station cannot be ascertained.

If the Observer believes this to be true, he or she is expected to inform the EC immediately.

Related Information

1. Chief Electoral Officer– to supervise the election work in the State/UT
2. District Election Officer– to supervise the election work of a district.

3. Returning Officer– for each assembly and parliamentary constituency.

4. Electoral Registration Officer– for the preparation of Electoral rolls for a parliamentary/ assembly constituency

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

4. Four technical papers of Telangana engineers selected for Third World Irrigation Forum meeting in Bali

The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage has approved four technical paper proposals submitted by the engineers of Irrigation Department of Telangana for their presentation at Third World Irrigation Forum meet to be held at Bali in Indonesia in September 2019.

Related Information

World Irrigation Forum (WIF)

The triennial aims to bring together all the stakeholders involved in irrigation of multi-disciplines and all scales, including the policymakers, experts, research institutions, non-governmental organizations & farmers.

It provide a platform for the world irrigation community and interested development professionals to find solutions to problems plaguing the irrigated agriculture, in time of depleting freshwater resources as a result of global warming and climate change.

ICID (International Commission on Irrigation & Drainage) provides a unique platform for multi-stakeholder in WIF for sharing and learning by engaging in issues of interest at a global level.

It also gathers a wide range of experts from various fields to discuss important issues highlighted.

India’s step for Irrigation

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)

It was launched on 1st July 2015.

The motto of PMKSY is ‘Har Khet Ko Paani’ for providing end-to-end solutions in the irrigation supply chain, viz. water sources, distribution network and farm level applications.

PMKSY has the following components:

Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme: being implemented by Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation
PMKSY (Har Khet ko Pani): being implemented by Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation
PMKSY (Watershed): being implemented by Department of Land Resources.

PMKSY(Per Drop More Crop - PDMC): Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare is implementing Per Drop More Crop component of PMKSY, which is operational from 2015-16 in the country.

Per Drop More Crop mainly focuses on water use efficiency at the farm level through precision/ Micro Irrigation (MI) (Drip and Sprinkler Irrigation).

9th International Micro irrigation conference

The Theme of the conference was: "Micro Irrigation and Modern Agriculture".

The conference was organized by the Ministry of Water Resources and River Development.

Micro Irrigation Fund

Micro Irrigation Fund created with NABARD for encouraging public and private investments in Micro-Irrigation.

The main objective of the fund is to facilitate the States in mobilizing the resources for expanding coverage of Micro Irrigation.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Agriculture Source- The Hindu

5. Ways and Means Advances

RBI, in consultation with the GOI, has decided that the limits for Ways and Means Advances (WMA) for the first half of the financial year 2019-20.

Related Information

Ways and Means Advances

It is a temporary loan facility provided by RBI to meet temporary mismatches in the receipts and payments of the central and state government.

It was introduced on April 1, 1997.

This facility can be availed by the government if it needs immediate cash from the RBI.

The Ways and Means Advances is to be vacated after 90 days.

The limit for WMA are mutually decided by the RBI and the Government of India

Note: The Interest rate for Ways and Means Advances is charged at the repo rate.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics

Source- Indian Express

6. India inks MoU to set up agriculture, rural development institute in Malawi

India has signed an MoU with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Consultancy Service (NABCONS) for setting up the India-Africa Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development (IAIARD) in Malawi, a landlocked country in southeastern Africa.

It is an attempt to complement the efforts of the Government of India to enhance capacity in the areas of agro-financing and entrepreneurship development for African countries.

IAIARD will be a pan-African institute wherein trainees not only from Malawi but also from other African countries, will receive training to develop their human resources and build their capacity.

This institute will be the first of its kind developed in an African country by India.

This will further strengthen bilateral relations with Malawi and India's relations with the African Union.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International Relations

Source- Business Standard

7. Indian Army built the longest suspension bridge "Maitri Bridge" over Indus river in Leh

Indian Army built the longest suspension bridge over Indus river in Leh in just 40 days.

Named Maitri Bridge, the construction of the bridge was undertaken by the combat engineers of 'Sahas aur Yogyata' regiment of 'Fire and Fury Corps' of the Indian Army.

The 260-feet long bridge is likely to give a major boost to connectivity in remote areas in Ladakh.

The central government had emphasised on building all-weather road connectivity in the region.

Topic- GS-3- Infrastructure

Source- Business Today

8. NuGen Mobility Summit 2019

ICAT is organizing a NuGen Mobility Summit, 2019, at Manesar.

The objective of the Summit is to share new ideas, learnings, global experiences, innovations and future technology trends for faster adoption, assimilation and development of advanced automotive technologies for a smarter and greener future.

International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT)

ICAT Manesar is a division of NATRIP Implementation Society (NATIS) under the Department of Heavy Industries, Government of India.

It provides services for testing, validation, design and homologation of all categories of vehicles.

It has a mission to assist the automotive industry in adopting cutting edge technologies in vehicle evaluation and component development to ensure reliability, durability and compliance to the current and future regulations in new generation mobility solutions.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source-PIB

05.04.2019

1. Global Report on Food Crises 2019

The report is released jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

Finding of the Report

The two-thirds of the total number of people facing acute food insecurity are in 8 countries viz. Yemen, Congo, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan and Northern Nigeria.

The report mentioned the short-term forecast of food insecurity in the year 2019 also, stating the above-mentioned countries, will remain among the world's most severe food crises.

Climate and natural disasters pushed another 29 million people into acute food insecurity in 2018 and that number excludes 13 countries including North Korea and Venezuela because of data gaps.

Related Information

Food and Agriculture Organization

It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Its headquarters is in Rome, Italy. The goal of FAO is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active healthy lives.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Important Report

Source- The Hindu

2. CCMB Scientist discovered Enzyme "Murein EndopeptidaseK" to Curb Bacteria Cell Growth

Scientists at the CCMB have discovered an enzyme called Murein EndopeptidaseK.

The enzymes help in breaking cell walls of bacteria and hence, offers a potential for a new drug delivery route to arrest the anti-bacterial resistance through existing antibiotic drugs.

The researchers had identified a new enzyme which would act on the protein of cell wall in Escherichia coli (E. coli) that can be a potential drug target.

Related Information

Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (CCMB)

It is a premier research organization in frontier areas of modern biology situated in Hyderabad.

The objectives of the Centre are to conduct high-quality basic research and training in frontier areas of modern biology and promote centralized national facilities for new and modern techniques in the inter-disciplinary areas of biology.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

3. India must spend 10% of its GDP to meet SDGs by 2030: Report

The report released by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. India needs to spend nearly \$2 (Rs140) per day per person to remove poverty, while rest of Asia-Pacific countries have to spend nearly \$1 per day per person till 2030 to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Related Information

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

It is one of the five regional commissions under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Others are:

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

ESCAP was established in order to increase economic activity in Asia and the Far East, as well as to foster economic relations between the region and other areas of the world.

Related Information

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012.

SDGs is a set of 17 "Global Goals" with 169 targets covering various sectors like health, education and climate change among others.

The SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which started a global effort in 2000 to tackle the indignity of poverty.

The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent

environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Important

Institution Source- Down to Earth

4. Komodo Dragons

Indonesia government may temporarily shut an island that is home to Komodo dragons in a bid to fix problems created by mass tourism and thwart attempts to smuggle the world's biggest lizard.

Related Information

Komodo Dragons

These are the largest, heaviest lizards in the world and one of the few with a venomous bite.

Komodo dragons are limited to a few Indonesian islands of the Lesser Sunda group including Rintja, Padar and Flores, and the island of Komodo.

The IUNC status of Komodo dragons is 'Vulnerable'.

Topic- GS Paper 3-

Biodiversity Source- The Hindu

5. 'The Order of Zayed': UAE's top honour for Modi

UAE President Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan has awarded Prime Minister Narendra Modi the country's highest civilian award, 'the Order of Zayed'.

Previous recipients of the Order of Zayed include Russian President Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, British Queen Elizabeth II, and former Pakistan President Musharraf.

The Order of Zayed is awarded to Heads of Government/Head of State for their international relations with UAE.

Related Information

India and UAE relations

Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd has signed MoU with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) to explore storage of crude oil at Padur underground facility in Karnataka.

Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd is a Special Purpose Vehicle which is owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

India-UAE Hydrocarbon relations

UAE is 6th largest crude oil source for India and supplies around 6% of petroleum requirement.

India and UAE recently elevated their bilateral relationship to comprehensive strategic partnership especially in the energy sector, transforming from buyer-seller relations to two-way investment relations.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Awards and Prizes Source- The Hindu

6. Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman

The Vice President of India has been conferring around 100 'President's Certificate of Honour' and 'Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman' Awards to scholars in Classical Languages.

Related Information

According to Article 343, the official language of India should be Hindi in Devanagari script.

There are 22 languages as per Eight schedules of the Indian constitution.

Classical language

There are 6 classical languages in India.

1. Kannada
2. Malayalam
3. Odia
4. Sanskrit
5. Tamil language
6. Telugu language

Criteria to determine the declaration of a language as a Classical language is as under:-

Extraordinary antiquity of its early transcripts or verified history over a period of 1500-2000 years.

A body of ancient literature or texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers.

The literary tradition should be unique and not hired from another language community.

The classical language and literature being diverse from modern, there may also be a discontinuity among the classical language and its later forms or its sprouts.

Topic- GS Paper 1- Art and Culture

Source-PIB

7. Advance Pricing Agreement

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has entered into 18 APAs in the month of March 2019, which includes 03 Bilateral APAs (BAPAs).

Related Information

What is Advance Pricing Agreement?

An APA is a contract, usually for multiple years, between a taxpayer and at least one tax authority specifying the pricing method that the taxpayer will apply to its related-company transactions.

These programmes are designed to help taxpayers voluntarily resolve actual or potential transfer pricing disputes in a proactive, cooperative manner, as an alternative to the traditional examination process.

Benefits

APAs gives certainty to taxpayers reduces disputes, enhance tax revenues and make the country an attractive destination for foreign investments.

These agreements would be binding both on the taxpayer as well as the government.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Economics

Source- Economics Times

8. 'Pasupu Kumkuma': Andhra govt scheme for women

The Election Commission (EC) passed an order stating that any money transfer under the 'Pasupu Kumkuma' scheme will not violate the Model Code of Conduct.

Background

It was launched in February 2019.

It aims to provide financial help to women registered with self-help groups.

Each beneficiary is provided Rs 10,000 cash and a smartphone.

Under the scheme, about 93 lakh women will be benefitted and the financial help was to be paid in three separate instalments within three months.

Topic- GS-2- Government

Schemes Source- Indian Express

09.04.2019

1. Meteorological Department issues 'Yellow' weather warning for Himachal Pradesh

The Meteorological Department issued a yellow weather warning for rain in Himachal Pradesh.

The IMD issues colour-coded warnings to alert the public ahead of severe or hazardous weather conditions that can cause disruption or damage.

Related Information

The Meteorological Department uses four colour codes to indicate various categories of alerts. These are

- (a) Green
- (b) Yellow
- (c) Amber
- (d) Red

These colour codes signify the levels of caution to be taken.

Green colour: It indicates "no warning" and therefore no actions to be taken. No advisory is issued in such cases.

Yellow colour: It indicates "be updated" i.e. keeping a watch on the weather situation as it may deteriorate. Yellow is the least dangerous of the weather warnings.

Amber colour: It indicates "be prepared" i.e. it implies there is an increased likelihood of extremely bad weather.

Red colour: It indicates "Take action" which demands necessary actions to be taken by different agencies.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Disaster management Source- Indian Express

2. No end to discolouration of Periyar

The discolouration of the river Periyar (Kerala) has continued unprecedentedly thus raising concerns among environmentalists.

Environmentalists' activists allege that that discolouration was caused due to excessive discharge of chemical wastes into the river by industries located on the banks which result in Eutrophication condition in the river.

Related Information

Eutrophication

Eutrophication is a condition when a body of water becomes overly enriched with minerals and nutrients which induce excessive growth of plants and algae.

This process may result in oxygen depletion of the water body.

It is often induced by the discharge of nitrate or phosphate-containing detergents, fertilizers, or sewage into an aquatic system.

The eutrophication results in "Algal bloom" or the great increase of phytoplankton in a water body as a response to increased levels of nutrients.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

3. Discovery of 'death switch' mechanism in plants may yield stronger crops

Chinese scientists have discovered a possible "death switch" mechanism in the plant's immune system that triggers infected cells to self-destruct, thus limiting the spread of the disease and keeping other parts of the plant healthy.

The discovery provides clues to cell death control and immunity for plants, and they hope further research can lead to a new generation of disease-resistant crops that use significantly less pesticide and are more environmentally friendly.

How does it work?

About 20 years ago, scientists discovered that plants, like animals,

have robust immune systems that can protect them from pathogens including viruses, fungi, bacteria and parasites. Plants also have a unique "lure and catch" immune response to deal with pathogens that have breached their cellular defence, but exactly how this worked remained unknown.

To probe this mystery, the researcher and his team investigated a protein called AvrAC, which is produced by a bacterial pathogen that causes black rot on cabbage. The bacterium injects AvrAC into plant cells, where it acts as a "biochemical weapon" weakening the plant's immune system.

They discovered that some plants have evolved to carry a resistance protein called ZAR1 that can detect bacterial proteins like AvrAC. These plants use special proteins as "bait" and trick the bacterial protein into attacking them instead.

While the bait is being attacked, ZAR1 is activated to form a multiprotein structure called resistosome. The resistosome itself into the cell's membrane and triggers it to destroy itself along with the invading pathogens, thus protecting other healthy cells.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology Source- AIR

4. Exercise – Western Shield

The Sri Lankan army will conduct "Exercise – Western Shield" starting from July 01, 2019.

The exercise will coincide with 10 years of the end of the island nation's 30-year civil conflict between government troops and Tamil Tiger rebels.

The exercise will provide an opportunity for army trainees to march through those areas that are inaccessible to others, except forest conservation authorities.

The army personnel would also be trained to stay well-attuned, refreshed and upgraded to meet with any future warfare threat during this exercise.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- TOI

5. Battle of Kangla Tongbi

Platinum Jubilee of the Battle of Kangla Tongbi War was commemorated on 07 Apr 2019 by Army Ordnance Corps at Kangla Tongbi War Memorial near Imphal.

Related Information

The Battle of Kangla Tongbi, considered one of the fiercest battles of World War II, was fought by Ordnance personnel of 221 Advance Ordnance Depot (AOD) in 1944.

They fought the Japanese forces who tried to capture Imphal and the surrounding areas.

The Kangla Tongbi War Memorial is mute testimony to this battle and the unflinching devotion to duty of the Ordnance personnel of 221 AOD, 19 of whom made the supreme sacrifice.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source-PIB

6. Candida Auris: Drug Immune Fungal Infection

Candida auris is a mysterious and dangerous fungal infection which has emerged around the world.

It is resistant to many antifungal medications, placing it among a growing number of germs that have evolved defences against common medicines.

Related Information

What is Candida auris?

Candida auris is a fungus that, when it gets into the bloodstream, can cause dangerous infections that can be life-threatening.

Scientists first identified it in 2009 in a patient in Japan.

In recent years, it has emerged around the world, largely in hospitals and nursing homes.

Why is it so dangerous?

auris is often resistant to major antifungal drugs that are typically used to treat such infections.

Who is at risk?

People with compromised or weakened immune systems are the most vulnerable.

This includes elderly people, and also people who are already sick; in at least one case, newborns were infected at a neonatal unit.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- New Work times

7. Bamboo rice

The gates of Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary in Cuttack district (Odisha) have been opened for forest dwellers to come and collect the Bamboo rice.

Related Information

Bamboo rice is special rice that is grown out of a dying bamboo shoot. When the bamboo shoot breathes its last, it flowers into a rare variety of rice seeds, which are known as bamboo rice.

It is said that the bamboo rice harvesting is a major source of income for the tribal communities living in the interiors of Wayanad Sanctuary in Kerala.

The sanctuary makes a rich habitat to bamboo groves, where many small tribal communities still bide.

How is it Different from Other Types of Rice?

Bamboo rice has a striking resemblance to paddy rice and tastes more like wheat.

The difference lies in its texture when cooked, which is mostly moist and sticky.

It is believed that bamboo rice has a low glycemic index compared to other varieties of rice, which is considered to be a healthier option for diabetics.

The rice has low or no fat and is rich in vitamin B.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Down to Earth

8. One District One Product (ODOP) scheme

Chittoor which the largest producer of tomatoes in the country and, houses Asia's biggest tomato market facing adopted One District-One Product (ODOP) scheme for tomato facing problem with cheap Chinese Pulp.

About the scheme

The scheme is implemented by the Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries.

The ODOP has intended to help the farmers in

(a) grappling with the vagaries of the market, including the extreme price fluctuations.

(b) By providing them necessary forward and backward linkages a

(c) By Promoting processing units on a sustained basis.

Under ODOP, tomato, potato and onion have been identified in the country so far as requiring financial and technological support.

Tomato is the only crop from Andhra Pradesh who to qualified under this scheme.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Down to Earth

10.04.2019

1. India retains top spot in remittances: World Bank

India retained its position as the world's top recipient of remittances with USD 79 billion in 2018.

Remittances grew by more than 14 Percent in India, where a flooding disaster in Kerala likely boosted the financial help that migrants sent to families.

India is followed by China (USD 67 billion), Mexico (USD 36 billion), the Philippines (USD 34 billion), and Egypt (USD 29 billion).

Topic- important for Prelims and State PCS exams

Source- Business Today

2. International Convention on World Homoeopathy Day

The convention has been organised by the Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH) on 9-10th April

2019 on the occasion of the World Homoeopathy Day. It was held at Dr Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi. It aimed to deliberate on linking Education & Clinical Practice with Research. To recognise exemplary work in Homoeopathy, AYUSH awards were given for Life Time Achievement, Best Teacher, Young Scientist and the Best Research paper.

Related information

World Homoeopathy Day

It is observed on 10th April across the world to commemorate the birth anniversary of the founder of Homoeopathy, Dr Christian Fredrich Samuel Hahnemann. Samuel Hahnemann was a German physician, a great scholar, linguist and an acclaimed scientist.

Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH)

It is an autonomous research organization under Ministry of AYUSH. The council is responsible for taking stock of the challenges faced and to formulate future strategies for the development of Homoeopathy.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Source-PI B

3. National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) Ranking 2019

The NIRF rankings have been released wherein IIT Madras has topped no. 1 in the overall category.

Some Highlights:

Top 3 Engineering Institutions in India-2019

Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay

Top 3 Universities

Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

Top 3 Colleges

Miranda House, Delhi
Hindu College, Delhi
Presidency College, Chennai

Related information

NIRF

It is the 4th edition of NIRF Rankings by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).

The first NIRF ranks were released in the year 2016.

The NIRF rankings are based on these parameters - Teaching, Learning and Resources, Research and Professional Practices, Graduation Outcomes, Outreach and Inclusivity, and Perception.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Education reforms

Source- The Times of India

4. PSEs to stay PSUs even with below 51% government stake

The government is planning to change the definition of state-run companies.

Where an entity will continue to qualify as a public sector enterprise (PSE) even if the government holding falls below 51%.

The significance of this move is that if the PSU definition is changed, it would be easier for the government to mobilise funds.

Related information

CPSE (Central Public Service Enterprise)

Under the present definition, CPSEs are companies in which the direct holding of the central government or other CPSEs is 51% or more.

Topic- GS paper 3- Indian Economy

Source- Livemint

5. Counting orangutans using star-spotting technology

A ground-breaking scientific collaboration is harnessing technology used to study the luminosity of stars, to carry out detailed monitoring of orangutan populations in Borneo.

The technology has been developed by Liverpool John Moores University, World Wide Fund for Nature and French non-profit HUTAN.

Orangutans, like all great apes, build a sleeping nest in trees.

Traditionally, orangutan numbers are estimated by counting these nests

from the ground. However, this method is costly and time-consuming due to the large areas that need to be surveyed.

For the study, the research team combined drone technology with thermal-imaging cameras, which are mostly used by astronomers. They were able to spot and classify the animals by using their heat signatures.

Related Information

Orangutan

The orangutans are three extant species of great apes native to Indonesia and Malaysia.

Three Extant species are-

- (a) Bornean orangutan
- (b) Sumatran orangutan
- (c) Tapanuli orangutan

Orangutans currently inhabit lowland forests on Borneo, an island shared by Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, and Indonesia's island of Sumatra.

IUCN status: Critically Endangered
This critically endangered species lost due to habitat shrink drastically over the past few decades largely due to the destruction of forests for logging, paper, palm oil, and mining.

Topic-GS paper 3-Environment & Ecology

Source- Down To Earth

6. From Australia to Africa, fences are stopping Earth's great animal migrations

For time immemorial, many wildlife species have survived by undertaking heroic long-distance migrations. But many of these great migrations are collapsing right before our eyes.

Perhaps the biggest peril to migrations is so common that we often fail to notice them: fences. Australia has the longest fences on Earth. The 5,600-kilometre "Dingo Fence" separates southeastern Australia from the rest of the country, whereas the "Rabbit-Proof Fence" stretches for almost 3,300 kilometres across Western Australia. Both of these enormous fences were intended to repel rabbits and other

"vermin" such as emus, kangaroos and dingoes that were considered threats to crops or livestock.

Fatal fences

In Africa, home to some of the most spectacular wildlife migrations, scientists found that of 14 large-mammal species known to migrate en masse, five migrations were already extinct.

Proliferating fences, along with habitat loss and wildlife poaching, has sent ecosystems such as the Greater Mara in Kenya crashing into ecological turmoil.

Indochina once had mass migrations of elephants and other large mammals, big cats, monkeys and birds — often called the "Serengeti of Southeast Asia".

The thundering herds of American bison — some numbering up to 4 million animals — which once dominated the plains of North America have all but vanished today.

How to save mass migration

There are two main ways to destroy mass migrations: killing the animals outright by hunting and over-harvesting, or stopping the animals from accessing food or water, typically by fencing them out or clearing & fragmenting their habitat. Migrations are vulnerable even in the seas.

Recent research shows that growing shipping traffic is an increasing danger to migratory great whales, basking sharks, and giant whale-sharks – all highly vulnerable to collisions with fast-moving ships, as well as disruption of their sensitive hearing and vocal communications by shipping noise and sonar, and pollutants from vessels.

And a few places on Earth are still free from fencing and fragmentation. The world-famous Serengeti ecosystem of Tanzania is an iconic example.

Topic-GS paper 3-Environment & Ecology

Source- Down To Earth

7. UK govt released 'Online Harms White Paper' to regulate online content

It contains a set of new rules aimed at limiting harmful online content. It would develop a culture of transparency, trust and accountability in the new regulatory framework.

Topic: GS Paper 3- Cybersecurity

Source- BBC news and The Hindu

8. Rwanda genocide: Nation marks 25 years since mass slaughter

Rwanda's president said the country had become "a family once again" while marking the 25th anniversary of the genocide that killed 800,000 people.

About 85% of Rwandans are Hutus but the Tutsi minority has long dominated the country.

Related information

Most of those who died were minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus, killed by ethnic Hutu extremists.

In 1959, the Hutus overthrew the Tutsi monarchy and tens of thousands of Tutsis fled to neighbouring countries, including Uganda.

Tutsis are the second largest population division among the three largest groups in Rwanda and Burundi; the other two being the Hutu (largest) and the Twa (smallest).

Topic- GS-3- International

Relations Source- BBC news

11.04.2019

1. ECI puts on hold release of a biopic on PM Modi under Article 324

Election Commission of India puts on hold release of a biopic on PM Modi under Article 324 which prohibit display/exhibit any biopic/publicity material during model code of conduct period.

Related Information

Article 324

Under article 324 the Constitution provides for vesting of the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections with the Election Commission.

The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of,

all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of President and Vice-President held under this Constitution.

This article also included the appointment of election tribunals for the decision of doubts and disputes arising out of or in connection with elections to Parliament and to the Legislatures of States shall be vested in a Commission viz. Election commission

Note: A committee is set up by Election Commission which will be headed by a retired Supreme Court judge or a former Chief Justice of a High Court which look after the case of violation in any movie, certified by the appropriate authority [Censor Board], or a complaint made in this regard during Model Code of Conduct period.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB + the Hindu

2. Census: 2021: 16th Census of India

A Data Users' Conference was held in New Delhi to deliberate on strategy and questionnaire for Census 2021.

For the first time in the 140 years long Census exercise in India, data is proposed to be collected through a mobile app.

The Home ministry said enumerators (the persons who conduct door to door counting) would be encouraged to use their own mobile phone for which they would be paid appropriate remuneration or else there is also option to collect and record the data through paper schedules which will eventually be submitted electronically by them.

The Census 2021 would be the world's largest enumeration exercise in which 33 lakh enumerators could be mobilized for data collection.

Related Information

Census in India

It is conducted in every 10 years.

It started in 1872.

Census 2011 data was released on 31st March 2011 by Union Home Secretary and RGCCI (Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India) of India.

Census 2011 was the 15th census of India & 7th census after Independence.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source-PIB

3. 'Veer Pariwar mobile' App

President of India launched 'CRPF Veer Parivar App.

The app is developed to show the financial benefit provided to the families of martyrs also it will provide other kinds of help to their families.

It will render all assistance to the families of the martyred CRPF personnel with regard to issuance of ex gratia, pensionary benefits and all information regarding the welfare schemes introduced for them by the government.

This app is providing real-time basis assistance to the families of martyrs. The unique feature of this application is that it will be installed by the force's officials securely on the phone of the families and will not be available over the app stores.

Related Information

Akshay Kumar in 2017 launched a similar app 'Bharat Ke Veer' for helping families of martyred central paramilitary forces that was initiated by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

Topic- GS Paper 3– Defence

Source- The Hindu

4. 'Bold Kurukshetra 2019': Joint military exercise between India-Singapore

It is a joint military exercise between India- Singapore.

The Exercise aimed to develop military technology, boost maritime security and bolster the nations' fight against terrorism.

Related Information

Other Exercises between India and

Singapore are:

SIMBEX

Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) is an annual bilateral naval exercise conducted by the Indian Navy and the Republic of Singapore Navy

Exercise Agni Warrior

It is an India- Singapore joint military exercise.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- Indian Express

5. Pseudomonas putida CSV86: a bacteria preferentially degrade aromatic compounds

IIT Bombay researchers can selectively remove from the environment toxic, aromatic pollutants such as benzoate, benzyl alcohol and naphthalene from the soil by using a unique strain of bacterium Pseudomonas putida CSV86.

Related Information

Pseudomonas putida CSV86

It is a unique strain of bacterium which can selectively remove the environment toxic, aromatic pollutants such as benzoate (sodium benzoate is used as a food preservative), benzyl alcohol and naphthalene, from the soil.

The bacterial strain has a preference for aromatic compounds and organic acid as a food source even when glucose is available.

The bacterial strain is very helpful for bioremediation or waste-water treatment.

Bioremediation

It is a process used to treat contaminated substance including water, soil and subsurface material, by altering environmental conditions to stimulate the growth of microorganisms and degrade the target pollutants.

It is less expensive and more sustainable than other remediation alternatives.

Some examples of bioremediation related technologies are phytoremediation, mycoremediation, bioventing, bioleaching, landfarming, bioreactor, composting, bioaugmentation, rhizofiltration, and biostimulation.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

6. How is Google's GPay operating without authorisation: Delhi HC asks RBI

News: The Delhi High Court asked the RBI how could Google's mobile payment app, Google Pay, operate in India as a payment transaction system without the requisite authorization which is compulsory under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act 2007
Related Information

Payment & Settlement Systems Act 2007

It was set up by the RBI in 2007.

The acts provide for the regulation and supervision of payment systems in India and designate the apex institution (RBI) as the authority for that purpose and all related matters.

To exercise its powers and perform its functions and discharge its duties, the RBI is authorized under the Act to constitute a committee of its central board, which is known as the Board for Regulation and Supervision of Payment and Settlement Systems (BPSS).

The Act also provides the legal basis for 'netting' and 'settlement finality'.

What is a Payment System under the PSS Act 2007?

The Section 2 of the PSS Act 2007 defines that a payment system enables payment to be effected between a payer and a beneficiary, involving clearing, payment or settlement service or all of them, but does not include a stock exchange.

It is further stated a 'payment system' includes the systems enabling credit card operations, debit card operations, smart card operations, money transfer operations or similar operations.

Except stock exchanges and clearing corporations set up under stock exchanges, all other systems carrying out either clearing or settlement or payment operations or all of them are regarded as payment systems.

Are foreign entities allowed to operate a payment system in India?

The PSS Act 2007 does not prohibit foreign entities from operating a payment system in India and the Act does not discriminate or differentiate

between foreign entities and domestic entities.

All entities, whether domestic or foreign, need to obtain a license approval or authorization from the RBI before commencing payment system operations in the country.

The PSS Act indicates that "No person can operate a payment system except under and in accordance with an authorisation issued by the Reserve Bank of India"

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Important act

Source- Economics Times

7. India's data localisation norms

India has recently promulgated a number of data localisation requirements that would serve as significant barriers to digital trade between the US and India.

According to the US Trade Representative's 2019 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers India's step of data localization norms and draft e-commerce policy terming as "most discriminatory and trade-distortive" step taken by India.

Related Information

BN Srikrishna Committee

The Union Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MEITY) has constituted an Expert Committee under the BN Srikrishna Committee in Year 2017 to address the issue of the protection of data the government of India.

The Committee also suggested a draft Data Protection Bill.

Data Protection Bill 2018.

Highlights of the Bill.

All personal data to which the law applies must have at least one serving copy stored in India

Personal data critical to national interest must be stored and processed only in India

The Centre will have the power to exempt transfers on the basis of strategic or practical considerations.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

12.04.2019

1. State Of World Population 2019 Report

According to State of World Population 2019 report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), India's population grew at an average of 1.2% annually between 2010 and 2019 which is more than double the annual growth rate of China.

India's population in 2019 stood at 1.36 billion, growing from 942.2 million in 1994 and 541.5 million in 1969.

The report says 27 % of the country's population was in the age bracket of 0-14 years and 10-24 years each, while 67 % of the country's population was in the 15-64 age bracket. Six per cent of the country's population was of the age 65 and above.

In India, the total fertility rate per woman declined from 5.6 in 1969 to 3.7 in 1994 and 2.3 in 2019.

Around half of India's populations in 24 states have achieved the replacement fertility rates of 2.1 children per women, which is the desired family size when the population stops growing.

India registered an improvement in life expectancy at birth.

The life expectancy at birth in 1969 was 47 years, growing to 60 years in 1994 and 69 years in 2019.

Highlights of the report

The world's population rose to 7.715 billion in 2019, up from 7.633 billion in 2018, with the global average life expectancy of 72 years.

The least developed countries recorded the highest population growth, with countries in Africa registering an average of 2.7% a year.

However, the country's large youth population will continue to fuel population growth even as the size of the ageing population increases.

Much of the overall increase in global population till 2050 is projected to occur in high fertility countries, mostly in Africa, or in countries with large

populations, such as Nigeria and India.

The findings on women aged between 15-49 years were published for the first time in this report.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

It is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency.

The mandate of UNFPA is established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

It is a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly.

It works directly to tackle Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health, Goal 4 on education and Goal 5 on gender equality.

UNFPA in India

UNFPA has been assisting the Government of India since 1974 to provide family planning and health services, advance reproductive health and rights and improve maternal health.

It is the Eighth Country Programme of assistance (2013-17) to the Government of India focusses on young people's sexual and reproductive health and improving opportunities for vulnerable women and girls.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Important Report

Source- UN

2. First Ever Image of Black Hole revealed

Scientists have revealed the first-ever image of a black hole.

The black hole is located at the centre of a distant galaxy called Messier 87 (M87) located in Virgo A constellation.

It is supermassive-6.5 billion times the Solar mass.

The image of the black hole was taken by the Event Horizon Telescope (ETH).

The ETH is a project comprised of eight different telescopes at different observatories around the world.

It has been operating in synchronicity to image the black holes in the centre of M87 galaxy.

Sagittarius A* black hole located at the centre of the Milky Way galaxy.

Related Information**Black Hole**

A black hole is a region of space from which nothing, not even light, can escape.

These black holes consist of a huge amount of matter packed densely into a small area, giving it an immense gravitational pull.

Black holes are thought to be formed when very massive stars collapse at the end of their life cycle.

The black hole itself cannot be seen as light cannot pass through it.

It possesses an event horizon- a boundary designating the point of no return.

Any object including light that falls within its event horizon is sucked into the black hole.

However, if something that orbits the black hole outside the event horizon shines as it usually does, the black hole can be seen in shadow against this shine.

Black-holes were theorized by Albert Einstein in 1915.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

3. Pathalgadi Rebellion

Most of the villages in Jharkhand which supported the Pathalgadi movement is likely to witness low voter turnout during the Lok Sabha polls for 14 seats in the state.

Related Information**Pathalgadi movement**

It was started by tribal groups to resist the plundering of tribal rights by the State and Union governments. Pathalgadi (huge stone plaques) participants plant a stone order in the tribal villages of Jharkhand, which dismiss the authority of the central or the state governments on their villages.

These include excerpts from the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) as well as warnings to outsiders, prohibiting them from entering the village.

Pathalgadis have their presence in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and parts of West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh.

Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996

PESA is a law enacted by the GOI for ensuring self-governance through traditional Gram Sabhas for people living in the Scheduled Areas of India.

It was enacted on 24 December 1996 to extend the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution to Scheduled Areas, with certain exceptions and modifications.

Scheduled Areas are areas identified by the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

The Scheduled Areas were not covered by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment or Panchayati Raj Act of the Indian Constitution as provided in Part IX of the Constitution.

PESA sought to enable the Panchayats at appropriate levels and Gram Sabhas to implement a system of self-governance with respect to a number of issues such as customary resources, minor forest produce, minor minerals, minor water bodies, selection of beneficiaries, the sanction of projects, and control over local institutions.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

4. Government clears procurement of 464 T-90 tanks amid growing tension with Pakistan

The central government has cleared the procurement of 464 T-90 tanks from Russia in a deal worth over Rs 13,500 crore.

Under the new deal, the tanks would be provided to the Armoured Corps of the force which will use them for deployment along the border with Pakistan.

The new deal would increase the number of T-90s in the Army to close to 2,000 along with the remaining T-72 and T-55s.

Related Information**T-90**

It is a third-generation Russian battle tank that entered service in 1993.

Originally called the T-72BU, but later renamed to T-90.

Topic- GS-3- Defence

Source- India Today

5. Namami Gange gets global recognition at world summit

The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) was awarded the distinction of "Public Water Agency of the Year" by Global Water Intelligence at the Global Water Summit in London.

The awards recognise excellence across the international water industry and reward those initiatives in the water, waste water, and desalination sectors, which bring remarkable improvements in the lives of people.

Note: NMCG is under the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.

Related Information**Namami Gange Mission**

'Namami Gange Programme', is an Integrated Conservation Mission, approved as 'Flagship Programme' by the Union Government in June 2014.

The mission was launched to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga.

Topic- GS-2- Government Policies

Source- Indian Express

6. India stares at a pile of solar e-waste

In a study made public India will likely stare at a pile of a new category of electronic waste, namely solar e-waste by 2050.

Related Information

India is among the leading markets for solar cells in the world, buoyed by the government's commitment to install 100 GW of solar power by 2022.

So far, India has installed solar cells for about 28 GW and this is largely from imported solar PV cells.

Solar cell modules

These are made by processing sand to make silicon, casting silicon ingots, using wafers to create cells and then assembling them to make modules.

These modules are 80% glass and aluminium, and non-hazardous.

Other materials used, including polymers, metals, metallic compounds and alloys which are classified as potentially hazardous.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Renewable Energy

Source- The Hindu

7. Western Disturbance

A Western Disturbance is an extratropical storm originating in the Mediterranean region that brings sudden winter rain to the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent.

It is a non-monsoonal precipitation pattern driven by the westerlies.

The moisture in these storms usually originates over the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.

The frequency of these systems reaching India increases during winter with the southward shift of pressure belts (with the apparent movement of the sun towards the tropic of cancer).

Extratropical storms are global phenomena with moisture usually carried in the upper atmosphere, unlike their tropical counterparts where the moisture is carried in the lower atmosphere.

In the case of the Indian subcontinent, moisture is sometimes shed as rain when the storm system encounters the Himalayas.

Western Disturbances are important for the development of the Rabi crop, which includes the locally important staple wheat

Topic-GS Paper 3–Disaster

Management Source- Indian Express

8. Saraswati Samman 2018

The Telugu poet K Siva Reddy has been selected for the prestigious Saraswati Samman, 2018 for his collection of poetry titled Pakkaki Ottigilite.

Related Information

15.04.2019

Saraswati Samman

The Saraswati Samman is an annual award for outstanding prose or poetry literary works in any 22 Indian languages listed in Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India.

This award is considered to be among the highest literary awards in India.

It was instituted in 1991 by the K. K. Birla Foundation.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important awards/prizes

Source- AIR

9. Supreme Court refuses interim stay on electoral bonds

The Supreme Court refused to stay for now the contentious electoral bonds scheme, which enables anonymous funding to political parties but asked all parties to submit to the Election Commission details of electoral bonds received by them.

Related Information

Electoral Bond

These bonds will have a shelf-life of 15 days.

It can be purchased only from specified branches of State Bank of India.

Electoral bonds can be bought for any value, in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh or Rs 1 crore.

An Indian citizen or body incorporated in India will be eligible to purchase the bond.

Electoral bonds can be used for making a donation only to the political parties registered under section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (43 of 1951) and which secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last general election to the House of the People or a Legislative Assembly. These bonds will not carry the name of the payee.

Topic- GS-2- Indian Polity

Source- Indian Polity

1. Unique oil-eating bacteria found in the Mariana Trench

Scientists from the University of East Anglia have discovered a unique oil-eating bacteria in the deepest part of the Earth's oceans -the Mariana Trench.

The Mariana Trench is located in the Western Pacific Ocean and reaches a depth of approximately 11,000 metres.

These types of microorganisms essentially eat compounds similar to those in oil and then use it for fuel.

Similar microorganisms play a role in degrading oil spills in natural disasters such as BP's 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The proportion of hydrocarbon-degrading bacteria in the Trench is the highest on Earth.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- Science Daily

2. The world's largest aeroplane "Roc" made its first test flight in California

The mega-jet, called Roc, which has a wingspan the length of an American football field and is powered by six engines on a twin fuselage, carried out its maiden voyage over the Mojave Desert, California

The plane, built by Stratolaunch Systems Corp.

It stayed aloft for more than two hours, hitting a top speed of 304km per hour, and reached an altitude of 5,182m.

Topic- Important for IAS Prelims & State PCS

Source- Space.com

3. Order of the Holy Apostle Andrew: Russia's Highest Civilian Award

Russia's highest civilian award the "Order of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First," will be awarded to PM Narendra Modi for promoting a special and privileged strategic partnership between Russia and India.

Related Information

'The Order of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First'

It is awarded to prominent government and public figures, prominent representatives of science, culture, art and various sectors of the economy for “exceptional services that contribute to the prosperity, greatness and glory of Russia”.

It was first awarded by former Russian Tsar ‘Peter the Great’ in 1698 and subsequently discontinued.

In 1998, former President Boris Yeltsin reinstated the honour by a Presidential decree.

Previous recipients include Chinese President Xi Jinping, and presidents of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Honors and awards Source- The Hindu

4. CMFRI signs agreement with ISRO to save coastal wetlands

CMFRI and ISRO have joined hands to map, validate and protect smaller wetlands in coastal regions.

The programme is aimed at restoring them through coastal livelihood programmes.

They developed a mobile app and a centralised web portal that will have a comprehensive database of wetlands that are smaller than 2.25 hectares in the country.

Such smaller wetlands cover an area of more than five lakh hectares across the country.

The app will be used for real-time monitoring of the wetlands and giving advisories to stakeholders and coastal people.

The collaborative move is part of a national framework for fisheries and wetlands, developed recently by the National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) project of CMFRI.

Note:

NICRA is a network project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) launched in 2011.

The project aims to find ways and means to mitigate the impact of climate change in marine fisheries and coastal region.

Related Information

Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)

It is one of the largest marine fishery research institutes in India located in Kochi, India.

It was established by Government of India in 1947 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and later it joined the ICAR in 1967.

ICAR is the largest network of agricultural research and education institutes in the world functioning under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers’ Welfare.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

5. Jallianwala Bagh massacre: 100 years later

British Prime Minister Theresa May expressed “regret” in British Parliament for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, ahead of the 100th anniversary of the killings on April 13, 1919.

The massacre which left over 300 Indians dead is one of the deadliest in the history of India.

Related Information

Jallianwala Bagh massacre

A massacre took place in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on Baisakhi on April 13, 1919.

It occurred when troops of the British Indian Army under the command of Colonel Dyer opened fire on a crowd of people holding a pro-independence meeting when two nationalist leaders, Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, were arrested by the British officials without any provocation.

The government formed a committee known as ‘Hunter Commission’ on October 1919, to investigate the Jallianwala Bagh shootings.

The commission submitted its final report March 1920, the committee unanimously condemned Dyer’s actions.

However, the Hunter Committee did not impose any penal or disciplinary action against General Dyer.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Indian

History Source- Indian Express

6. Display information on 7 common antibiotics: CDSCO

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has written to drug manufacturers, to mention in leaflets inserted into drug packets or on promotional literature, information about the adverse reactions of 7 common

antibiotics. Related

Information CDSCO

It is under the Directorate General of Health Services, under the gamut of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GOI

It is a National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.

It is headquartered in New Delhi and also has six zonal offices.

Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940, CDSCO is responsible for approval of New Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country.

It also provides expert advice to the State Drug Control Organizations with a view to bringing about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

SUGAM Portal

SUGAM – an online licensing Portal launched in 2016 by the government. SUGAM enables online submission of applications requesting for permissions related to drugs, clinical trials, ethics committee, medical devices, vaccines and cosmetics.

Topic-GS Paper 2–Important Institutions Source- TOI

7. World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) 2019

The World Summit on the Information Society Forum is a global United Nations(UN)multistakeholder platform facilitating the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines for advancing Sustainable Development Goals.

The WSIS submit is co-organized by The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Related Information

WSIS awarded prestigious UN awards to Bengal government's schemes Utkarsh Bangla(youth skill development program), Sabuj Sathi (Bicycle distribution scheme).

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Important Organisation

Source- The Hindu

8. New Species of Ancient Humans "Homo Luzonensis" Uncovered in the Philippines

Researchers in the Philippines have found fossil bones and teeth of a previously unknown human species (Homo Luzonensis) in the northern Philippines.

The discovery could mean primitive human relatives left Africa and made it all the way to South-East Asia, something not previously thought possible.

Related Information

Homo Luzonensis

Scientists named the species Homo luzonensis after the island of Luzon, where the discovery was made.

Homo Luzonensis lived on the island of Luzon at least 50,000 to 67,000 years ago.

The hominin was identified from a total of seven teeth and six small bones and teeth from two adults and one child found in a cave on the island of Luzon in the Philippines.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture, Geography

Source- The Hindu

9. Lateral entry: Nine specialists join Govt at Joint Secy level

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has appointed nine non-governmental professionals at joint-secretary level posts in central government departments.

Related Information

The government think tank Niti Aayog had in a report highlighted that it was essential that specialists be inducted into the system through the lateral entry on a fixed-term contract.

The lateral entry mode, which pertains to the appointment of specialists from the private sector in government organisations, is an attempt by the government to bring in fresh talent into the bureaucracy.

Criteria for selection

Graduation Degree, Minimum 40 Years age, 15 years' experience in fields like Revenue, Finance, Transport, Civil Aviation and Commerce.

The recruitment will be on contract basis for three to five years depending upon the performance.

Background

First ARC had pointed out the need for specialization as far back as in 1965.

The Surinder Nath Committee and the Hota Committee followed suit in 2003 and 2004, respectively, as did the second ARC.

A UPSC-commissioned report of the Civil Services Examination Review

Committee headed by YK Alagh (2001) had recommended lateral entry into middle and senior levels of the government.

Baswan Committee (2016) had supported lateral entry considering the shortage of officers.

Niti Aayog, in its Three Year Action Agenda for 2017-2020 had said that sector specialists be inducted into the system through lateral entry as that would "bring competition to the established career bureaucracy".

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

10. C-295 plane deal in final stages

C-295 planes are waiting for the clearness from the Defence Acquisition Council.

C-295 is transport-aircraft for Indian Air Force which is meant to replace the ageing Avro fleet.

Related Information

C-295

It is a twin-turboprop tactical military transport aircraft and is currently manufactured by Airbus Defence and Space in Spain.

Defence Acquisition Council

It is headed by Union Minister of Defence and was constituted to ensure a fair defence procurement planning process.

It is a principle approval authority for 15 Years Long Terms Integrated Perspective Plan for Defence Forces.

It takes the decision regarding 'offset' provisions in respect of acquisition proposals above Rs. 300 crores.

It also takes decisions regarding Transfer of Technology under 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- Livemint

16.04.2019

1. IMD forecast normal rainfall during the south-west monsoon

The India Meteorological Department forecast that the country would receive normal rainfall during the

coming south-west monsoon season (June to September 2019), with a low probability of deficient rainfall.

IMD brands the monsoon as 'normal' or 'deficient' based on how it fares against its benchmark Long Period Average (LPA).

Related Information

Long Period Average (LPA)

LPA is the average rainfall received by the country as a whole during the south-west monsoon, for a 50-year period.

This acts as a benchmark against which the rainfall in any monsoon season is measured.

The current LPA is 89 cm, based on the average rainfall over the years 1951 and 2000.

Deficient rainfall

The country is said to have received deficient rainfall if the actual rainfall falls below 90 percent of LPA.

Excess rainfall

The country is said to have received excess rainfall if the rainfall is greater than 110 percent of LPA.

Normal rainfall

When the actual rainfall received falls between 96 and 104 percent of LPA.

Note:

A temperature rise greater than 1 degree Celsius for three months at a trot is considered a "strong" El Nino (and threatening to the monsoon).

A 0.5 degree Celsius-1 degree Celsius rise is called "weak El Nino conditions."

Currently, El Nino is 0.9 degree Celsius.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Environment Source- The Hindu

2. Cabinet approves Continuation of Phase 4 of GSLV

The Union Cabinet has approved ongoing GSLV continuation programme Phase-4 consisting of five GSLV flights during the period 2021-2024.

The GSLV Programme - Phase 4 will enable the launch of 2 tonne class of satellites for Geo-imaging,

Navigation, Data Relay Communication and Space Sciences.

The GSLV Continuation Programme - Phase 4 will meet the launch requirement of satellites for providing critical Satellite Navigation Services, Data Relay Communication for supporting the Indian Human spaceflight programme and the next interplanetary mission to Mars.

Related Information

Earth Orbit

Lower earth orbit	180 km – 2000 km
Mid earth orbit	2000 km – 35786 km (approximate)
High earth orbit	> 35786 km (approximate) (geosynchronous)

Different Launch Vehicle for Satellites

Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)

It is the third generation launch vehicle of India.

It is the first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages.

It was successfully launched in October 1994.

PSLV has emerged as a versatile launch vehicle to carry out Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbit (SSPO), Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) and low inclination Low Earth Orbit (LEO) missions.

Launched Missions Chandrayaan-1, Mars Orbiter Mission, Space Capsule Recovery Experiment, IRNSS, AstroSat

Important Mission

(a) Chandrayaan-1 in 2008 through PSLV-XL C11 and

(b) Mars Orbiter Spacecraft (Mangalyaan) in 2013 through PSLV-XL C25

Variants

There are currently three operational versions of the PSLV:

(a) The standard (PSLV)

(b) The core-alone (PSLV-CA) without the six strap-on booster motors

(c) The (PSLV-XL) version, which carries more solid fuel in its strap-on motors than the standard version

GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle)

It was primarily developed to launch INSAT class of satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbits.

The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) project was initiated in 1990 with the objective of acquiring an Indian launch capability for geosynchronous satellites.

It has a payload to Low Earth Orbit is 5,000 kg & Payload Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit to is 2500 kg.

It is capable of placing 2 ton class of satellites viz. INSAT and GSAT into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

GSLV is three Stage Vehicle

The first stage is a solid propellant motor stage.

The second stage is the liquid propellant stage

The third one is cryogenic stage viz. uses liquid hydrogen as fuel & liquid oxygen as oxidizer

Note: Cryogenic rocket engine – Fuel or oxidizer (or both) is gases liquefied and stored at very low temperatures. Eg. GSLV Mk-III.

Variants

(a) GSLV rockets using the Russian Cryogenic Stage (CS) are designated as the GSLV Mk I. It is capable of launching around 1500 kg.

(b) Versions using the indigenous Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS) are designated the GSLV Mk II. It is capable of launching 2500 kg into the geostationary transfer orbit.

(c) GSLV Mk III

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source-PI B

3. Authorities seek tiger reserve status for Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary

Recently the tiger Reserve Authority in Uttarakhand feel upgrading this sanctuary into a tiger reserve due to steady rise in tiger population in the sanctuary.

The Sanctuary at present does not come formally under the ambit of the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary is situated close to the Nandhaur River in Kumaon region of the State and spread over an area of 269.5 square km.

Related Information

National Tiger Conservation Authority

NTCA is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority is set up under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Environment and Forests.

Note:

Tiger Protection Program 'or Project Tiger was started in 1973, by the Government of India in co-operation with the World Wide Fund.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

4. Sub-sonic cruise missile 'Nirbhay' successfully test-fired

DRDO successfully test fired indigenously designed & developed Long Range Sub-Sonic Cruise Missile "Nirbhay" from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) Odisha.

Related Information

NI RBHAY Missile

It is India's first indigenously designed and developed Long Range Sub-Sonic Cruise Missile.

It has blended missile and aeronautical technologies which allows it to take off vertically like missile and cruise horizontally like an aircraft.

It is two-stage missile powered by solid rocket motor booster developed by Advanced Systems Laboratory.

It has an operational range of 1000 km and can carry warheads of up to 300 kg including nuclear warheads. It can be launched from various kind of platforms.

Mach Number

It is the ratio of the speed of a body to the speed of sound in the surrounding medium.

Subsonic if Mach no. < 0.8
Transonic If Mach no. lies between 0.8 and 1.2
Supersonic If Mach no. lies between 1.2 and 5.0
Hypersonic If Mach no. lies between 5.0 and 10.0

Topic- GS Paper 3 –
Defence Source- AIR

5. Cabinet approves the creation of sixth deputy CAG post

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to create one post of Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General by abolishing one STS level post in the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India.

The Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General shall oversee the coordination among State Audits, audit of telecommunication and coordinate the various Information Systems (IS) initiatives within the Indian Audit & Accounts Department.

Related Information

Comptroller and Auditor General of India

It is an authority, established by Article 148 of the Constitution of India.

The CAG audits all receipts and expenditure of the Government of India and the state governments, including those of bodies and authorities substantially financed by the government.

The CAG is also the external auditor of Government-owned corporations and conducts a supplementary audit of government companies, i.e., any non-banking/ non-insurance company in which Union Government has an equity share of at least 51 percent or subsidiary companies of existing government companies.

The reports of the CAG are taken into consideration by the Public Accounts Committees (PACs) and Committees on Public Undertakings (COPUs), which are special committees in the Parliament of India and the state legislatures.

The CAG is ranked 9th and enjoys the same status as a judge of the

Supreme Court of India in Indian order of precedence.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance
Source- Indian Express

6. Antibiogramoscope: Device to test antibiotic resistance

The professor of Anna University has been discovered this Antibiogramoscope device which tests antibiotic resistance in just 6 hours.

This project is jointly supported by the UGC and DST.

Antibiogramoscope has cleared validation tests at NABL accredited microbiological lab in

Coimbatore. Related Information

National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL)

It is a Constituent Board of Quality Council of India.

It helps in providing Government, Industry Associations and Industry in general with a scheme of Conformity Assessment Body's accreditation which involves third-party

assessment of the technical competence of testing including medical and calibration laboratories, proficiency testing providers and reference material producers.

Quality Council of India

It is a non-profit autonomous society.

The aim of QCI is to establish an accreditation structure in the country and to spread quality movement in India by undertaking a National Quality Campaign.

Its headquarter in New Delhi.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science &

Technology Source- The Hindu

7. CCS to decide on dual control over Assam Rifles'

The Ministry of Home Affairs has conveyed to the Delhi High Court that it, along with the Ministry of Defence, will abide by any decision of the Cabinet Committee on Security on the dual control over the Assam Rifles.

Related Information

Assam Rifles is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs while the operational control lies with the Ministry of Defence.

Assam Rifles

The Assam Rifles is the oldest paramilitary force of India. It is under the control of the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). They perform many roles including the provision of internal security under the control of the army through the conduct of counterinsurgency and border security operations, provision of aid to the civilians in times of emergency, and the provision of communications, medical assistance and education in remote areas. In times of war, they can also be used as a combat force to secure rear areas if needed. Since 2002 it has been guarding the Indo–Myanmar barrier as per the government policy "one border one force".

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Defence Source- The Hindu

8. Global measles cases up by 300% : WHO

The United Nation agency World Health Organisation said that Measles cases rose 300% worldwide through the first three months of 2019 compared to the same period last year which is concern grows over the impact of anti-vaccination stigma.

Related Information

Measles

Measles is a highly contagious infectious disease caused by the measles virus. Measles is an airborne disease which spreads easily through the coughs and sneezes of infected people. It may also be spread through contact with saliva or nasal secretions.

Topic- GS Paper 3– Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

9. First leucistic five-striped palm squirrel found in North India

A leucistic five-striped palm squirrel (Funambulus pennanti) has been recorded from a human-made subtropical forest at Zamania in eastern Uttar Pradesh's Ghazipur district.

Funambulus pennanti is more frequently found in the northern part of India including Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar.

The Ghazipur squirrel was the second recorded case of leucism in Funambulus pennanti for India. Leucism in other species of Funambulus has previously been reported from Tamil Nadu and Goa.

Note: Leucism is a condition where there is partial loss of pigmentation in animals on the skin. However, the loss of colour does not extend to the eye.

Topic- GS-3- Environment

Source- Down to Earth

17.04.2019

1. Election Commission Power to Tackle Speech

The Supreme Court took note of the Election Commission of India quickly changing tack on April 15 to pass a flurry of restraining orders against leading politicians for their communally provocative and divisive speeches.

Related Information

1. Indian Penal Code 1860

(a) Section 124A IPC

Law of Sedition deals with section 124A of IPC, 1860, is considered as a reasonable restriction on freedom of speech.

It was drafted by Thomas Macaulay and introduced in 1870.

(b) Section 153A IPC

This section penalizes 'promotion of enmity between different groups on the grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language etc. and acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.

2. Representation of The People Acts 1951

Section 123 (3A) and section 125 prohibits the promotion of enmity on grounds of religion, race, caste, community or language in connection with election as a corrupt electoral practice and prohibits it.

3. Cabinet Television Network Regulation Act 1955

Section 5 and 6 of the Act prohibits transmission or re-transmission of a programme through cable network in contravention to the prescribed programme code or advertisement code.

4. Cinematography Act 1952

Section 4, 58 and 7 empowers the Board of Film Certification to prohibit and regulate the screening of a film.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

2. Lakes are filled with liquid methane on Titan

Using data obtained by NASA's Cassini spacecraft, the scientists found that some of frigid Titan's lakes of liquid hydrocarbons in this region are surprisingly deep while others may be shallow and seasonal. Titan boasts lakes, rivers and seas of hydrocarbons consist of compounds like hydrogen and carbon which are the main components of petroleum and natural gas.

Related Information

Cassini–Huygens Mission

Commonly called Cassini was a collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency and the Italian Space Agency.

The mission objective was to send a probe to study the planet Saturn and its system, including its rings and natural satellites.

Cassini-Huygens has been described by NASA's Planetary Science Division Director as a "mission of firsts".

The mission was ended in 2017 after it was de-orbited to burn up in Saturn's upper atmosphere.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

3. Scientific management of mangroves is need of the hour

In a study, it has been found that 40 per cent of mangrove forests in the West Coast of India have been converted into farmlands and housing colonies over the last three decades

Related Information

Mangroves

Mangroves are trees and shrub species that grow at the interface between land and sea in tropical and subtropical regions of the world.

Mangroves are salt-tolerant vegetation that grows in intertidal regions of rivers and estuaries.

They are referred to as 'tidal forests' and belong to the category of 'tropical wetland rainforest ecosystem'.

A mangrove ecosystem is an interface between terrestrial forests and aquatic marine ecosystems.

The ecosystem includes diversified habitats like mangrove-dominant forests, litter-laden forest floors, mudflats, coral reefs and contiguous water courses such as river estuaries, bays, inter-tidal waters, channels and backwaters.

Mangroves in India

(a) Godavari-Krishna

(b) Sundarbans (West Bengal)- is considered as the largest mangrove forest in the world

(c) Islands in the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal

(d) Andaman and Nicobar Islands

(e) Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat

(f) Bhitarkanika Mangroves

(g) Godavari-Krishna mangroves.

(h) Pichavaram Mangrove Forest (Tamilnadu)- second largest mangrove forest in the world

Why Mangroves are important for Environment?

It creates unique environments which provide ecological niches for a wide variety of organisms.

It serves as breeding, feeding and nursery grounds for most of the commercial fishes and crustaceans on which thousands of people depend for their livelihood.

Mangroves give protection to the coastline and minimise disasters due to cyclones and tsunami.

Mangroves store more carbon dioxide than most other forests.

They perform important ecological functions like nutrient cycling, hydrological regime, coastal protection, fish-fauna production, etc.

It acts as shock absorbers by reducing high tides and waves which help to prevent soil erosion.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Down to Earth

4. Novel device "snow TENG" creates electricity from snowfall

Scientists have designed a first-of-its-kind 3D-printed device called snow-based triboelectric nanogenerator, or snow TENG that can produce electricity from falling snow.

The device designed by researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in the US is inexpensive, small, thin and flexible like a sheet of plastic.

The device can work in remote areas because it provides its own power and does not need batteries,

It generates charge through static electricity, produces energy from the exchange of electrons.

Topic- GS-3- Science &

Technology Source- Space.com

5. NASA's TESS Exoplanet Mission Finds 1st Earth-Size Alien World "HD 21749c"

NASA's newest planet hunter has discovered its first Earth-size alien world.

The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) spotted the planet, as well as a weird "sub-Neptune" world, circling the star HD 21749, which lies about 53 light-years from Earth.

TESS soared to Earth orbit in April 2018 atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket to hunt for planets around some of the closest and brightest stars in the sky.

This work involves looking for the tiny brightness dips that occur when alien worlds cross their host stars' faces from the spacecraft's perspective.

That newly confirmed neighbour, HD 21749c, appears to be about the same size as Earth, but its mass is tough to nail down at present. It circles its host star very tightly, completing one orbit every 7.8 Earth days, and is therefore probably quite hot. Though It does not seem to be suitable for Earth-like life.

Related Information

This exoplanet, known as HD 21749b, is about 23 times heavier than Earth and 2.7 times wider than our home world. Those numbers suggest HD 21749b is gaseous rather than rocky, but not as puffy as its closest comparisons in our solar system, Uranus and Neptune.

HD 21749b has an orbital period of 36 Earth days — the longest of any TESS planet to date.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- Space.com

6. Bhutan govt to place bill for ratification of BBIN initiative at its upper senate

BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) signed a framework Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) in June 2015 to enable movement of passenger and cargo vehicles across borders among the four countries.

Bhutan, is one of the signatories to the BBIN MVA, has not yet ratified the Agreement for its entry into force.

Pending ratification, however, Bhutan has given its consent for the BBIN MVA to enter into force amongst the other 3 countries i.e. Bangladesh, India and Nepal, who have already ratified it.

The agreement will permit the member states to ply their vehicles in each other's territory for transportation of cargo and passengers, including third country transport and personal vehicles.

Topic- GS-2- International

Relations Source- AIR

7. There are 150 Bustards in the Desert National Park: report

Wildlife Institute of India pegged that the Great Indian Bustards has the total population for the whole country at 150 during 2018 including Rajasthan's Desert National Park Bustard.

Related Information

Great Indian Bustards

It is one of the heaviest flying birds which can grow up to one metre in height.

It is considered the flagship grassland species, representing the health of the grassland ecology.

They are categorised as Critically endangered under the IUCN Red data list.

These birds are protected under CITES Appendix I, Schedule 1 (Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2002).

Protected areas in India for Great Indian Bustard

Desert National Park Sanctuary — Rajasthan

Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary – Andhra Pradesh

Karera Wildlife Sanctuary– Madhya Pradesh

Topic- GS-3- Environment and Ecology Source- Down to Earth

8. Another species extinct: This time the Yangtze giant softshell turtle

The recent death of the last known surviving female Yangtze giant softshell turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) means that the species is now walking into the sunset.

Related Information

Yangtze giant Softshell turtle

The Yangtze giant softshell turtle is also known as the Red River giant softshell turtle is an extremely rare species of turtle.

The species is endemic to eastern and southern China and northern Vietnam.

Only three living individuals are known, one in China (captive) and two in Vietnam (wild) (a fourth from Vietnam having been reported dead in January 2016).

It is listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List.

It may be the largest living freshwater turtle in the world.

India's Black Softshell Turtle

Black softshells hatchlings were released into the Haduk Beel (wetland) of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam.

The black softshell turtle figures as Extinct in the wild' in the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List.

It is a freshwater turtle that is found in India and Bangladesh.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- TOI

9. Non-core assets

Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) will get 12 months to monetise non-core assets identified by a ministerial panel headed by the finance minister.

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) has issued the guidelines for monetisation of non-core assets of CPSEs and immovable enemy properties.

Related Information

What are the Non-Core Assets?

Non-core assets are assets that are either not essential or simply no longer used in a company's business operations.

Non-core assets are often sold when a company needs to raise cash.

Some businesses sell their non-core assets in order to pay down their debt.

Note:

Enemy property refers to the assets which were left behind by people who migrated to Pakistan or China and are no longer citizens of India.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- AIR

10. HOME EXPO INDIA 2019

The 8th edition of HOME EXPO INDIA 2019 has been organized by the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts in Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

Related Information

Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)

It is an apex body of handicrafts exporters for promotion of exports of Handicrafts from the country.

It is a non-profit organization which was established under the Companies Act in the year 1986-87.

Note: Handicraft Industries work under the aegis of Ministry of Textiles.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

18.04.2019

1. Zinc deficiency rising in Indians'

In a new study titled 'Inadequate zinc intake in India: past, present and future' by the Harvard found that rising carbon dioxide levels can accelerate zinc deficiency in crops.

Highlights of study

The study states that inadequate zinc intake has been rising in India for decades, causing tens of millions of people to become newly deficient in it. The highest rate of inadequate zinc intake was concentrated in the southern and northeastern States with rice-dominated diets: Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya.

Effects of Mineral Deficiency

What is mineral deficiency?

Minerals are specific kinds of nutrients that your body needs in order to function properly.

A mineral deficiency occurs when your body doesn't obtain or absorb the required amount of a mineral.

There are five main categories of mineral deficiency: calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium, and zinc.

Zinc deficiency

Zinc plays a role in many aspects of the body's metabolism. These include:

- (a) Protein synthesis
- (b) Immune system function
- (c) Wound healing
- (d) DNA synthesis

It's also important for proper growth and development during pregnancy, childhood, and adolescence.

Zinc is found in animal products like oysters, red meat, and poultry.

Zinc deficiency can cause loss of appetite, taste, or smell.

Decreased function of the immune system and slowed growth are other symptoms.

National grain fortification programmes

The Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2018 replace the standards operationalised earlier.

It is under FSSAI which is an autonomous body established under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India.

The new standards now provide a minimum and a maximum range for the fortification of staples like wheat flour (atta), maida, rice (with Iron, Folic Acid and Vitamin B12), double fortified salt (with Iodine and Iron), vegetable oil and milk (with Vitamin A and Vitamin D).

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology Source- Indian Express

2. Sri Lanka's 1st satellite 'Raavana-1' launched into space

Sri Lanka's first satellite 'Raavana-1' was launched into space from NASA's Flight Facility on Virginia's east shore.

'Raavana 1' weights around 1.05 kg and the lifespan of the satellite is around one and a half years.

The launch marks Sri Lanka's entry into the global space age.

The satellite was designed and built at the Kyushu Institute of Technology in Japan by two Sri Lankan research engineers.

Its camera mission is to capture images of Sri Lanka and its neighbouring countries.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology Source- AIR

3. Demand for fair pricing of medicines at WHO forum

In an effort to increase the affordability of medicines, delegates from governments and civil society organisations at a World Health Organisation (WHO) forum demanded greater transparency around the cost of research and development as well as the production of medicines.

This demand was made at the Fair Pricing Forum, which was hosted by the government of South Africa and co-hosted by the WHO, held between April 13 and 14).

The cost of production of most medicines is only a small fraction of the final price paid by governments, patients or insurance schemes.

To make matters worse, lack of transparency sometimes leads to situations where low- and middle-

income countries end up paying higher prices for medicines compared to wealthier countries.

Over the years, efforts have been made to increase transparency. For example, WHO's database on vaccine markets and shortages, MI4A, can help achieve competitive vaccine prices.

Related Information

WHO

It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health.

It's headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

The WHO is a member of the United Nations Development Group.

Topic- GS-2- International

Organization Source- Down to Earth

4. French icon Notre-Dame

Cathedral Why in News:

Recently It was caught in a massive fire.

This is probably the worst damage the cathedral has ever suffered.

Notre-Dame Cathedral

Notre Dame is a religious landmark and a national, cultural, historical emblem of France.

The cathedral whose construction began in 1160 and which was consecrated nearly two centuries later in 1345, is arguably the greatest symbol of Paris

The present edifice was built after the original was destroyed by fire, and another fire led to more work between 1230 and 1240.

Louis XIV and Louis XV remodelled it in the 17th and 18th centuries.

In 1786, the original spire was replaced.

The cathedral was damaged during the French Revolution, and there were overhauls from 1844 to 1864, when the spire and flying buttresses were re-done.

In 2017, a €160 million renovation began, which was ongoing.

Topic- GS-1- Art & Culture

Source- Indian Express

5. A small step for China: Mars base for teens opens in Gobi desert

The C-Space Project recently unveiled its Mars Base set in the Gobi Desert.

The C-Space Project, where the C stands for Community, Culture and Creativity.

It provides an education facility for Chinese teenagers.

It will teach them about space exploration and living on Mars.

Related Information

Gobi Desert

It is the largest desert in Asia.

It covers parts of Northern and Northeastern China, and of southern Mongolia.

The Gobi is a rain shadow desert, formed by the Tibetan Plateau blocking precipitation from the Indian Ocean reaching the Gobi territory.

The silk road actually passes through the Gobi Desert.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

6. IN – VPN BILAT EX: Indian Navy-Vietnam Peoples' Navy Bilateral Exercise

The exercise was undertaken as a part of the ongoing Overseas Deployment of Eastern Fleet ships to South East Asian countries.

The Exercise is a significant step in further strengthening mutual confidence and interoperability as well as sharing best practices between the Indian and the Vietnam Peoples' Navies.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source-PI B

7. World Heritage Day: April 18

International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) announced April 18 as the World Heritage Day in 1982.

The theme of the World Heritage day is "Rural Landscapes".

Related Information

ICOMOS

It is a professional association that works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places around the world.

It was founded in 1965 in Warsaw as a result of the Venice Charter of 1964,

and offers advice to UNESCO on World Heritage Sites.

It's headquartered in Paris.

ICOMOS is a partner and founding member of the Blue Shield, which works to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters

Topic- GS Paper 3– Important Institutions

Source- The Hindu

8. 'First' 3D print of heart with human tissue, vessels unveiled

The scientist from the Tel Aviv University, Israel has printed the world's first 3D vascularised engineered heart using a patient's own cells and biological materials.

Related Information

The 3D Heart was made from human cells and patient-specific biological materials.

During the process, the patient-specific biological materials served as the bio-inks (a substance made of sugars and proteins that can be used for 3D printing of complex tissue models).

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Economic Times

9. Voter ID

A voter ID, or the Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC), is a document that is issued to an Indian citizen who is above the age of 18 and is eligible to vote.

Voter IDs were first issued in 1993 when T.N. Seshan was the Chief Election Commissioner.

The card primarily serves as an identity proof for the citizen for casting her ballot in a municipal, State or national election.

Holding the card, however, does not guarantee the right to vote.

The right to vote is available only for those citizens whose names can be found on the electoral roll.

EPICs are provided only to general electors and not service and overseas electors.

If a voter moves residence to another Assembly constituency, she will have to register afresh as a voter in the new constituency and will be provided with a new voter ID.

Her EPIC number will remain the same though.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

10. Chenchus believe the fox ushers in fortune

Recently for the luck's sake Chenchu tribal family domesticated fox near Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh.

Related Information

Chenchus

These are a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group who lives deep in the forest of Nallamala (tropical dry deciduous scrub with trees of axle wood, teak, Hardwicke) near Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve.

They also live in Telangana, Karnataka and Odisha.

They are inveterate forest dwellers, who have, over centuries, steadfastly refused to move out of their woods regardless of the perils of such life.

About the Fox

The conservation of fox falls under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972, according to which hunting or domesticating it is an offence and attracts punishment.

The possession of fox by non-forest dwellers is also an offence."

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

19.04.2019

1. India drops down on World Press Freedom Index 2019

India has dropped two places on a global press freedom index to be ranked 140th out of 180 countries.

The index has been prepared by "Reporters Without Borders".

Highlights of the Report

The report finds an increased sense of hostility towards journalists across the world, with violent attacks in India

leading to at least six Indian journalists being killed in the line of their work in the year 2018.

South Asia in general features poorly on the index, with Pakistan dropping three places to 142, and Bangladesh dropping four places to 150.

Norway is ranked first in the 2019 Index for the third year running while Finland (up two places) has taken second place from the Netherlands (down one at 4th).

At the bottom of the Index, both Vietnam (176th) and China (177th) have fallen one place and Turkmenistan (down two at 180th) is now last, replacing North Korea (up one at 179th).

Related Information

Reporters Without Borders (RWB) or Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF)

It is a Paris based non-profit organisation that works to document and combat attacks on journalists around the world.

It conducts political advocacy on issues relating to freedom of information and freedom of the press.

Topic-GS-2- International

Organization Source- Economic Times

2. Nepal launches its first satellite NepaliSat-1 from the US

Nepal successfully launched its first satellite into space from the US to gather detailed geographical information of the Himalayan nation.

NepaliSat-1 is a low orbit satellite which will be in the 400-km distance from the Earth's surface.

The satellite will take photographs on a regular basis to gather geographical information of the country.

NAST (Nepal Academy of Science and Technology) initiated the launch of the country's own satellite under the BIRDS project of the Japanese Kyushu Institute of Technology.

Related Information

The BIRDS project has been designed in association with the United Nations and aims at helping countries launch their first satellite.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- Business Today

3. Saudi Arabia to host the G20 summit in 2020

Saudi Arabia announced that it will be hosting the G20 summit in November 2020 in its capital Riyadh.

This would be the first G20 summit in the Arab world.

Last year's G20 meeting was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Related Information G20

The G20 (or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors.

Founded in 1999.

It aims to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability.

The G20 was born out of a meeting of G7 finance ministers and central bank governors in 1999.

It is made up of 19 countries and the European Union.

Countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The work of the G20 is generally divided into two tracks:

1. The Finance track comprises all meetings with G20 finance ministers and central bank governors and their deputies.
2. The Sherpa track focuses on broader issues such as political engagement, anti-corruption, development, trade, energy and climate change, gender equality, among others.

Topic-GS-2- Important international institutions

Source- Business Standards

4. Kakapo: world's fattest parrot

The world's fattest parrot, the critically endangered kakapo, has enjoyed a record-breaking breeding season.

New Zealand scientists said that climate change is possibly aiding the species' unique mating spree.

The kakapo is an "unusual" parrot as the females control the breeding process and only mate every two to four years when New Zealand's native rimu trees are full of fruit.

Topic- GS-3-

Biodiversity Source- AIR

5. Alexandrine Parakeet (Gagroni parrot)

In the Jhalawar-Baran Lok Sabha seat, the district administration has made the endangered Gagroni parrot its mascot for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Related Information

Gagroni parrot

Also known as Alexandrine Parakeet is also known for imitating the human voice.

It falls under schedule 1 (B) of the Wildlife protection act (WPA) 1972.

It is under the 'near threatened' list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Appendix II of CITES.

The male Gagroni parrot has a red ring on its neck and red spots on wings.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Indian Express

6. Investments through participatory notes (P-notes)

Participatory notes

These are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be a part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly after going through a due diligence process.

Related Information

Foreign Portfolio Investment and Foreign Portfolio Investor

Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) is investment by non-residents in Indian securities including shares, government bonds, corporate bonds, convertible securities, infrastructure securities etc.

The class of investors who make an investment in these securities are known as Foreign Portfolio Investors.

Who are Foreign Portfolio Investors?

Foreign Portfolio Investors includes investment groups of Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs), Qualified Foreign Investors (QFIs) (Qualified Foreign Investors) and subaccounts etc.

NRIs don't come under Foreign Portfolio Investors.

SEBI criteria for Foreign Portfolio Investment

SEBI has recently stipulated the criteria for Foreign Portfolio Investment in which any equity investment by non-residents which is less than or equal to 10% of capital in a company is portfolio investment. While above this the investment will be counted as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

Investment by a foreign portfolio investor cannot exceed 10 per cent of the paid up capital of the Indian company.

As per SEBI regulations, FPIs are not allowed to invest in unlisted shares and investment in unlisted entities will be treated as FDI.

Note:

Foreign Institutional Investor

According to SEBI, "an FII is an institution established or incorporated outside India which proposes to make investments in Indian securities".

FII is an institution who is registered under the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Foreign Institutional Investors) Regulations, 1995.

FIIs comprised of a pension fund, a mutual fund, investment trust, insurance company or a reinsurance company.

Qualified Foreign Investor

QFI is an individual, group or association which is a resident in a foreign country.

The QFI should compliant with the Financial Action Task Force standard and should be a signatory to the International Organisation of Securities Commission.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics

Source- The Hindu Business Line

6. Porteresia coarctata: A salt tolerant rice variety

Researchers have developed a new salt-tolerant transgenic rice plant by over-expressing a gene from wild rice called *Porteresia coarctata* into the commonly used IR 64 indica rice variety.

It is a native of India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar and is grown mainly in saline estuaries.

The new crop can withstand salt concentration of up to 200 micromoles per litre or about half as saline as seawater without affecting normal growth and grain yield under greenhouse conditions.

The work had been supported by funds from the Department of Biotechnology.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & technology Source- Down to Earth

7. Varuna Naval Exercise 2019

India and France will conduct their largest ever naval exercise 'Varuna'. The Exercise will be conducted in May 2019.

Related Information

India and France

The two countries have signed Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) that will enable both countries to use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of defence supplies.

India, with the help of this mutual logistical agreement, is planning to contain China who is aggressively expanding its strategic footprint in the IOR (Indian Ocean Region) with its debt-trap policy.

The Military Logistics Agreement with France which provides Indian Navy access to French bases located in the India ocean region including the Reunion Islands near Madagascar and Djibouti on the Horn of Africa and French navy access to Indian ports in this region.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- Indian express

8. CSIR plans genome sequencing to map population diversity

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) plans to genome sequencing to map population diversity of India.

Globally, many countries have undertaken genome sequencing of a sample of their citizens to determine unique genetic traits, susceptibility (and resilience) to disease.

The project aims at educating a generation of students on the "usefulness" of genomics.

Related Information

Genome

It is the genetic material of an organism. It consists of DNA (or RNA in RNA viruses).

The genome includes the genes (the coding regions) and the noncoding DNA as well as mitochondrial DNA and chloroplast DNA.

The term genome was created in 1920 by Hans Winkler professor of botany at the University of Hamburg.

The study of the genome is called genomics.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and technology

Source- The Hindu

9. Tendered votes

According to the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, a voter is allowed to cast a 'tendered vote' where someone else representing to be a particular voter has already cast that vote.

The presiding officer may allow the actual voter to vote if the person is able to prove his or her identity.

They would be provided with a ballot paper to mark symbol and it would be placed in a cover specially kept for the purpose.

A tendered ballot paper shall be the same as the other ballot papers used at the polling except that

- o Such tendered ballot paper shall be serially the last in the bundle of ballot papers issued for use at the polling station
- o Such tendered ballot paper and its counterfoil shall be endorsed on the back with the words "tendered ballot"

paper" by the presiding officer in his own hand and signed by him.

The elector, after marking a tendered ballot paper in the voting compartment and folding it, shall, instead of putting it into the ballot box, give it to the presiding officer, who shall place it in a cover specially kept for the purpose.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

22.04.2019

1. Asian Tea Alliance launched in China

Asian Tea Alliance (ATA), a union of five tea-growing and consuming countries, was launched in Guizhou in China.

Related Information

Asian Tea Alliance (ATA)

It is a union of five tea-growing and consuming countries.

The members of the alliance are the Indian Tea Association, China Tea Marketing Association, Indonesian Tea Marketing Association, Sri Lanka Tea Board and Japan Tea Association.

ATA plans to work towards enhancing tea trade, cultural exchanges, technology exchanges as well as globally promoting tea.

It will also work towards enhancing global consumption of tea while creating a sustainability agenda for the future of Asian tea.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International

Relation Source- Economics Times

2. Taxing Renewable Energy Certificates

Renewable Energy companies have moved the Delhi High Court, seeking an exemption for Renewable Energy Certificates under the GST.

Related Information

Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs)

These are a type of environmental commodity intended to provide an economic incentive for electricity generation from renewable energy sources.

One REC is created when the one-megawatt hour of electricity is

generated from an eligible renewable energy resource.

States where RE potential is high, there are avenues for harnessing the RE potential beyond the RPO (Renewable Purchase Obligation) level fixed by the SERCs.

Therefore RE deficient states can buy REC's from these states to fulfil their RPO's.

REC mechanism allows the eligible entities (RE generators) to sell their electricity at local tariffs of the DISCOM and sale their REC's (Environmental attributes associated with the one MWh of power produced) to the obligated entities.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Down to Earth

3. Navy launches guided missile destroyer INS Imphal under project 15B

The Indian Navy launched guided missile destroyer Imphal at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders in Mumbai.

It has been named after the Battle of Imphal and Kohima that were fought 75 years ago.

Imphal is the third ship to be launched under a project 15B in which ships are built to carry and operate two multiple role helicopters. Enhanced stealth features have been achieved through the shaping of hull and use of radar transparent deck fittings which make the ships difficult to detect.

Related Information

In 2011, the government had sanctioned four 15B ships at the cost of Rs 29,700 crores.

The first ship of the project, guided-missile destroyer 'Visakhapatnam', was launched on April 20 in 2015.

The delivery of Visakhapatnam (2015) and Mormugao warships (2016) will start in April 2021 and will go on till 2024.

Topic- GS-3- Defence

Source- Indian Express

4. Bhopal gas tragedy among the world's major industrial accidents of the 20th century: UN

The UN report titled 'The Safety and Health at the Heart of the Future of Work - Building on 100 years of experience' said the Bhopal disaster was among the world's "major industrial accidents after 1919".

The report is released by the UN labour agency International Labour Organization (ILO).

In 1984, at least 30 tons of methyl isocyanate gas, which was released from the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, affected over 600,000 workers and nearby inhabitants.

The report also warned that 2.78 million workers die from occupational accidents and work-related diseases each year.

Topic- GS-3- Disaster

Management Source- DD News

5. "Bubble boy" disorder

US researchers have used Human Immunodeficiency Virus to develop a gene therapy that cured 8 infants who were treated at St. Jude and at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, San Francisco of a rare combined immunodeficiency disease termed as "bubble boy" disorder.

Related Information

Bubble boy Disease

"Bubble boy" or SCID (Severe combined immunodeficiency) is also known as alymphocytosis, Glanzmann–Riniker syndrome, severe mixed immunodeficiency syndrome, and thymic alymphoplasia.

It is a rare genetic disorder which results in extreme vulnerability to infectious diseases.

The disease affects 1 in 200,000 newborns, mostly males and without any treatment, it often kills the child in the first 2 years of life.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Science Daily

6. Indian bullfrogs take to invasive behaviour early in Andamans

Indian bullfrogs introduced in the Andaman islands are invasive and eat native wildlife including fish and lizards.

Now, experiments reveal that even in the developmental stages, the large bullfrog tadpoles eat other native frog tadpoles, finds a study.

Related Information

Indian bullfrog (Asian bullfrog)

It is a large species of frog found in mainland Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Nepal.

It has been introduced in Madagascar and India's the Andaman Islands where it is now a widespread invasive species.

They prefer freshwater wetlands and aquatic habitats.

The IUNC status: Least Concern

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

7. Solar Photovoltaic (PV) vs Solar thermal

'Solar PV' works by photons in sun's rays knocking off electrons in the semiconducting material in the panels and channels them through a wire— the stream of electrons is electricity. Solar PV, therefore, works best where there is a lot of sunlight.

Solar thermal systems, in contrast, suck up sun's heat and conduct it to where it is needed – such as for drying of spices or fish or wet paint.

The sun-facing boards in photovoltaic sheets are called 'panels' or 'modules' while in solar thermal the stuff that lies open to the sun are called 'collectors' and are measured in terms of square metres.

In solar PV, there is some loss in the conversion of light energy into electric energy, whereas in solar thermal, there is no conversion—it is just heat which all through.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Energy Resources

Source- The Hindu

8. Helium hydride ion (HeH+): Universe's first molecule

Scientists have discovered the most ancient type of molecule in our universe, Helium Hydride ion (HeH+) in space, which supports the theories, assumed to have formulated the universe after the Big Bang Theory.

The molecule will emit its strongest spectral line at a characteristic wavelength of 0.149 mm.

NASA's high-flying observatory Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) detected this molecule towards a planetary

nebula. Related

Information SOFIA

The Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy is a joint project of NASA and the German Aerospace Center to construct and maintain an airborne observatory.

It is an aircraft with reflecting telescope, flying into the stratosphere.

It is put above Earth's infrared-blocking atmosphere, allowing astronomers to study the solar system and beyond in ways that are not possible with ground-based telescopes.

The observatory's mobility allows researchers to observe from almost anywhere in the world and enables studies of transient events that often take place over oceans where there are no telescopes.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

9. Ganga has a higher proportion of antibacterial agents: study

A study 'Assessment of Water Quality and Sediment to Understand Special Properties of River Ganga,' was commissioned by the Union Water Resources Ministry to probe the "unique properties" of the Ganga.

The study began in 2016 and was conducted by the Nagpur-based National Environmental Engineering and Research Institute (NEERI), a CSIR lab.

The NEERI team was tasked with assessing the water quality for "radiological, microbiological and biological" parameters in the Bhagirathi (a feeder river of the Ganga) and the Ganga at 20 sampling stations.

As part of the assessment, five pathogenic species of bacteria (Escherichia, Enterobacter, Salmonella, Shigella, Vibrio) were selected and isolated from the Ganga, Yamuna and the Narmada and their numbers compared with the bacteriophages present in the river water.

Because bacteriophages are a kind of virus that kill bacteria, they are frequently found in proximity to each other.

The study suggests there are many more of them in the Ganga than in other rivers.

Ganga may contain unique microbial life, which makes it relatively more resilient to putrefaction, was suggested by British colonial scientists about 200 years ago.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

10. Medicine labels in regional language

In order to counter fake, sub-standard and expired drugs, the Drugs Technical Advisory Board has recommended Hindi and other regional languages will be used in the tendering process.

DTAB proposed to amend Rule 96 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 for labelling of iron tablets and polio drops distributed to the children under government programmes with name and expiry date in Hindi also.

The Board then constituted a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Dr. R.N. Tandon to examine and give recommendations to streamline the labelling requirements of drugs so as to provide the requisite information to the consumer.

Related Information

Drugs Technical Advisory Board

It is the highest statutory decision-making body on technical matters related to drugs in India.

It was constituted under the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

It is a part of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

11. In a first, east Asian birds make Andaman stopover

News species of other birds of Southeast Asian origin has been recorded in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands during migration.

Researchers are intrigued by the fact that a number of new sightings have increased post the 2004 tsunami.

Related Information

What is Flyway?

A flyway is a geographical region within which a single or a group of migratory species completes its annual cycle – breeding, moulting, staging and non-breeding.

There are 9 flyways in the world.

The EAAF (East Asian-Australasian Flyway) extends from Arctic Russia and North America to the south Australian boundaries and includes the most of the East Asian regions including Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Central Asian Flyway covers the northernmost breeding ground in Siberia to the southernmost non-breeding grounds in the west and south Asia, the Maldives and British Indian Ocean Territory.

Government initiative

Recently Union government has come out with a 5-year national action plan to conserve habitats of migratory birds under the National Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Birds.

The action plan is brought out by the Union Environment Ministry which spans 2018-2023.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

23.04.2019

1. Face of Disasters 2019 Report

The face of Disasters 2019 report is published by the Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS).

It delves into the changing face of disaster risks and the need to look at them from a broader perspective, with roots in resource management practices.

The report lists eight key areas that must be considered in tackling the natural disasters of tomorrow which include:

Changing nature of water, Coastal erosion, The melting of the 'Third Pole' – the Himalayas etc.

Related Information

SEEDS

SEEDS, a nonprofit voluntary organization, are a collective endeavour of young professionals drawn from development-related fields.

It is involved in research activities in Community Development, Disaster Management, Environmental Planning, Transport Planning, and Urban and Regional Planning.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Organisation

Source- Economics Times

2. U.S. ends waiver for India on Iran oil

The U.S announced that they will not issue any additional Significant Reduction Exceptions [SREs] to existing importers of Iranian oil.

The exemptions were granted November 2018 for a 180-day-period for India and seven other countries, and are due to expire on May 2.

India, China and U.S. allies Japan, South Korea and Turkey will be the most impacted by the non-renewal of waivers.

The other three currently exempted countries – Italy, Greece and Taiwan – have already reduced their imports to zero.

Related Information

What is the US Sanctions against Iran?

It refers to economic, trade, scientific and military sanctions against Iran related to its nuclear programme.

The sanctions have been imposed by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control, or by the international community under U.S. Pressure via the UN Security Council (UNSC).

The sanctions include the official ban on dealing with Iran by the US, a ban on selling aircraft and repair parts to Iranian aviation firms, trading oil

etc. What is the Iran Nuclear deal?

Formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear deal was announced in 2015.

The deal was signed between Iran and the P5+1 group (US, UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany).

The deal restricts Iran's nuclear programme, in return for lifting most of the economic sanctions against it.

Why the US re-imposed sanctions?

US claims that the deal fails to address the threat of Iran's nuclear missile programme.

The deal does not include strong inspection and verification mechanisms.

Destabilizing actions of Iran in the region such as support for Houthi rebels (in Yemen) and Hezbollah (in Lebanon).

What are the impacts on India due to the new sanctions?

Impact on Oil prices

Currently, Iran is India's third-largest oil supplier.

Oil prices increased after US sanctions on Iran.

Increase in oil prices will increase in inflation levels in India due to fall in rupee value.

Chabahar Port

To reduce any backlashes from the US, India needed to reduce its investments in Chabahar port.

This would affect India's strategic access to Afghanistan and Central Asia through Iran.

Also with declining trade due to sanctions, Iran would lose interest in the chabahar port and instead would focus on its main port of Bandar Abbas, affecting India's ambitious plans for regional connectivity.

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

It was signed in 2002 which is a multi-mode transport and transit network connecting India, Russia, Iran, Europe, and Central Asia.

After the nuclear deal signed in 2015, plans for INSTC gained momentum.

With the new sanctions, countries along the route or the banking and insurance firms dealing with the INSTC plan would be adversely affected by the reimposed US sanctions.

India West-Asia Relation

India maintains diplomatic relations with Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the tension in West-Asia will affect India's strategic and economic relations with these countries.

Also, the conflict in West Asia would have indirect effects in India such as diaspora, remittances from the Middle East etc.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International relation
Source- The Hindu

2. IMA threatens agitation over bridge course proposal

The allopathic practitioners are up in arms over the NITI Aayog's proposal to bring in a bridge course between the Bachelor of Dental Surgery and the MBBS allowing dentists to practise family medicine with the Indian Medical Association.

Related Information

The NITI Aayog had earlier proposed a bridge course for Ayush (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) doctors in the National Medical Commission Bill meant to replace the Indian Medical Council Act.

The successful completion of the course would allow dentists to practice family medicine.

This move is based on the fact that the dental courses in the country follow the same training and curriculum as the MBBS courses for the first three years.

This proposal looks to empower dentists in the country to cater to primary health care.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

3. Global Deal for Nature (GDN)

Conservation scientists, environmental NGOs, and indigenous

groups are urging governments to adopt the GDN as a companion commitment alongside the Paris Climate Agreement approved by nearly 200 countries in 2015.

The Global Deal for Nature proposes a target of 30 Percent of the planet to be fully protected under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity by 2030.

“The Global Deal for Nature is a time-bound, science-based plan to save the diversity and abundance of life on Earth.

The three overarching goals of the GDN are:

1. To protect biodiversity by conserving at least 30% of the earth’s surface by 2030
2. Mitigate climate change by conserving the earth’s natural carbon storehouses.
3. Reduce major threats.

Related Information

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

It is a legally binding treaty, which came as an outcome of Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro on 5 June 1992 and entered into force on 29 December 1993.

It is commonly known as “Biodiversity Convention”.

India is signatories to the CBD.

India enacted the Biological Diversity Act in 2002 for giving effect to the provisions of the CBD.

The governing body of CBD is the Conference of the Parties (COP).

The two protocols to CBD are:

(a) Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety: It was adopted in 2000 and legally binding protocol as part of CBD.

(b) Nagoya Protocol (Biodiversity Accord): It was adopted in 2010 and legally binding protocol. It ends up with a strategic plan with 20 targets called “Aichi Target”. Topic-

GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

4. Mount Agung volcano erupts on Bali Island, Indonesia

Related Information

Other Active Volcanoes in Indonesia

Mount Bromo is an active volcano which is a part of the Tengger massif, in East Java, Indonesia.

Mount Merapi is located on the border between Central Java and Yogyakarta provinces, Indonesia and active in status.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Landscape

Source- The Hindu Business line

5. Traditional Knowledge Digital Library

An MOU signed between Ministry of AYUSH and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research for the development of the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL).

TKDL is a globally recognized proprietary database on Indian systems of medicine for preventing bio-piracy and misappropriation of traditional knowledge.

The objective of the library is to protect the ancient and traditional knowledge of the country by documenting it electronically and classifying it as per international patent classification systems.

Apart from that, the non-patent database serves to foster modern research based on traditional knowledge, as it simplifies access to this vast knowledge of remedies or practices.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PI B

6. Agent Orange: US to clean up toxic Vietnam War air base

The U.S. has launched a \$183 million clean-up campaign at a former air base in Vietnam that was used to store the toxic chemical Agent Orange.

Related Information

Agent Orange

It was a powerful herbicide used by U.S. military forces (Operation Ranch Hand) during the Vietnam War in the 1960s.

US forces sprayed millions of litre of Agent Orange over South Vietnam between 1962 and 1971 in a bid to flush out Viet Cong communist guerrillas by depriving them of tree cover and food.

The active ingredients in Agent Orange are a combination of 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) and 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4,5-T).

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

7. Olive Ridley Turtle

The idyllic Kalam Island off the Odisha coast has become lively with lakhs of baby Olive Ridley turtles crawling towards the Bay of Bengal after emerging from eggshells.

Related Information

Olive Ridley Turtle

The olive ridley sea turtle is also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle is the second smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.

This species of sea turtle is found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

They can also be found in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

It is Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.

Nesting sites in India:

- Gahirmatha beach (Odisha)
- Astaranga coast (Odisha)
- Hope Island of Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary (Andra Pradesh)
- Beach of Rushikulya River (Odisha)
- Devi River mouth (Odisha)

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

8. What does an Emergency mean in Sri Lanka?

Under the Public Security Ordinance (PSO) of 1947, the President can proclaim an emergency for all or parts of Sri Lanka, if "he is of the opinion that it is expedient to do so in the interests of public security and the preservation of public order or for the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the life of the community".

Only the President can declare an emergency, and his decision is not subject to judicial review.

However, he must summon Parliament immediately to inform it of his decision. Parliament must approve

of the proclamation within 14 days, failing which the proclamation expires at the end of one month.

Parliament can, however, revoke or change an Emergency Regulation, and courts can strike down a specific Emergency Regulation that violates the Constitution.

Emergency Regulations supersede existing laws.

Why in News:

Sri Lanka's President declares an emergency in the country after blasts in Sri Lankan churches and hotels.

Topic- GS-2- Indian Polity

Source- CNN

24.04.2019

1. AJIT: India's first low cost indigenously-built microprocessor

IIT Bombay developed the country's first-ever indigenously-built SPARC ISA architecture based microprocessor called AJIT.

This project comes under India's 'Made In India' initiative which aims to make India a global manufacturing hub by encouraging both multinational as well as domestic companies to manufacture their products within the country.

AJIT will be used in India's satellites like NAVIC or IRNSS (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System).

SAMEER (Society for Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering & Research), an independent lab under MeitY is also planning to use AJIT in various satellite receivers.

This super cheap cost around less than two US dollar (Rs. 100 to be exact).

Related Information

India recently had its first indigenously -developed open-source processor in the form of Shakti.

That was instead based on RISC-V architecture, and it was developed in collaboration with semiconductor tool design company Bluespec.

The other main difference between the two is that Shakti is smaller and geared towards smartphones and IoT devices.

Ajit instead is aimed at larger systems like robots, automation systems, appliances, and in the future perhaps even servers and workstations.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Science Daily

2. Iran and Pakistan to set up joint rapid reaction force

Iran and Pakistan have agreed to set up a joint border “reaction force” after Balochistan attacks.

Related Information

Border Reaction Force

Border rapid reaction force would be set up for combatting terrorism since increased tensions over attacks on both sides of the frontier is causing heavy casualties.

It helps to counter the increasing number of deadly attacks by militant groups on their frontier.

The Iran-Pakistan border skirts the volatile southeastern Iranian province of Sistan-Balochistan which has been the scene of frequent attacks on Iran’s security forces.

Balochistan Provinces

It is one of the four provinces of Pakistan.

It is the largest province in terms of land area, forming the southwestern region of the country.

Its provincial capital and largest city is Quetta.

Balochistan shares borders with Punjab and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the northeast, Sindh to the east and southeast, the Arabian Sea to the south, Iran to the west and Afghanistan to the north and northwest.

The main ethnic groups in the province are the Baloch people and the Pashtuns.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- Indian Express

3. Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) Authority

IEPF Authority recovers Rs 1,514 crore of depositors’ money from Peerless.

Related Information

Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority

IEPF Authority has been set up under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India.

It is a statutory body under Companies Act 2013 to administer the Investor Education and Protection Fund with the objective of promoting Investor’s Education, Awareness and Protection.

The Authority takes various initiatives to fulfil its objectives through Investor Awareness Programmes and various other mediums like Print, Electronic, Social Media, and Community Radio etc.

Topic- GS Paper 2– Important Institution

Source-PIB

4. Garia puja unites tribals and non-tribals in Tripura

Garia Puja is an important festival for the Tripuri tribal community of the state.

The Garia dance is very popular among the Tripuris and the Reangs.

In Garia puja devotees sacrifice chicken for ritual purpose.

It is symbolic of the worship of deities as well as of the socio-economic activities of the households, these dances represent hunting, fishing, food-gathering and various other activities.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

5. Mosquirix: First Malaria Vaccine

Malawi (African Nation) will be undertaking large scale pilot tests for the world’s most advanced experimental malaria vaccine in a bid to prevent the disease that kills hundreds of thousands of people across Africa and Asia every year.

It is under the trade name Mosquirix, has been developed by British pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline in partnership with the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative.

Related Information

India’s step to fight with malaria

According to World Malaria Report 2018, among the 11 nations with 70% of the world's burden of malaria, only India has managed to reduce its disease burden, registering a 24% decrease between 2016 and 2017.

India has set 2030 as the target year for eliminating malaria.

It currently accounts for 4% of global malaria cases and 52% of malaria deaths outside the African region.

In 2017, India launched its five-year National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination. The plan is a landmark in India's fight against the disease that shifted focus from malaria "control" to "elimination".

The plan provides a roadmap to end malaria in 571 of India's 678 districts by 2022.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Down to Earth

6. VEM: A fire extinguisher that can be used in space

The Department of Mechanical Engineering at the Toyohashi University of Technology Japan has developed a new concept of fire extinguishing called Vacuum Extinguish Method (VEM).

Related Information

Vacuum Extinguish Method

It is based on the 'reverse' operation of the conventional fire extinguishing procedure.

Instead of spraying out extinguishing agents at a fire, the VEM sucks the flames and burning materials into a vacuum chamber, where they can be safely extinguished.

It is useful for the special environments that are highly enclosed such as space vehicles and submarines to prevent spreading the harmful combustion products such as fume, particulate matters, and toxic gas component across the entire enclosed cabin.

At present, fire extinguishers used in spacecraft or space stations in the US, Japan, Europe and Russia are mainly CO₂-spraying gas extinguishers but having many drawbacks.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Science Daily

7. New synthetic peptide may help treat Alzheimer's

Researchers at the University of Washington, USA have developed synthetic peptides that could target and reduce toxic protein aggregates, which are supposed to cause Alzheimer's disease.

Related Information

Alzheimer's disease

It is a chronic neurodegenerative disease.

It is a type of dementia that causes problems with memory, thinking and behaviour.

It is caused by the aggregation of the toxic protein.

Neurons in the human brain make a protein called amyloid beta.

Such proteins on their own, called monomers of amyloid beta perform important tasks for neurons.

However, in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease, amyloid beta monomers abandoned their jobs and get joined together.

Previously scientists had believed that plaques led to the cognitive impairments, a characteristic of Alzheimer's disease.

However, new studies have shown that the smaller aggregates of amyloid beta are the toxic elements of this disease.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science &

Technology Source- Science Daily

25.04.2019

1. SAECKs – Special Kits to Probe Sexual Assault Cases

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has distributed over 3,100 special kits SAECKs for collecting blood and semen samples, besides other evidence, to carry out immediate investigations into sexual assault cases among states and Union Territories.

Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits or 'rape investigation kits' are specially designed kits to carry out the immediate medico-legal investigation.

It also aids in furnishing evidence in sexual assault and rape cases.

These kits are also expected to help law enforcement agencies in ensuring effective investigation in a timely manner for better prosecution and convictions in sexual assault cases.

It is being procured with financial support under the Central government's Nirbhaya Fund.

Topic-GS Paper 2-Women

Empowerment Source- Indian Express

2. RBI divests its entire stake in NABARD and NHB

The Reserve Bank has divested its entire stake in National Housing Bank (NHB) and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to the government making them 100% government-owned now. It is based on the second Narasimham committee recommendations in which the RBI had proposed to transfer its ownership in SBI, NHB and Nabard to the government in October

2001. Related Information NABARD

It was established on the recommendations of B.Sivaraman Committee on 12 July 1982 to implement the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act 1981.

It replaced the Agricultural Credit Department (ACD) and Rural Planning and Credit Cell (RPCC) of Reserve Bank of India, and Agricultural Refinance and Development Corporation (ARDC).

It is one of the premier agencies providing developmental credit in rural areas.

NABARD is India's specialised bank for Agriculture and Rural Development in India.

NHB

It is an All India Financial Institution was set up in 1988, under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987.

It is an apex agency established to operate as a principal agency to promote housing finance institutions. RBI had 100% shareholding in NHB.

RBI Subsidiaries

Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (DICGC)
Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Limited (BRBNMPL)
Reserve Bank Information Technology Private Limited (ReBIT)

Topic- GS Paper 3- Economics

Source- The Hindu +AIR

3. Arab League pledges \$100m to Palestinian Authority

Arab League

Arab League

The Arab League is a regional organization of Arab countries in and around North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Arabia.

It has 22 members including Palestine, which the League regards as an independent state.

But Syria's (which was the founding member) participation has been suspended since November 2011, as a consequence of government repression during the Syrian Civil War.

Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa denotes the region containing the countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

Topic-GS Paper 2-International Organisation

Source- Al Jazeera

4. Magic milk: fighting infections with a clue from the echidna

Scientists at the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research - Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB) have isolated an anti-microbial protein found in the milk of an egg-laying mammal called Echidna.

The protein promises to serve as an alternative to antibiotics used on livestock.

The milk of the echidna has a protein that can puncture the cell membranes of multiple bacterial species, thus destroying the source of infection.

Related Information

Echidna

Echidnas, also known as spiny anteaters, are unique egg-laying mammals found only in Australia and New Guinea.

They are the egg-laying mammals.

It is listed as 'least concern' in IUCN.

Topic-GS Paper 3-Science & Technology Source- The Hindu

5. UAE's Hope Probe project bound for Mars is 85% complete

The UAE Space Agency and Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) have announced that 85% of the Hope Probe project has been completed.

Hope Probe is an ambitious dream project of UAE to send a mission to Mars.

Hope Probe is scheduled to be launched in July 2020.

With a successful launch, UAE hopes to become the first Arabic and Islamic country to make the Mars Mission dream a reality.

It is planned to reach Mars by 2021 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the founding of the UAE.

Hope Probe has been developed in accordance with the Mars Exploration Programme Analysis Group (MEPAG), the global scientific community which is working on Mars exploration and coordinated with international entities to ensure the best results.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology Source- DD News

6. Shigellosis Vaccine

India develops the first indigenous vaccine to treat bloody dysentery called Shigellosis which is recognised as a disease mainly affecting Asian and African nations.

Related Information

Shigella Bacteria

It causes Shigellosis which is an infectious disease.

Victims who are mostly infected with Shigella develop diarrhoea, fever, and stomach cramps starting a day or two after they are exposed to the bacteria.

The disease, at present, is largely treated through antibiotics, but considering the fact that antibiotic resistance has become a major concern; the vaccine was the need of the hour.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Science and Technology Source- Down to Earth

7. ICGS C-441: Coast Guard Vessel

The newly built Coast Guard Vessel ICGS C-441 was commissioned into the service at Vizhinjam Harbour, Thiruvananthapuram.

It is the seventh Interceptor vessel amongst the series which is built by M/s. L and T Ltd,

Surat. Related Information
ICGS C-441

It is designed to perform close coast surveillance, interdiction, search and rescue, rendering assistance to boats and crafts in distress at sea.

The vessel is powered by twin diesel engines and twin water-jet propulsion systems and has an endurance of 500 NM at 25 knots of speed.

The ship is fitted with state-of-the-art communication, navigational equipment and with light, medium and heavy automatic machine gun onboard armament.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Defence Source- Indian Express

8. Localisation under FAME-II Scheme

The Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee of the National Mission for Transformative Mobility has decided to incorporate localisation conditions to avail benefits under the FAME-II Scheme.

The steering committee has mandated that only companies that meet the 50% localisation threshold will be eligible for the incentives that will be available under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME-II)

scheme to boost electric mobility as well as the 'Make in India' initiative.

Related Information

FAME-II Scheme

The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME-II) is the part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan.

The Main thrust of FAME is to encourage electric vehicles by providing subsidies.

Under the scheme, the government plans to offer the incentives for electric buses, three-wheelers and

four-wheelers to be used for commercial purposes.

The centre will invest in setting up charging stations, with the active participation of public sector units and private players.

FAME 2 will also encourage interlinking of renewable energy sources with charging infrastructure.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Governance

Source- TOI

9. Indonesia releases Ramayana stamp

Indonesia released a special commemorative stamp on the theme of Ramayana to mark the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties with India.

The stamp, designed by renowned Indonesian sculptor Padmashri Bapak Nyoman Nuart, features a scene from Hindu epic Ramayana in which Jatayu valiantly fought to save Sita.

Topic- GS-2- International Relations

Source- Business Standard

26.04.2019

1. Khasi 'kingdoms' to revisit 1947 agreements

A federation of 25 Himas or Khasi kingdoms plans to revisit the 1948 agreements that made present-day Meghalaya a part of India.

The revisiting aimed to safeguard tribal customs and traditions from Central laws in force or could be enacted, such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

Related Information

The 25 Khasi states had signed the Instrument of Accession and Annexed Agreement with the Dominion of India between December 15, 1947, and March 19, 1948.

The conditional treaty with these states was signed by Governor General Chakravarty Rajagopalachari on August 17, 1948.

The Khasi States did not sign the Instrument of Merger unlike most other states in India.

Instrument of Accession

The Instrument of Accession was a legal document first introduced by the Government of India Act 1935.

It was used in 1947 to enable each of the rulers of the princely states under British paramountcy to join one of the new dominions of India or Pakistan created by the Partition of British India.

The instrument of Accession also signed by Junagadh and Jammu and Kashmir.

Note:

The Constitution of India also provided Special provision for these state in Article 371C for Manipur and Article 371B for Assam.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance Source- The Hindu

2. Country's first project "Clean Meat" to research on cell-based

Centre's grant set to give fillip country's first project to research on cell-based meat, also called clean meat.

The research would be taken up at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) with the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

Related Information
Clean Meat

Clean meat is produced by taking a small sample of animal cells and replicating them in a culture outside of the animal.

The resulting product is 100 Percent real meat, but without the antibiotics, coli, salmonella, or waste contamination-all of which come standard in conventional meat production.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology Source- The Hindu

3. Bt brinjal being illegally grown in Haryana

Genetically modified (GM) brinjal is being illegally grown in the Fatehabad district of Haryana, according to anti-GM activists.

Related Information

Bt Brinjal was developed by Mahyco (Maharashtra Hybrid

Seeds Company) in collaboration with the Dharward University of Agricultural Sciences and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee 2007, recommended the commercial release of Bt Brinjal but the initiative was blocked in 2010. Brinjal has been genetically modified by inserting a protein gene from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* to give protection against certain pests.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)

Genetically Modified Organisms are the ones in which the genetic material (DNA) has been altered in such a way as to get the required quality.

The technology is often called 'gene technology', or 'recombinant DNA technology' or 'genetic engineering' and the resulting organism is said to be 'genetically modified', 'genetically engineered' or 'transgenic'.

Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC)

It is apex body under Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change for regulating the manufacturing, use, import, export and storage of hazardous microorganisms or genetically engineered organisms (GMOs) and cells in the country.

GEAC is also responsible for giving technical approval of proposals relating to the release of GMOs and products including experimental field trials.

However, Environment Minister gives final approval for GMOs.

The safety aspects of genetically modified crops are assessed by the Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBSCs), Review Committee on Genetic Manipulation (RCGM) and

Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) constituted under Rules 1989 of Environment Protection Act (EPA) – 1986 based on Biosafety Guidelines and the Standard

Operating Procedures

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

4. Tiwa tribals celebrate Khelchawa festival for a good harvest in Assam

Tiwa tribals celebrate Khelchawa festival in Assam.

The festival is held at the close of the harvest season.

The festival of Khelchawa is a completely male-dominated affair in a matrilineal society.

Related Information

Tiwa Tribes

Tiwas are a tribal group of Assam.

They are divided into two sub-groups namely, Hill Tiwas and Plain Tiwas.

They also found in Meghalaya where a large section of Hill Tiwa population thrives.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

5. Antarctic penguins suffer huge breeding failure

The second largest Emperor penguin colony in the world has suffered a "catastrophic" breeding failure after nearly all chicks born over three years died as their icy Antarctic habitat shrinks, researchers said.

Related Information

Emperor Penguin

It is the tallest and heaviest of all living penguin species and is endemic to Antarctica.

These are the only penguin species that breeds during the Antarctic winter.

The IUCN status: Near Threatened

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Down to Earth

6. Akademik Lomonosov: World's First Floating Nuclear Power Plant

Russia successfully tested its first 'Akademik Lomonosov', world's first floating nuclear power plant operator subsidiary of Rosatom, state-owned atomic energy cooperation of Russia.

Related Information

Akademik Lomonosov

Akademik Lomonosov is a non-self-propelled powership to be operated as the first Russian floating nuclear power station.

The ship was named after Academician Mikhail Lomonosov.

The nuclear power plant powered by its twin KLT-40S reactor system.

The ship was named after famous academician Mikhail Lomonosov.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Defence Source- TOI

7. Zoologists discover two new bird species in Indonesia

Zoologists have discovered two beautiful new bird species in the Wakatobi Archipelago of Sulawesi, Indonesia.

The name of the species are Wakatobi white-eye and the Wangi-Wangi white-eyr.

White-eyes as a group has spread and speciated more rapidly than any other birds. They are adaptable, feeding on a wide variety of fruits, flowers and insects.

Topic- GS-3- Bio-Diversity

Source- Phys. org

8. Mars: Nasa's InSight lander detects first 'Marsquake'

NASA's InSight probe has detected and measured what scientists believe to be the first 'Marsquake' ever recorded.

The Marsquake is like Earthquakes on Earth.

This is the first time a likely seismological tremor has been recorded on another planet.

A faint seismic signal was detected by the lander's Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure instrument, was recorded on April 6, the lander's 128th sol (Mars Solar Day).

Mars and the Moon do not have tectonic plates, but they still experience quakes.

On Mars and Moon, quakes are caused by a continual process of cooling and contraction of the surface that creates stress.

This stress builds over time until it is strong enough to break the crust, causing a quake.

Related Information

InSight Mission

It is a part of NASA's Discovery Program, managed by the agency's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

It will be the first mission to peer deep beneath the Martian surface, studying

the planet's interior by measuring its heat output and listening for Marsquakes which are seismic events similar to earthquakes on Earth.

It will use the seismic waves generated by marsquakes to develop a map of the planet's deep interior.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science &

Technology Source- BBC

9. Marine invasive alien species threaten islands in Asia-Pacific

According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' (IPBES) Global Assessment Report on ecosystem services, Invasive alien species have increased and constitute to be one of the most serious drivers of biodiversity loss across the Asia-Pacific region.

Note: IPBES, which has 132 member governments, is the body that measures the contribution of biodiversity to people. It was established in Panama City, on 21 April 2012 by 94 governments. IPBES is placed under the auspices of four United Nations entities: UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and UNDP and administered by UNEP.

Related Information

According to the Convention on Biological Diversity: "invasive alien species are species whose introduction and/or spread outside their natural past or present distribution threaten biological diversity".

These species are found in or known to impact animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms, and can affect all types of ecosystems.

For the Asia-Pacific region, this poses a serious threat to local livelihoods.

Topic- GS-3- Environment

Source- Down to Earth

29.04.2019

1. Southern River Terrapins (Batagur Affinis)

Royal Turtles formally classified as Southern River Terrapins, were released into a remote stretch of a Cambodian river.

They are known as Royal turtle because it was historically protected by a royal decree and the eggs were considered a delicacy reserved for the king.

They are classified as 'Critically endangered' in IUCN Red List.

They are found in Malaysia, Indonesia and Cambodia.

They are on the brink of extinction because of hunting, trafficking, and illegal sand mining.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Environment & Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

2. Kafala System

Qatar is set to abolish its controversial exit visa system called Kafala or Sponsorship system for all foreign workers by the end of 2019.

Related Information

About Kafala System

The kafala system is a system used to monitor migrant laborers, working primarily in the construction and domestic sectors, in Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

The system requires all unskilled laborers to have an in-country sponsor, usually their employer, who is responsible for their visa and legal status.

This practice has been criticised by human rights organizations because this tying of migrant workers' visas with employers leads to requiring prior consent of their employer before changing jobs or leaving, which further leads to their exploitation.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics

Source- The Economics Times

3. Corridor linking India, Myanmar no longer under BRI framework

India's decision to skip the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) may have led to the exclusion of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor from the list of projects covered by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) umbrella.

Instead, South Asia is covered by three major undertakings

- o the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)
- o the Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network, including Nepal-China cross-border railway
- o The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

India's Concern

Due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which passes through Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), India for the second time, did not participate in the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) which hurt its

Related Information

About Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar Economic Corridor

It is a multi-modal transport corridor with the aim to connect India (Kolkata) and China (Kunming) via Bangladesh (Dhaka) and Myanmar (Mandalay).

The idea was given a shape in the form of BCIM forum in 1999 in the first 'Kunming Initiative.

The corridor is intended to advance multi-modal connectivity, promote investment and trade and facilitates people-to-people contacts through a combination of road, rail, water and air linkages in the region.

The multi-modal corridor will be the first expressway between India and China and will pass through Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)

The CMEC will run from Yunnan Province of China to Mandalay in Central Myanmar.

From there it will head towards Yangon, before terminating at the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the Bay of Bengal.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Infrastructure

Source- The Economics Times

4. Manjira Wildlife Sanctuary

The Manjeera barrage and the Singur reservoir are going dry this summer. It has forced the crocodiles from the Manjeera Wildlife sanctuary to search for any place where water is logged.

Related Information

About Manjira Wildlife Sanctuary

It is a wildlife sanctuary and reservoir located in Sangareddy district of Telangana.

The reservoir is located in the sanctuary, provides drinking water to Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

Mugger Crocodile

The mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*), also called marsh crocodile is a crocodilian native to freshwater habitats from southern Iran and Pakistan to the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka.

It is extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar and has been listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List since 1982.

It is one of three crocodilians in India, apart from saltwater crocodile (*C. porosus*) and Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*).

About Manjira

It is a tributary of the river Godavari. It passes through the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Telangana.

It originates in the Balaghat range of hills near Ahmednagar district. Terna River is an important tributary of the Manjira River

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

5. **IIT Madras: Easy OCR system for nine Indian languages**

Taking a cue from European languages, several of which have the same (Roman letter-based) script

IIT Madras has developed a unified script for nine Indian languages, named the Bharati script.

They have also developed a method for reading documents in Bharati script using a multi-lingual optical character recognition (OCR) scheme.

The scripts that have been integrated include Devnagari, Bengali, Gurmukhi, Gujarati, Oriya, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil.

English and Urdu have not been integrated so far.

The team has also created a finger-spelling method that can be used to

generate a sign language for hearing-impaired persons.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

6. **Jamia team develops ultrasensitive quantum thermometer**

Researchers at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, have developed an ultrasensitive quantum thermometer using graphene quantum dots.

The thermometer can precisely measure a wide range of temperature: 27 degree C to –196 degree C.

The thermometer has high sensitivity when measuring different temperatures and can measure very minute (micro Kelvin) changes in temperature.

Application

The device can find widespread applications in cryogenic temperature sensing.

It will be useful in the pharmaceutical industry, healthcare to measure the incubation temperature of biological cells and molecules

It will also be useful for automobile industry to measure the ignition temperature within the engine.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

7. **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty**

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said leaving the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is one of the "many options" Tehran has to retaliate against U.S. sanctions.

Related Information

About Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Non-Proliferation Treaty or the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is an international agreement with the objective of thwarting the spread or proliferation of nuclear weapons and related technology.

It aims to encourage and support collaboration in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to propel towards accomplishing nuclear disarmament, as well as complete and general disarmament.

The treaty was out for signature on 1st July 1968 and came into force two years later in March 1970.

The treaty is significant because more nations have accepted this treaty than any other disarmament treaty.

The four member states of the United Nations that have not accepted NPT are India, Pakistan, Israel and South Sudan.

North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003.

Topic- GS Paper 2–Important

Treaty Source- The Hindu

8. Fani may turn into 'extremely severe cyclone'

A tropical cyclone called Fani in the Bay of Bengal was likely to develop into an "extremely severe cyclone" in the next two days, the India Meteorological Department.

It will hit coastal areas of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

Related Information

Tropical cyclone

A tropical cyclone is a rapidly rotating storm system characterized by a low-pressure center, a closed low-level atmospheric circulation, strong winds, and a spiral arrangement of thunderstorms that produce heavy rain.

Depending on its location and strength, a tropical cyclone is referred to by different names, including hurricane, tropical storm, cyclonic storm, tropical depression, and simply cyclone.

A hurricane is a tropical cyclone that occurs in the Atlantic Ocean and northeastern Pacific Ocean.

A typhoon occurs in the northwestern Pacific Ocean

In the south Pacific or Indian Ocean, comparable storms are referred to simply as "tropical cyclones" or "severe cyclonic storms"

Topic-GS Paper 3 –Disaster

Management Source- Indian Express

9. Centre for Predictive Human Model Systems: Non-animal research models

Atal Incubation Centre (AIC) at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular

Biology (CCMB), in collaboration with Humane Society International/ India (HSI/India), has launched Centre for Predictive Human Model Systems.

It is dedicated to enable a shift in science by focusing on 21st century new-approach methodologies instead of animal models for research.

The centre aims to prioritise investment in human-based, non-animal methodologies in life sciences research in India.

The World laboratory animal day was observed on 24th April.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- The Hindu Business Line

10. Ishad : A mango variety

A local mango variety called Ishad, the pulp of which has been extracted for over a century for making value-added products, is facing the threat of becoming rare due competition from hybrid varieties.

It is grown in Ankola in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

30.04.2019

1. Army invokes emergency powers for missile deal

The Army is in the process of procuring Spike-LR Anti-Tank Missiles from Israel and Igla-S Very Short Range Air Defence Systems (VSHORAD) from Russia through a set of new financial powers for emergency procurements sanctioned by the Defence Ministry.

Under the latest emergency financial powers, armed forces have been given a free hand to procure equipment worth up to 300 crore on a priority basis.

VSHORAD deal

The deal for VSHORAD, to replace the legacy Igla systems in service, began in 2010.

Related Information Spike-LR (Long Range) Anti-Tank Missiles

Spike is a fire-and-forget missile with lock-on before launch and automatic

self-guidance. The missile is equipped with an imaging infrared seeker. The Spike-LR (Long Range) has a range of 4 km.

IGLA-S (SA-24)

It is the latest model of Russian Man-portable air-defence system (MANPADS) technology.

It offers superior performance over earlier supplied SA-18 missiles to India.

It is designed for use against visible aerial targets at short range such as tactical aircraft, helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAVs) both head-on and receding, at any time of day, against background clutter and decoy flares (jamming).

It will have a maximum range of 6 km, altitude of 3 km along with all-weather capability.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Defence Source- The Hindu

2. Committee constituted to oversee clean air programme

The Union Environment Ministry has constituted a committee to implement the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

Its aim to reduce particulate matter (PM) pollution by 20%-30% in at least 102 cities by 2024.

The committee will be chaired by the Secretary, Union Environment Ministry along with its members.

The committee would be headquartered in New Delhi.

The NCAP is envisioned as a five-year action plan with 2019 as the first year. There would be a review every five years.

The NCAP targets, the cities would be expected to calculate the reduction in pollution, keeping 2017's average annual PM levels as the base

year. WHO Report on Air Pollution

World Health Organisation's (WHO) database on air pollution over the years has listed Tier I and Tier II Indian cities as some of the most polluted places in the world.

In 2018, 14 of the world's 15 most polluted cities were in India.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

3. National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)

NCMC Meeting chaired by Cabinet Secretary took stock of the preparatory measures arising out of the Cyclonic Storm 'Fani'.

Related Information

National Crisis Management Committee

It is a temporary committee set up by the Government of India in the wake of a natural calamity for effective coordination and implementation of relief measures and operations.

On the constitution of such a committee, the Agriculture Secretary shall provide all necessary information to and seek directions if any.

The Committee consists of Cabinet Secretary of various departments as stakeholders.

The Committee has also Crisis Management Group (CMG) for dealing with matters relating to relief in the wake of major natural calamities.

The CMG will meet at least twice in a year and as often as may be required by the Relief Commissioner.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Disaster Management

Source- Indian Express

4. Global Food Policy report: 2019

It has been released by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

The 2019 report highlights the urgency of rural revitalization to address a growing crisis in rural

areas. Highlights of the Report

Rural population account for 45.3% of the world's total population and at least 70% of the world's population remains extremely poor.

Rural transformation and revitalization have been the pre-eminent goal of India's development efforts since independence.

Nearly 50% of rural youth all over the world do not have any formal job they are either unemployed or under-employed.

Almost one billion people, most living in rural areas of Africa and South Asia, still lack access to electricity. As the growth rates varied greatly across the region, South Asia remained the fastest growing region in the world in 2018, as economic growth continued to

strengthen. Related Information
IFPRI

It provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. The headquarter of IFPRI is in Washington USA.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important
Report Source- Economics Times

5. Spain's Socialists win snap election

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's Socialists won snap elections.

Snap Election

In a parliamentary democracy, a general election is held once every few years in which every adult can vote to determine the people who will represent them in parliament.

A snap election refers to a swift and often unforeseen decision by the party in power to initiate a general election sooner than the fixed-term deadline.

A snap election is an election called earlier than expected.

It differs from a recall election in that it is initiated by politicians (usually the head of government or ruling party) rather than voters, and from a by-election in that the winners will serve an entire term as opposed to the remainder of an already established term.

Since the power to call snap elections usually lies with the incumbent, they usually result in increased majorities for the party already in power having been called at an advantageous time. However, snap elections can also backfire on the incumbent and resulting in a decreased majority or even the opposition winning or gaining power.

As a result of the latter cases, there have been occasions in which the consequences have been the implementation of fixed-term elections.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –
Governance Source- The Hindu

6. Cyberex: Cyber Exercise

The Indian armed forces have decided to conduct a major cyber exercise called "Cyberex".

It is the first such major joint exercise of the Army, Indian Air Force (IAF) and Indian Navy under the aegis of integrated defence staff with participation from several other organisations.

The aim of the exercise is to assess the situation, seek responses, damage control and requisite actions required for a synergised response during cyber attacks.

It will also include scenarios connected to cyber attacks on critical Indian infrastructure like strategic networks and power grids.

India with the help of Cyberex and other such endeavours wants to be prepared for challenges in the fifth dimension of warfare after the first four battlefields of land, air, sea & space.

However, India has lagged far behind in developing cyber warfare capabilities despite having a robust civilian information technology sector.

On the other hand, China has steadily upgraded its cyber weapons to degrade or destroy an adversary's military assets and to keep strategic assets safe.

Note:

Indian Government has also decided to establish a small tri-service Defence Cyber Agency (DCA) much like the ones for space and special operations under a two star general. The DCA led by a naval officer will undertake defensive cyber operations with the offensive ones being left to other agencies under the national security advisor.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence
Source- The Hindu Business line

7. Cyclone Kenneth

Heavy rain and flooding in northern Mozambique due to Cyclone Kenneth killed at least 38

people. Related Information
 Cyclone Kenneth

It is powerful tropical cyclone which battered northern Mozambique with winds of up to 220 Km/hour.

The cyclone also struck the island nation of Comoros.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Disaster Management
 Source- AIR + Indian Express

8. EU slams Donald Trump's withdrawal from the UN arms trade treaty

The European Union warned that US President Donald Trump's rejection of a UN treaty designed to regulate the global arms trade would hamper the global fight against illicit weapons trafficking.

Trump said that the United States would not abide by the 2013 treaty aimed at regulating the global arms trade, calling it "misguided" and encroachment on US sovereignty.

The US Senate never ratified the treaty after former president Barack Obama endorsed it.

Related Information ATT
 (Arms Trade Treaty)

It entered into effect in December 2014, requires member countries to keep records of international transfers of weapons and to prohibit cross-border shipments that could be used in human rights violations or attacks on civilians.

While 130 countries originally signed the treaty, only 101 have ratified it. Those include major powers like France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

All 28 Member States of EU have joined the ATT and are determined in pursuing its objectives and its universal ratification and implementation.

The world's largest arms traders, the United States, China and Russia, have not joined.

Topic- GS-2- International
 Relations Source- Economic Times

9. For a malnutrition-free India

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4, India has unacceptably high levels of stunting, despite marginal improvement over the years.

In 2015-16, 38.4% of children below five years were stunted and 35.8% were underweight.

India ranks 158 out of 195 countries on the human capital index.

Lack of investment in health and education leads to slower economic growth.

Ambitious goals

The aim of the National Nutrition Strategy of 2017 is to achieve a malnutrition-free India by 2022.

The plan is to reduce stunting prevalence in children (0-3 years) by about three percentage points per year by 2022 from NFHS-4 levels, and achieve a one-third reduction in anaemia in children, adolescents and women of reproductive age.

In terms of geographical regions, Bihar (48%), Uttar Pradesh (46%) and Jharkhand (45%) have very high rates of stunting, while States with the lowest rates include Kerala, and Goa (20%).

Topic- GS-2- Health Issues

Source- The Hindu



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