



ASPIRE IAS
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PIB

Monthly Magazine

(JULY - 2020)

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Accelerate Vigyan

About

The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) has launched a new scheme called 'Accelerate Vigyan' (AV).

About Accelerate Vigyan:

- Recognizing that all research has its base as the development of quality and well-trained researchers, AV will initiate and strengthen mechanisms of identifying research potential, mentoring, training and hands-on workshops on a national scale.
- The primary objective of this inter-ministerial scheme is to give more thrust on encouraging high-end scientific research and preparing scientific manpower, which can lead to research careers and knowledge-based economy.
- The idea behind the launch of this scheme is to provide a single platform for research internships, capacity building programs, and workshops across the country.
- The vision of the scheme is to expand the research base, with three broad goals:
 - Consolidation
 - Aggregation of all scientific programs, initiating high-end orientation workshops
 - Creating opportunities for research internships for those who do not have access to such resources/facilities
- An Inter-Ministerial Overseeing Committee (IMOC) involving all the scientific ministries/departments and a few others has been constituted for the purpose of supporting SERB in implementing the AV scheme in a successful manner.
- **Components under the AV:**

- **ABHYAAS Program:** It is an attempt to boost research and development in the country by enabling and grooming potential PG/PhD students by means of developing their research skills in selected areas across different disciplines or fields.

- It has two components: High-End Workshops ('KARYASHALA') and Research Internships ('VRITIKA'). This is especially important for those researchers who have limited opportunities to access such learning capacities/facilities/infrastructure.

- **SAMMOHAN:** Under this, there are two subcomponents:

- **SAYONJIKA:** It is an open-ended program to catalogue the capacity building activities in science and technology supported by all government funding agencies in the country.
- **SANGOSHTI:** It is a pre-existing program of SERB.

About SERB:

- The SERB Act 2008 is the legislation of Parliament that established the Board.
- It functions under the Department of Science and Technology, GOI.
- The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) is a statutory body established through an Act of Parliament.
- Supporting basic research in emerging areas of Science & Engineering is the primary and distinctive mandate of the Board.
- **Objectives of SERB:**

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- Assist in setting up infrastructure and environment for scientific pursuit.
- Enable in order to achieve synergy between academic institutions, research and development laboratories and industry for promoting basic research in science and engineering.
- Evolve a system of approach to expeditiously provide funding for research, including monitoring and evaluation, by adopting modern management practices.
- Serve as a premier agency for planning, promoting and funding of internationally competitive research in emerging areas.
- Identify major inter-disciplinary research areas, and individuals, groups or institutions and fund them for undertaking research.
- The Government of India will provide an unconditional and irrevocable guarantee to the special securities issued by the Trust.
- Any NBFC including Microfinance Institutions registered with RBI (excluding those registered as Core Investment Companies) and any HFC registered with the National Housing Bank (NHB) complying with the following broad conditions will be eligible to raise funding from the said facility:
 - Compliance with RBI regulations on Capital adequacy
 - Net NPA is less than 6% as on 31.03.2019
 - Net profit in at least one of the two preceding financial years
 - Rated as investment grade by a rating agency
 - Is not reported under SMA-1 or SMA-2 category by any bank for their borrowing during the period one year prior to 01.08.2018

Special Liquidity Scheme for NBFCs and HFCs

About :

With a view to improving the liquidity position of NBFCs and HFCs, the Union Finance Minister had announced in March 2020 the launch of a Special Liquidity Scheme of Rs. 30,000 crore.

Details:

- The scheme is being launched through a Special Purpose Vehicle in the form of SLS Trust set up by SBI Capital Markets Limited (SBICAP).
- RBI will provide funds for the Scheme by subscribing to government-guaranteed special securities issued by the Trust.
- The total amount of such securities issued outstanding shall not exceed Rs. 30,000 crores at any point in time.
- The Scheme will remain open for 3 months for making subscriptions by the Trust.
- The period of lending (CPs/NCDs of NBFCs/HFCs for a short duration of up to 90 days) by the Trust shall be for a period of up to 90 days.
- The financing would be used by the NFBCs/HFCs only to repay existing liabilities and not to expand assets.
- Further, those market participants who are looking to exit their standard investments with a residual maturity of 90 days may also approach the SLS Trust.
- This facility is a part of the Government of India and RBI's efforts to alleviate the concerns of the market participants on the availability of funds to the sector.

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Drug Discovery Hackathon 2020 (DDH2020)

Context:

Union HRD Minister and Union Health Minister jointly launch the Drug Discovery Hackathon 2020 (DDH2020).

About DDH2020:

- The DDH2020 is an open-source drug discovery hackathon against COVID-19.
- It is a joint initiative of AICTE and CSIR, supported by the Office of Principal Scientific Advisor, Govt. of India, NIC and MyGov.
- The goal of the hackathon is to establish 'Open innovation Model' for in silico drug discovery against the COVID-19 virus and will cover the various processes in drug discovery, including but not limited to, in silico screening of molecules, lead optimization and identification of drug-able non-toxic targets.
- The targets/tools/lead molecules identified through the process of DDH2020 will be further taken forward for synthesis followed by subsequent steps in routine drug discovery programs.
- The hackathon will have two major tracks:
 - Track-1: will primarily deal with drug design for anti-COVID-19 hit/lead molecule generation using tools such as molecular modeling, pharmacophore optimization, molecular docking, hit/lead optimization, etc.
 - Track-2: will deal with designing/optimizing new tools and algorithms which will have an immense impact on expediting the process of in silico drug discovery. Novel or refined tools/algorithms from Track-2 will help develop better models for predicting ADMET in silico, thus improving screening efficiency.

- There is also a third track called "Moon shot" which allows for working on problems that are of 'out of the box' nature.

- The hackathon consists of challenges that are posted as problem statements and, are based on specific drug discovery topics which, are open to the participants to solve.
- My Gov portal is being used and any Indian student can participate.
- Professionals and researchers from anywhere in the world can also participate.
- The winners will be given prizes and the best entries will be taken into stage 2 of the competition.
- The best of stage 2 will go to stage 3.
- The plan is that at the end of the stage 3 competition, the best solutions such as drug molecules or drug targets will be taken to the experimental level and validated for their predictions by either CSIR labs or start-ups.

Swachh Survekshan 2021

About :

A new category of awards titled 'Prerak Daur Samman' announced as part of Swachh Survekshan 2021.

Details:

- The Prerak Daur Samman has a total of five additional subcategories – Divya (Platinum), Anupam (Gold), Ujjwal (Silver), Udit (Bronze), Aarohi (Aspiring) – with top three cities being recognized in each.
- In a departure from the present criteria of evaluating cities on 'population category', this new category will categorize cities on the basis of six select indicator-wise performance criteria which are as follows:

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- Segregation of waste into Wet, Dry and Hazard categories
- Processing capacity against wet waste generated
- Processing and recycling of wet and dry waste
- Construction & Demolition (C&D) waste processing
- Percentage of waste going to landfills
- Sanitation status of cities

Background:

- To encourage cities to improve urban sanitation, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has been conducting the Swachh Survekshan since 2016.
- The competition has been able to imbibe a spirit of healthy competition among the citizens with respect to improving the cleanliness of their cities.
- In the 2020 Swachh Survekshan, an unprecedented 1.87 crore citizens participated. The results for 2020 are yet to be released by the Ministry.
- While Mysuru had won the award for the Cleanest City of India in the first edition of the survey, Indore has retained the top position for three consecutive years (2017, 2018, 2019).

Atmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge

About :

- This has been launched by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology along

with the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and NITI Aayog.

- The chief aim of the challenge is to identify the best Indian Apps that are already being used by citizens and have the potential to scale and become world class Apps in their respective categories.
- This innovation challenge will run in two tracks:
 - Promotion of existing apps
 - For promotion of existing apps and platforms across the categories of e-learning, work-from-home, gaming, business, entertainment, office utilities, and social networking, the government will provide mentoring, hand-holding and support.
 - Track-01 will work in mission mode for identifying good quality apps for the leaderboard and shall be completed in around a month.
 - Track-01 is being launched in 8 categories: office productivity & work from home; social networking; e-learning; entertainment; health and wellness; business including agri-tech and fin-tech; news; games.
- Development of new apps
 - For incubating new apps and platforms, Track-02 initiative will work to help create new champions in India by providing support in ideation, incubation, prototyping and roll out along with market access.
- This challenge will be jointly hosted by the Government and members of the

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tech community to make it more holistic.

- Expected outcomes of the challenge:
 - Give better visibility and clarity to existing apps to achieve their goals.
 - Create tech products to find solutions to tech conundrums with the help of mentorship, tech support and guidance during the entire life-cycle.
- The Innovation Challenge will be available on the MyGov portal.
- A specific jury for each track with experts from Private Sector & Academia will evaluate the entries received.
- Shortlisted Apps will be given awards & will also feature on Leader boards for the information of citizens.
- The Government will also adopt suitable Apps, guide them to maturity and list on Government e-Marketplace (GeM).
- Some of the key evaluation parameters will include Ease of use (UI/UX), Robustness, Security and Scalability.

that a genetic risk score is effective in diagnosing type-1 diabetes in Indians.

- Developed by the University of Exeter, the genetic risk score takes into account detailed genetic information that are known to increase the chance of developing type-1 diabetes. The score may be used at the time of diabetes diagnosis to help decide if someone has type-1 diabetes.

Significance of the study:

- It is widely believed that only children and adolescents get type-1 diabetes and obese and older (typically after 45 years of age) get type-2 diabetes.
- However, recent findings have shown that type-1 diabetes can occur later in life, while type-2 diabetes is on the rise among younger and thinner Indians.
- Distinguishing the two types of diabetes, has therefore, become more complex.
- The two types follow different treatment regime with type-1 diabetes needing lifelong insulin injections but type-2 diabetes often being managed with diet or tablet treatment.
- Misclassification of the type of diabetes may lead to sub-standard diabetes care and possible complications. In this context, this particular study gains importance as it helps in diagnosing diabetes from its type-1 and type 2 variants correctly.

Type-1 diabetes

About :

Genetics could help diagnose type-1 diabetes in Indians: study reveals

Details:

- Researchers at the KEM Hospital and Research Centre, Pune; CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad; and the University of Exeter in the UK have found

Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA)

Context:

The GKRA was launched to start extensive public works to provide livelihood opportunities and create local employment to returnee migrants and similarly affected rural citizens.

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Details:

- As part of this Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan Mission aims at providing household tap connections to every rural household and offers a huge opportunity to engage skilled, semi-skilled and migrant returnees in drinking water supply related works.
- States have been requested to start works in villages of these districts so that it will not only help to ensure an adequate quantity of water at the household level but will also help in providing employment to migrant returnees.
- States have been advised to prioritize taking up works of 'low hanging fruits' i.e. by augmenting or retrofitting existing piped water supply schemes so that these villages become 'Har Ghar Jal Gaon' i.e. 100% Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) villages.

National Atlas and Thematic Mapping Organisation (NATMO)

About :

NATMO publishes 4th updated version of its COVID-19 Dashboard.

About NATMO:

- NATMO was established in 1956 as the National Atlas Organisation.
- Professor S.P. Chatterjee, the doyen of Indian Geography was the Founder-Director of this institute.
- It was renamed in 1978 to give it a broad-based responsibility in the field of thematic cartography and geographical research.

- It is under the administrative control of the Department of Science & Technology of the Government of India.
- It is headquartered in Kolkata.
- Major functions of NATMO:
 - Compilation of the National Atlas of India
 - Preparation of the National Atlas maps in regional languages
 - Preparation of thematic maps based on research studies on environmental and associated aspects and their impact on social and economic development
 - Any other work entrusted by the Central Government or its agencies to NATMO
 - Installation of automated Mapping System for increasing speed and efficiency in mapping
 - Division of Digital mapping System & Digitized and Scanning of existing maps on digital format
 - Geographical Researches
 - Remote Sensing & GIS, Digital Image processing
 - Division on Cartography for the Visually Impaired
 - Capacity and Infrastructure building of NATMO to convert/to upgrade in digital mode

NHAI to Rank Roads for Quality Service

About :

In its effort to improve the quality of roads, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), under the

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Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, has decided to undertake performance assessment and ranking of the highways in the country.

Details:

- The assessment audit and ranking of the National Highways are aimed to take corrective recourse, wherever needed, to improve the quality and provide a higher level of service to highway commuters.
- The assessment parameters are based on different international practices and studies for benchmarking highway performances in the Indian context.
- The criteria for the assessment have been broadly categorised in three main heads:
 - Highway efficiency (45%)
 - Highway safety (35%)
 - User services (20%)
- Additionally, important parameters like operating speed, access control, time taken at toll plaza, road signages, road markings, accident rate, incident response time, crash barriers, illumination, availability of Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS), functionality of structures, provision for grade-separated intersections, cleanliness, plantation, wayside amenities and customer satisfaction will also be considered while conducting the assessment.
- The score obtained by each Corridor in each of the parameters will provide feedback and corrective recourse for higher standards of operation, better safety and user experience to improve existing highways.
- This will also help in identifying and filling gaps of design, standards, practices, guidelines and contract agreements for other NHAI projects.

World Bank to help rejuvenate the Ganga

About :

World Bank provides \$400 million to enhance support for rejuvenating the Ganga.

Details:

- The World Bank and the Government of India signed a loan agreement to enhance support for the Namami Gange programme that seeks to rejuvenate the Ganga river.
- The Second National Ganga River Basin Project will help stem pollution in the iconic river and strengthen the management of the river basin which is home to more than 500 million people.
- The government's Namami Gange programme seeks to ensure that the river returns to a pollution-free, ecologically healthy state.

About the National Ganga River Basin Project:

- The World Bank has been supporting the government's efforts since 2011 through the ongoing **National Ganga River Basin Project**, which helped set up the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) as the nodal agency to manage the river, and financed sewage treatment infrastructure in several riverside towns and cities.
- The National Ganga River Basin Project is a World Bank project with the objective to support India's National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) in:
 - Building capacity of its nascent operational-level institutions, so that they can manage the long-term Ganga clean-up and conservation program.
 - Implementing a diverse set of demonstrative investments for reducing point-source pollution loads in a sustainable manner, at priority locations on the Ganga.

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- There are two components to this Project:
 - Institutional development: The objectives of this component are to build the functional capacity of the NGRBA's operational institutions at both the central and state levels, and to provide support to associated institutions for implementing the NGRBA program.
 - Priority infrastructure investments: The objective of this component is to finance demonstrative infrastructure investments to reduce pollution loads in priority locations on the river.
- The four main sectors of investments are municipal wastewater management, industrial pollution control, solid waste management and riverfront management.
- The NMCG is considered the operational wing of the Project.
- The basin provides more than one-third of India's surface water, 90 percent of which is used for irrigation.
- Paradoxically, this fertile region is also home to some of the poorest sections of India's population, with more than 200 million people living below the national poverty line.
- Cultural significance of the Ganga:
 - As India's holiest river, the Ganga has a cultural and spiritual significance that far transcends the basin's boundaries.
 - It is worshipped as a living goddess and, since time immemorial, people from across the country have flocked to the many historic temple towns the lie along the river's banks to pray and bathe in its flowing waters.

Pollution in the Ganga:

About the Ganga:

- The Ganga is considered India's most important and iconic river.
- It flows down from its glacial source in the high Himalayas to course through five states in the northern plains before draining into the waters of the Bay of Bengal through the Sunderbans delta, the largest mangrove system in the world.
- Along its 2,500 km journey, the river enriches huge swathes of agricultural land and sustains a long procession of towns and cities.
- The sprawling Ganga basin, an area of 860,000 sq km spread across 11 states, is the world's most populous river basin.
- It houses close to half of India's population.
- Over 40 percent of the country's GDP is generated in this region.
- The Ganga today is facing formidable pollution pressures, along with the attendant threats to its biodiversity and environmental sustainability.
- An ever-growing population, together with inadequately planned urbanization and industrialization, has affected the quality of the river's waters.
- Today, the Ganga's waters are sullied by the incessant outpouring of sewage, as well as by the large volumes of solid and industrial waste that are churned out by human and economic activity along the river's banks.
- The absence of adequate infrastructure, along with weak environmental governance and little technical expertise to manage these extreme pollution pressures, has resulted in the rapid deterioration of the water's quality in recent decades.
- The Ganga's mainstem runs through 50 major Indian cities, almost all of which have a population of more than 50,000 people.

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- These towns and cities generate some 3 billion litres of sewage every day, only a fraction of which is treated before it reaches the river.
- While domestic sewage accounts for 70-80 percent of the wastewater that flows into the Ganga, Industrial effluents add another 15 percent, with far-reaching impacts on human and aquatic health due to their toxic nature.
- And, in the absence of adequate solid waste management in most cities, mounds of uncollected garbage add to the pervasive pollution.

last 5 years and stands at more than 87 Gigawatt.

- The share of non-fossil sources in installed capacity of electricity generation increased from 30.5% in March 2015 to 37.7% in May 2020.
- 80 million LPG connections provided in the rural areas providing them with clean cooking fuel and a healthy environment.
- Over 360 million LED bulbs distributed under the UJALA scheme.
- India has moved on to Bharat Stage VI norms from Bharat Stage IV by April 2020.

Ministerial on Climate Action

About :

The fourth edition of the virtual Ministerial on Climate Action witnessed countries exchanging views on how countries are aligning economic recovery plans with the Paris Agreement and the critical enabling conditions to ensure continued climate action.

Details:

- The meeting was co-chaired by the European Union, China and Canada to advance discussions on the full implementation of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to demonstrate continued political commitment to global climate action.
- The virtual meeting was attended by representatives from more than 30 countries.
- The Union Environment Minister highlighted India's achievements in the ministerial:
 - India has achieved a reduction of 21% in the emission intensity of its GDP between 2005 and 2014.
 - India's renewable energy installed capacity has increased by 226% in the

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

About :

Cabinet approves Central Sector Scheme of financing facility under the 'Agriculture Infrastructure Fund'.

About the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund:

- The scheme shall provide a medium – long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and financial support.
- Under the scheme, Rs. One Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans to:
 - Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)
 - Marketing Cooperative Societies
 - Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs)
 - Self Help Group (SHG)

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- Farmers
- Joint Liability Groups (JLG)
- Multipurpose Cooperative Societies
- Agri-entrepreneurs
- Startups
- Aggregation Infrastructure Providers
- Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public Private Partnership Project
- Loans will be disbursed in four years starting with the sanction of Rs. 10,000 crore in the current year and Rs. 30,000 crore each in the next three financial years.
- All loans under this financing facility will have an interest subvention of 3% per annum up to a limit of Rs. 2 crore.
- This subvention will be available for a maximum period of seven years.
- Further, credit guarantee coverage will be available for eligible borrowers from this financing facility under Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme for a loan up to Rs. 2 crore.
- The Project by way of facilitating formal credit to farm and farm processing-based activities is expected to create numerous job opportunities in rural areas.
- The Fund will be managed and monitored through an online Management Information System (MIS) platform.
 - It will enable all the qualified entities to apply for a loan under the Fund.
 - The online platform will also provide benefits such as transparency of interest rates offered by multiple banks, scheme details including interest subvention and credit guarantee offered, minimum documentation, faster approval process

as also integration with other scheme benefits.

- The duration of the Scheme shall be from FY2020 to FY2029 (10 years).

Mongolian Kanjur Manuscripts

About :

First five re-printed volumes of Mongolian Kanjur Manuscripts released.

Details:

- The Ministry of Culture has taken up the project of reprinting of 108 volumes of Mongolian Kanjur under the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM).
- The first set of five volumes of Mongolian Kanjur published under the NMM was presented to the President of India and the Mongolian Ambassador on the occasion of Guru Purnima.
- It is expected that all the 108 volumes of the Mongolian Kanjur will be published by March 2022.

Mongolian Kanjur

- Mongolian Kanjur, the Buddhist canonical text in 108 volumes, is considered to be the most important religious text in Mongolia.
- In the Mongolian language 'Kanjur' means 'Concise Orders' - the words of Lord Buddha in particular.
- It is held in high esteem by Mongolian Buddhists and they worship the Kanjur at temples and recite the lines of Kanjur in daily life as a sacred ritual.
- The Kanjur is kept in almost every monastery in Mongolia.
- The Mongolian Kanjur has been translated from Tibetan. The language of the Kanjur is Classical Mongolian.

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- During the socialist era in Mongolia (1924 to the early 1990s), xylographs were consigned to flames and monasteries were bereft of their sacred scriptures.
- During 1956-58, Professor Raghu Vira obtained a microfilm copy of the rare Kanjur manuscripts and brought them to India.
- And, the Mongolian Kanjur in 108 volumes was published in India in the 1970s by Prof. Lokesh Chandra, former Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha).
- Now, the present edition is being published by the National Mission for Manuscripts, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in which every volume will have a list of contents indicating the original title of the sutra in Mongolian.

Background between India and Mongolia

- Historical interaction between India and Mongolia goes back centuries.
- Buddhism was carried to Mongolia by Indian cultural and religious ambassadors during the early Christian era.
- As a result, today, Buddhists form the single largest religious denomination in Mongolia.
- India established formal diplomatic relations with Mongolia in 1955.

National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM):

- NMM was launched in February 2003 by the Government of India, under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture.
- It has the mandate of documenting, conserving and disseminating the knowledge preserved in manuscripts.
- One of the objectives of the mission is to publish rare and unpublished manuscripts so that the knowledge enshrined in them is spread to researchers, scholars and the general public at large.

- India possesses an estimate of ten million manuscripts, probably the largest collection in the world. These cover a variety of themes, textures and aesthetics, scripts, languages, calligraphies, illuminations and illustrations.

Objectives of NMM:

- Locate manuscripts through national-level surveys.
- Document each and every manuscript and manuscript repository for a National Electronic Database that currently contains information on four million manuscripts, making this the largest database on Indian manuscripts in the world.
- Conserve manuscripts incorporating both modern and indigenous methods of conservation and training a new generation of manuscript conservators.
- To train the next generation of scholars in various aspects of Manuscript Studies like languages, scripts and critical editing and cataloguing of texts and conservation of manuscripts.
- To promote access to manuscripts by digitizing the rarest and most endangered manuscripts.
- To promote access to manuscripts through the publication of critical editions of unpublished manuscripts and catalogues.
- To facilitate the public's engagement with manuscripts through lectures, seminars, publications and other outreach programmes.

National Fish Farmers Day 2020

About :

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National Fish Farmers Day is observed on 10th July every year in honour of scientists Dr. K. H. Alikunhi and Dr. H.L. Chaudhury.

About National Fish Farmers Day:

- These two scientists had successfully demonstrated the technology of induced breeding (Hypophysation) in Indian Major Carps on 10th July 1957 at the erstwhile 'Pond Culture Division' of CIFRI at Cuttack, Odisha (presently Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture, CIFA, Bhubaneswar).
- The event aims to draw attention to changing the way the country manages fisheries resources to ensure sustainable stocks and healthy ecosystems.
- Every year, the event is celebrated by felicitating outstanding fish farmers, aquapreneurs & fisher folks in recognition of their accomplishments in the field and their contribution in the growth of the fisheries sector in the country.
- Fishermen and fish farmers across the nation participate in the event apart from officials, scientists, professionals, entrepreneurs and stakeholders.

India Cycles4Change Challenge

About :

Smart Cities Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs opens registration for India Cycles4Change Challenge.

About the India Cycles4Change Challenge:

- The India Cycles4Change Challenge is an initiative of the Smart Cities Mission, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India to inspire and support Indian cities to quickly implement cycling-friendly initiatives in response to COVID-19.

- The Challenge aims to help cities connect with their citizens as well as experts to develop a unified vision to promote cycling.
- In addition to creating extensive cycling-networks through low-cost interventions like pop-up cycle lanes and traffic-calmed or non-motorised zones, cities could launch programmes such as community-led cycle rental schemes that increase the availability of cycles to citizens and promote the usage of cycling through public events and outreach.
- In the longer term, the Smart Cities Mission encourages cities to convert temporary interventions into permanent.
- Cities are encouraged to collaborate with CSOs, experts, and volunteers as they develop and implement their plans. Citizen collaboration will also be a key metric in the evaluation of proposals submitted by the cities.
- **The Challenge will run in two stages.**
 - Stage One will run until October where cities will focus on piloting quick interventions to promote cycling and developing a scale-up strategy.
 - In October 2020, 11 cities will be shortlisted and will receive Rs. 1 Crore award and guidance from national and international experts to further scale-up the initiatives in Stage Two, which will be held until May 2021.
- **Who can apply?**
 - Cities with a population of more than 5 lakh.
 - Capital cities of states/UTs.
 - Cities under the Smart Cities Mission.
- **Benefits for cities:**
 - Through this challenge, cities will be able to implement quick cycling

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interventions with support from experts and citizens.

- They will also receive guidance on how to create permanent interventions to encourage cycling in their city.

Atmanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping (ASEEM)

About :

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship launches AI-based ASEEM digital platform to bridge the demand-supply gap of skilled workforce across sectors.

About ASEEM digital platform:

- The ASEEM portal aims to help skilled people find sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- Apart from recruiting a skilled workforce that spurs business competitiveness and economic growth, the Artificial Intelligence-based platform has been envisioned to strengthen their career pathways by handholding them through their journeys to attain industry-relevant skills and explore emerging job opportunities, especially in the post COVID era.
- Besides identifying the major skills gap in the sectors and providing a review of global best practices, ASEEM will provide employers a platform to assess the availability of skilled workforce and formulate their hiring plans.
- It refers to all the data, trends and analytics which describe the workforce market and map demand of skilled workforce to supply.
- It will provide real-time granular information by identifying relevant skilling requirements and employment prospects.
- Who developed ASEEM?

- ASEEM, also available as an App, is developed and managed by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in collaboration with Bengaluru-based company Betterplace, specialising in blue-collar employee management.

• The portal consists of three IT-based interfaces:

- Employer Portal – Employer onboarding, Demand Aggregation, candidate selection
- Dashboard – Reports, Trends, analytics, and highlight gaps
- Candidate Application – Create & Track candidate profile, share job suggestion

- ASEEM will be used as a match-making engine to map skilled workers with the jobs available.

• For employees/workers:

- The portal and App will have provision for registration and data upload for workers across job roles, sectors and geographies. The skilled workforce can register their profiles on the app and can search for employment opportunities in their neighbourhood.

• For employers:

- Through ASEEM, employers, agencies and job aggregators looking for skilled workforce in specific sectors will also have the required details at their fingertips.

• For governments:

- It will enable policymakers to take a more objective view of various sectors.

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India's Tiger Census

2461 individual tigers have been photo captured, a whopping 83 % of the tiger population.

About :

India's Tiger Census sets a New Guinness Record for being the world's largest camera trap wildlife survey.

Details:

- The fourth cycle of the **All India Tiger Estimation 2018**, results of which were declared on Global Tiger Day last year has entered the Guinness World Record for being the world's largest camera trap wildlife survey.
- The fourth iteration of the survey – conducted in 2018-19 – was the most comprehensive to date, in terms of both resource and data amassed.
 - Camera traps (outdoor photographic devices fitted with motion sensors that start recording when an animal passes by) were placed in 26,838 locations across 141 different sites and surveyed an effective area of 121,337 square kilometres (46,848 square miles).
 - In total, the camera traps captured 34,858,623 photographs of wildlife (76,651 of which were tigers and 51,777 were leopards; the remainder were other native fauna).
 - From these photographs, **2,461 individual tigers** (excluding cubs) were identified using stripe-pattern-recognition software.

About the All India Tiger Estimation:

- The All India Tiger Estimation done quadrennially is steered by the National Tiger Conservation Authority with technical backstopping from the Wildlife Institute of India and implemented by State Forest Departments and partners.
- The latest results of 2018 have shown that India now has an estimated 2967 tigers out of which

Rheumatoid arthritis

About :

INST scientists formulate nanoparticle to reduce the severity of rheumatoid arthritis.

Details:

- Scientists from the Institute of Nano Science & Technology (INST), Mohali, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, have formulated nanoparticles with chitosan and loaded these nanoparticles with zinc gluconate for reducing the severity of rheumatoid arthritis.

Rheumatoid arthritis:

- Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disease that can cause joint pain and damage throughout the human body.
- It is a chronic inflammatory disorder.
- In some people, the condition can damage a wide variety of body systems, including the skin, eyes, lungs, heart and blood vessels, apart from the joints.
- Rheumatoid arthritis occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks the body's tissues.
- Unlike the wear-and-tear damage of osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis affects the lining of the joints, causing a painful swelling that can eventually result in bone erosion and joint deformity.
- Severe rheumatoid arthritis can cause physical disabilities.
- There is no cure for RA but there are treatments that can help manage it.

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- The element Zinc is vital for maintaining normal bone homeostasis, and its levels are reported to get reduced in rheumatoid arthritis patients.

Guntur Chilli

About :

For the first time, the Indian Railways loads Special Parcel Train to Bangladesh carrying Dry Chillies from Reddipalem in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh state.

About Guntur Chillies:

- Guntur and its surrounding areas in the state of Andhra Pradesh are well known for chillies cultivation.
- The quality of this farm produce is internationally renowned for its uniqueness in taste and brand.
- Guntur chillies are exported to Canada, Asia and Europe.
- Guntur district is the main producer and exporter of most varieties of chillies and chilli powder from India to countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Middle East, South Korea, U.K. and USA & Latin America.
- Chillies have various colours and flavours because of the level of Capsaicin in them.
- Guntur chillies form an important part of curries and various popular dishes of Andhra Pradesh.
- The main trading place for Guntur chilli is called Guntur Mirchi Yard which is also Asia's largest dried red chilli market.
- There are various types of Guntur chilli.
- The **Guntur Sannam Chilli** is a variety which has the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag.
 - Guntur Sannam chilli requires a warm and humid climate for its growth and

dry weather during the period of maturation.

- Sannam chilli belongs to the variety of *Capsicum annum*.
- This chilli has a thick skin and it is generally long (5 – 15 cm in length).
- Globally, India stands first in the production of chilli and in India, Andhra Pradesh leads in its production. Andhra Pradesh alone commands 46% of the chilli production in India.

Indian Railways

About :

Indian Railways on mission mode to become a "**Green Railway**" by 2030 (Net Zero Carbon Emission).

Details:

- The Ministry of Railways has taken a number of major initiatives towards mitigation of global warming and combating climate change.
- Railway Electrification, improving the energy efficiency of locomotives & trains and fixed installations, green certification for installations/stations, fitting bio-toilets in coaches and switching to renewable sources of energy are parts of its strategy of achieving net zero carbon emission.
- The Railways has completed the **electrification** of more than 40000 route km (RKM). Further electrification of lines has also been commissioned.
- It has also taken a number of initiatives to promote **solar energy**.
 - The Railways is harnessing solar energy through rooftop solar panels, on top of buildings including stations.

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- The Railways is also trying to produce power from land-based solar installations for running trains.
- It has also commissioned wind-based power plants.
- The Railways has started other green initiatives like 100 percent LED illumination of buildings and stations.
- It has acquired Green Certifications for many of its production units, workshops, diesel sheds and stores depot, railway stations and campuses.
- In the field of green initiatives, a total of 69,000 coaches have been fitted with more than 2,44,000 bio-toilets.

United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, 2020

About :

NITI Aayog presents India's second Voluntary National Review at UN's High-Level Political Forum.

Details:

- The NITI Aayog presented India's second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, 2020.
- The India VNR 2020 report is titled "Decade of Action: Taking SDGs from Global to Local".

About the India VNR 2020 Report:

- The report is titled "Decade of Action: Taking SDGs from Global to Local".
- The report is a comprehensive account of the adoption and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in India.

- Apart from presenting a review of progress on the 17 SDGs, the report discusses at length the policy and enabling environment, India's approach to localising SDGs, and strengthening means of implementation.

About the United Nations HLPF:

- The HLPF meets annually in July for eight days under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.
- The VNRs presented by Member States at the HLPF are a critical component of the review of progress and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
- The establishment of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was mandated in 2012 by the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), "The Future We Want".
- The first meeting of the HLPF was in 2013. It replaced the Commission on Sustainable Development, which had met annually since 1993.
- The **HLPF is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development** and it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level.
- The theme of the HLPF 2020 is "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development".
- 47 countries carried out VNRs in the 2020 meeting.

PRAGYATA Guidelines on Digital Education

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About :

Union HRD Minister virtually releases PRAGYATA Guidelines on Digital Education.

Background:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the closure of schools and has impacted over 240 million children of the country who are enrolled in schools. Extended school closures may cause loss of learning.
- To mitigate the impact of the pandemic, schools will not only have to remodel and reimagine the way teaching and learning have happened so far, but will also need to introduce a suitable method of delivering quality education through a healthy mix of schooling at home and schooling at school.
- The PRAGYATA guidelines have been developed from the perspective of learners, with a focus on online/blended/digital education for students who are presently at home due to lockdown.

About PRAGYATA Guidelines:

- The guidelines on Digital/Online Education provide a roadmap or pointers for carrying forward online education to enhance the quality of education.
- The PRAGYATA guidelines include eight steps of online/digital learning that is, Plan- Review- Arrange- Guide- Yak(talk)- Assign- Track- Appreciate.
- Based on the class of the students, the guidelines recommend the number of sessions per day and also the number of hours per session.
- These guidelines for school heads and teachers describe the need assessment, planning and steps to implement digital education while ensuring cyber safety and privacy measures.
- It also outlines the support to be provided to students with special needs.

- The main emphasis is on balanced online and offline activities keeping the screen time as an essential parameter in accordance with the level of students.
- Guidelines for physical health and mental wellness are stressed for all stakeholders so that children do not get overly stretched or stressed, or get affected negatively (postural defects, ophthalmic issues, and other physical problems) owing to prolonged use of digital devices.

15th India-EU (Virtual) Summit

About :

The 15th Summit between India and the European Union (EU) was held in a virtual format on 15th July 2020.

Details:

- India was represented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The EU was represented by the presidents of the European Commission and the European Council.
- The leaders decided to strengthen the EU-India Strategic Partnership, based on shared principles and values of democracy, freedom, rule of law, and respect for human rights, aiming at delivering concrete benefits for the people in the EU and India.
- The leaders deliberated on a number of topics and issued a joint statement which touched upon a number of subjects such as:
 - Promotion of effective multilateralism with the UN and the WTO.
 - Bolstering cooperation in international fora to reinforce international security, strengthen preparedness and response for global health emergencies, enhance

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global economic stability and inclusive growth, implement the Sustainable Development Goals and protect the climate and the environment.

- Mutual synergies in the field of healthcare.
 - Trade and investment relations.
 - Tackling climate change and environmental degradation.
 - Sustainable modernisation.
 - Harnessing human-centric digitisation – personal data protection and privacy.
 - Global peace and security, disarmament and non-proliferation and combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including its financing and countering radicalization.
 - Human rights.
- The leaders adopted the “EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025” to guide cooperation between the EU and India over the next five years.
 - They welcomed the signing of the Euratom-India Agreement on research and development cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
 - They also adopted a Joint Declaration on Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy and welcomed the upcoming renewal of the EU-India Science and Technology Agreement for another five years.
 - A free trade deal that India and the European Union have been planning since 2007 remained elusive at the Summit.
 - The EU is also one of the largest investors in India with a cumulative investment of over \$91 billion.

India–US Strategic Energy Partnership

About :

An **India Energy Modeling Forum** was launched in the joint working group meeting of the Sustainable Growth Pillar.

About the Sustainable Growth Pillar:

- The Sustainable Growth Pillar is an important pillar of the India–US Strategic Energy Partnership co-chaired by NITI Aayog and USAID.
- The SG pillar entails energy data management, energy modelling and collaboration on low carbon technologies as three key activities.

About the Energy Modeling Forum (EMF):

- The Energy Modelling Forum (EMF) in the USA was established in 1976 at the Stanford University to connect leading modelling experts and decision-makers from government, industry, universities, and other research organizations.
- The forum provides an unbiased platform to discuss the contemporary issues revolving around energy and environment.
- In India, there was no formalized and systematic process of having a modeling forum.
 - Even then, various think-tanks/research organizations like TERI, IRADe, CSTEP, CEEW, NCAER, etc., have been consistently developing scenarios and contributing through modelling studies and analyses to provide the required inputs to the Environment Ministry and other relevant ministries, including NITI Aayog.

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- The **India Energy Modelling Forum** will accelerate this effort and aim to:
 - Provide a platform to examine important energy and environmental-related issues;
 - Inform decision-making process to the Indian Government;
 - Improve cooperation between modelling teams, government, and knowledge partners, funders;
 - Facilitate exchange of ideas, ensure production of high-quality studies;
 - Identify knowledge gaps at different levels and across different areas;
 - Build capacity of Indian institutions.
- The NITI Aayog will initially coordinate the activities of the forum and finalize its governing structure. The forum would include knowledge partners, data agencies and concerned government ministries.

NISHTHA Programme

About :

Union Ministers jointly launch the first on-line NISHTHA programme for 1200 Key Resource Persons of Andhra Pradesh.

Details:

- Around 23,000 Key Resource Persons and 17.5 lakh, teachers and school heads have been trained under NISHTHA in face-to-face mode till date.
- For training the remaining 24 lakh teachers and school heads, NISHTHA has been customized for online mode.
- NISHTHA has been customized for an online mode to be conducted through DIKSHA and

NISHTHA portals by the NCERT, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need for maintaining social distance and avoiding the congregation of people.

NISHTHA Programme:

- NISHTHA is a National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement at the elementary stage under the Samagra Shiksha scheme.
- The programme was launched in 2019 by the Department of School Education and Literacy.
- Thereafter, 33 states/UTs have launched this programme in their states/UTs in collaboration under Samagra Shiksha, which is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- NISHTHA is a capacity building programme for "Improving Quality of School Education through Integrated Teacher Training".
- It aims to build competencies among all the teachers and school principals at the elementary stage.
- NISHTHA is the world's largest teachers' training programme of its kind.
- The basic objective is to motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in students.
- The expected outcomes of NISHTHA include, among others, improvement in the learning outcomes of students, creation of an enabling environment in the classrooms, improvement in the responsiveness of teachers to the social, emotional and psychological needs of students, ICT integration, etc.

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

About :

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Prime Minister to address High-Level Segment of ECOSOC.

Details:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver a keynote address virtually at this year's High-Level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council session on 17th July 2020 at the United Nations in New York.
- The annual High-level Segment convenes a diverse group of high-level representatives from the Government, the private sector, civil society and academia.
- The **theme** of this year's High-level Segment is "Multilateralism after COVID-19: What kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary".
- This will be the first opportunity for the PM to address the broader UN membership since India's overwhelming election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- The theme of this year's High-Level Segment is resonant with India's priority for the UNSC, wherein the country had called for 'reformed multilateralism' in a post-COVID world.
- It also recalls India's role, as the holder of the inaugural Presidency of ECOSOC (Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar in 1946).
- Modi had earlier delivered the keynote address virtually at the 70th anniversary of ECOSOC in 2016.

Bhagirathi eco-sensitive zone

About :

Approval accorded to the Zonal Master Plan of Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone.

About the Bhagirathi Eco-sensitive Zone:

- The Bhagirathi eco-sensitive zone notification stretches from Gaumukh to Uttarkashi covering

an area of 4179.59 sq km in the state of Uttarakhand.

- The zone notification was first issued by the Environment Ministry in December 2012.

Background:

- Since 2006, a huge public outcry against three bumper to bumper hydropower projects on the upper stretch of the Bhagirathi – Ganga was raised.
- After much deliberation, in 2010, the government decided to cancel the three projects to ensure the protection of the fragile area.
- The Government of India also decided to declare the approximately 135 km stretch from Gaumukh to Uttarkashi as an eco-sensitive zone under the Environmental Protection Act, 1986.
- With due consideration of the cultural significance of the origin path of the Ganga, the decision to preserve this last pristine stretch of the river Ganga was taken.
- Thus, the Bhagirathi eco-sensitive zone notification is a notification meant for protecting the spiritual-cultural significance of the area and to protect/conservate the fragile ecology of the origin of the national river – Ganga.
- There were objections to the notification from Uttarakhand politicians citing it as anti-developmental.
- However, the stretch identified as the eco-sensitive zone is of such fragile nature that it is not suited for the usual developmental activities being carried out elsewhere in the state.
- Moreover, the state has witnessed many disasters in the past that have claimed thousands of lives and have left the area vulnerable.
 - Over the last few years, the frequency & intensity of disasters in the state of Uttarakhand has consistently been increasing.

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- There have been flash floods and landslides, and also earthquakes with increased frequency.
- Experts have repeatedly pointed out that an increased burden of anthropogenic activities lies at the root of this frequent destruction..

Ecological significance of the area:

- Located in the upper Himalayas, the notified area of the Bhagirathi eco-sensitive zone is an interwoven, interdependent fragile Ganga-Himalayan Basin.
- Geographically, the area falls under the Garhwal lesser Himalayas and Higher Himalayas.
- High landslide-prone area
 - A significant part of the eco-sensitive zone area lies in high to very high hazard landslide zone.
 - After the recurrent disasters of 2012 and 2013, many old landslides have become active and many new landslides have also been seen.
 - It has been estimated that, on average, the damage caused by landslides in the Himalayan range costs more than US\$ 1 billion besides causing more than 200 deaths every year, which overall is considered as 30% of such types of losses occurring worldwide.
- High seismic sensitivity zone
 - The state of Uttarakhand is amongst the most seismically active states in the country.
 - There are many parallel thrusts & faults in the state.
- Hydrology of the area
 - The water sources of the Himalayan terrain are of great significance.

- The upper reaches of the Himalayas are the recharge areas of the Tarai & Bhabhar water bodies in the plains.
- Lying at the confluence of the Himalayas & the Indo-Gangetic basin, the Tarai & Bhabhar regions carry the fertile alluvial silt of the waters from the upper reaches that brings rich fertility to this area and carry it further downstream.
- Hydrogeological connectivity of the entire basin is very crucial and cannot be ignored.
- The hydrogeological network is also linked to flora and fauna. Thus, it is an important and integral component of the entire ecological system of the area and cannot be ignored.

Cultural significance of the area:

- Being the origin valley of the river Ganga, Uttarkashi is of immense cultural significance.
- Uttarkashi (literally Kashi of the north) is considered a sacred place for Hindu pilgrimage.
- Gaumukh is the terminus or pout of the Gangotri glacier and the source of the Bhagirathi river. This is the place where the holy Ganga river originates and is hence of great significance.
- There are many historically and culturally significant places along the Bhagirathi river.

U.S.-India Strategy Energy Partnership (SEP)

About :

The 2nd ministerial meeting of the U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP) held.

Details:

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- The SEP was established in 2018 at the direction of President Trump and Prime Minister Modi, recognizing the strategic importance of energy to the U.S.-India bilateral relationship.
- The SEP builds upon our longstanding energy partnership and sets the stage for meaningful engagements through robust government-to-government cooperation and industry engagement.
- The SEP organizes inter-agency engagement on both sides across four primary pillars of cooperation:
 - Power and Energy Efficiency
 - Oil and Gas
 - Renewable Energy
 - Sustainable Growth.
- Through these pillars, the United States and India are working to strengthen and modernize the power grid and distribution utilities for clean, affordable, and reliable energy access; improve efficiency, flexibility, and environmental performance in the power sector; promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth through long-term energy development; enhance energy security through oil and gas trade, and infrastructure investment; advance the development, deployment, and integration of renewable energy and expand access to finance for renewable energy projects; and reduce market barriers to energy trade and investment.
- The two countries are also leading joint research and development (R&D) through the **S.-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy-Research (PACE-R)** on smart grids and energy storage to increase resilience and reliability of the electric grid.

Outcomes of the SEP:

- The two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding to begin cooperation on Strategic Petroleum Reserves operation and maintenance,

including the exchange of information and best practices.

- They also discussed the possibility of India storing oil in the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve to increase their nations' strategic oil stockpile.
- The two sides agreed to collaborate on advanced high-efficiency coal technologies with low-to-zero emissions through carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS).
- Several other agreements were signed between agencies of both countries in the field of energy to advance the strategic and economic interests of both countries.
- The sides launched a public-private **Hydrogen Task Force** to help scale up technologies to produce hydrogen from renewable energy and fossil fuel sources and to bring down the cost of deployment for enhanced energy security and resiliency.
- They also signed an MOU to collaborate on India's first-ever **Solar Decathlon India** in 2021, establishing a collegiate competition to prepare the next generation of building professionals to design and build high-efficiency buildings powered by renewables.

National Disaster Response Fund

About :

Central Government allows contributions from any person or institution in the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).

About the NDRF:

- The NDRF is a fund constituted under Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- It supplements the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) of a state in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in the SDRF.

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- Natural calamities of cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloud burst and pest attack considered to be of severe nature by the GOI.
- The NDRF was formed by merging the erstwhile National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) with the NDRF.
- It is a fund managed by the Central Government for meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation due to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.
- NDRF amount can be spent only towards meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation.
 - It is used only for providing immediate relief.
 - It is not used for providing compensation for crop loss, etc.
 - It is also not used for measures to mitigate the risk or impact of disasters, for which another fund, the National Disaster Mitigation Fund has been constituted.
- The fund is in the "Public Accounts" of the GOI under the "reserve funds not bearing interest".
- It is audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).

COVID Protection System

About :

CSIR-CMERI, Durgapur, unveils the COVID Protection System (COPS) for the Workplace.

About CMERI:

- **CMERI** or the Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute is the apex R&D institute for

mechanical engineering under the aegis of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

- The institute's mandate is to serve the industry and develop mechanical engineering technology so that India's dependence on foreign collaboration is substantially reduced in strategic and economic sectors.
- Besides, the institute is facilitating innovations and inventions for establishing the claims of Indian talent in international fields where Indian products shall ultimately compete.
- It is located in Durgapur, West Bengal.

About the COVID Protection System (COPS) for the Workplace:

- This system can be utilised by organisations as healthcare workers and frontline security guards are vulnerable to COVID-19 through infected individuals and contaminated objects.
- The COPS is a conglomeration of Solar Based Intelligent Mask Automated Dispensing Unit cum Thermal Scanner (IntelliMAST), Touchless Faucet (TouF) and 360 degree Car Flusher.
 - **IntelliMAST:** It is an Intelligent surveillance kiosk which identifies the body temperature and whether an individual is wearing face mask or not through customized software solutions.
 - **Touchless Faucet (TouF):** It is being launched for households and office spaces. The system dispenses liquid soap and water from the same faucet with a time-gap of 30 seconds, which is as per the latest Government guidelines.
 - **360 degree Car Flusher:** It is a sodium hypochlorite water screen that uses specialized nozzle design to ensure that the sanitizer diffused water is evenly spread over and under the car body or wheels with adequate water force and coverage.

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- These are now available for Technology Transfers and Product Orders.

Manodarpan initiative

About :

Manodarpan initiative launched by the Union HRD Minister.

About Manodarpan initiative:

- It is an initiative launched by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- The objective of the initiative is to provide psychosocial support to students for their mental health and well-being.
- The portal will include student counselling, tips, podcasts, etc. aimed at reducing stress levels and anxiety.

Background:

- The outbreak of the global pandemic COVID-19 presents a challenging time for everyone around the world.
- Not only is this pandemic a serious medical concern, but it also brings mixed emotions and psycho-social stressors for all.
- There are emerging mental health concerns with a specific focus on children, adolescents and youth especially children with disabilities.
- Children and adolescents may be more vulnerable and may experience a heightened level of stress, anxiety and fearfulness, along with a range of other emotional and behavioural issues.
- Such unanticipated and sudden changes will be required to be addressed from all educational platforms.
- Teachers as well as families with an empathetic and patient approach can go a long way in

mitigating such needs of children and adolescents.

- This time can also be challenging for teachers and parents.

The Manodarpan initiative has been launched with a view to provide support to students, families and teachers all over the country and ensure their well-being.

India Ideas Summit

About :

PM to deliver the keynote address at India Ideas Summit on 22 July.

About the India Ideas Summit:

- The Summit is being hosted by the US-India Business Council.
- This year marks the 45th anniversary of the formation of the Council.
- The theme for this year's Summit is 'Building a Better Future'.
- The virtual Summit will feature high-level presence from Indian and US government policymakers, state-level officials, and thought leaders from business and society.
- The Summit will witness discussions on areas including India-US cooperation and the future of the relation between the two countries in a post-pandemic world.

About the US-India Business Council (USIBC):

- The USIBC was formed in 1975 as a business advocacy organization to enlighten and encourage the private sectors of both India and the United States to enhance investment flows.
- The organization serves as a direct link between business and Government leaders, resulting in

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increased trade and investment to strengthen ties between the two nations.

- Is partners with major Indian trade associations such as the CII, FICCI, NASSCOM, etc.

Sero-prevalence study conducted by National Centre for Disease Control

About :

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) commissioned a sero-surveillance study in Delhi.

Details:

- This study has been done by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) in collaboration with Govt. of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, following a rigorous multi-stage sampling study design.
- The study was conducted from 27th of June 2020 to 10th July 2020.
- For all the 11 districts of Delhi, survey teams were formed.
- Blood samples were collected from selected individuals after taking written informed consent and then their sera were tested for IgG antibodies and infection using COVID KAVACH ELISA.
- It is one of the largest sero-prevalence studies conducted in the country using the ELISA testing.
- 21,387 samples were collected as per lab standards and were tested.
- The tests help in identifying the of presence of antibodies in the general population.
- These tests performed are not diagnostic tests but only provides information about past

infection due to SARS-CoV-2 in individuals who test positive.

- Antibody testing repeatedly done over time i.e. sero-surveillance, generates important evidence for assessing the spread of the pandemic from time to time.

What do the results show?

- The results of the sero-prevalence study show that on an average, across Delhi, the prevalence of IgG antibodies is 23.48 %.
- The study also indicates that a large number of infected persons remain asymptomatic.

What is sero-prevalence?

- Sero-prevalence is the number of persons in a population who test positive for a specific disease based on serology (blood serum) specimens.
- It is often presented as a percent of the total specimens tested or as a proportion per 100,000 persons tested.
- As positively identifying the occurrence of the disease is usually based upon the presence of antibodies for that disease (especially with viral infections such as Herpes Simplex, HIV, and SARS-CoV-2), this number is not significant if the specificity of the antibody is low.

About the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC):

- The organisation was established to function as a national centre of excellence for control of communicable diseases.
- It works under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, GOI.
- It was formerly known as the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD).
- Its origins can be traced back to the Central Malaria Bureau, formed in 1909 in Kasauli. It

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was renamed as the Malaria Survey of India in 1927.

- In 1938, it shifted to Delhi under the name Malaria Institute of India (MII). In 1963, the MII became the NICD.

• NCDC Functions:

- Trained health manpower development: carries out various training programmes in the field of communicable diseases.
- Applied research: in various fields such as bacteriology, virology, mycology, immunology, parasitology, studies of epidemic-prone diseases, transmission dynamics of diseases, studies on pesticides' biological hazards, etc.
- Specialised services: diagnostics, storage and supply of diagnostic reagents, entomological services, quality control of insecticides, outbreak investigations, etc.
- Publications: bringing out regular newsletters and other material disseminating valuable information about any event of public health importance.
- NCDC's main centre is in Delhi, and it has branches in many other locations in India.

G20 Digital Ministers' Meet

About :

Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology represented India during this virtual meeting.

About the G20 Digital Ministers' Meet:

- A virtual meeting of G20 Digital Economy Ministers hosted by Saudi Arabia took place.

- Saudi Arabia is holding the presidency of the G20.
- The Digital Economy Ministers Meeting took place as part of the Sherpa Track for the G20 Leaders' Summit 2020.
- Consultations for the annual G20 meeting are conducted through three tracks. Government discussions take place under the Finance and Sherpa Tracks. Civil society organizations participate through Engagement Groups.
- The Sherpa Track includes meetings of Ministers and relevant senior officials focused on socioeconomic issues such as agriculture, anti-corruption, climate, digital economy, education, employment, energy, environment, health, tourism, trade and investment.
- The Saudi Arabian Presidency has selected the theme, "Realizing Opportunities of the 21st Century For All".

International Union of Railways (UIC)

About :

Director-General of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) nominated as the Vice-Chairman of the UIC Security Platform.

Details:

- Arun Kumar, DG, RPF has been nominated as the Vice Chairman of the UIC Security Platform for the time period July 2020 to July 2022.

About the International Union of Railways:

- Also known as the Union Internationale Des Chemins (UIC), the International Union of Railways is headquartered in Paris, France.
- The UIC is the worldwide professional association representing the railway sector and promoting rail transport.
- The UIC is the association for technical cooperation amongst railways and coordinates

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the sector's position as it negotiates its evolving relationship with the supply industry and research and develops needs in order to draw full advantage of potential interest to railway companies.

- The UIC's chief mission is to promote rail transport at a global level with the objective of optimally meeting current and future challenges of mobility and sustainable development.
- It was established in 1922.
- On behalf of the Indian Railways, the RPF has been an active member of the UIC.
- **UIC Security Platform:**
 - The UIC Security Platform is empowered to develop and formulate analysis and policy positions on behalf of the rail sector in matters relating to the security of persons, property and installations.
 - The security platform promotes the exchange of information and experience among the security agencies of UIC members and proposes common interest projects and activities in the field of railway security as dictated by the requirement of members or external events.
 - The COVID-19 Task Force set up by the UIC security platform has proved to be very useful in exchange of ideas, precautions to be taken, restoration efforts and experience sharing during the current pandemic.

Details:

- The government amended the GFR 2017 to enable the imposition of restrictions on bidders from countries that share a land border with India on grounds of **defence of India**, or matters directly or indirectly related to **national security**.
- The Department of Expenditure has issued this Order.
- As per this Order, any bidder from countries that share a land border with India can bid in the procurement of goods/services **only if the bidder is registered with the Competent Authority**.
- **Who is the Competent Authority?**
 - The Registration Committee constituted by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- **Also required:**
 - Political clearance from Ministry of External Affairs
 - Security clearance from Ministry of Home Affairs
- The Order takes into its ambit public sector banks and financial institutions, autonomous bodies, Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and Public-Private Partnership projects receiving financial support from the Government or its undertakings.
- The GOI has also written to the Chief Secretaries of the state governments to implement this Order in procurement by State Governments and state undertakings, etc.
 - For State Government procurement, the Competent Authority will be constituted by the states but **political and security clearance will remain necessary**.
- Relaxation has been provided in certain limited cases, including for the procurement of medical

General Financial Rules (GFR) 2017

About :

Restrictions on Public Procurement from certain countries.

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supplies for containment of the COVID-19 pandemic till 31st December 2020.

- By a separate Order, countries to which the Government of India extends lines of credit or provides development assistance have been exempted from the requirement of prior registration.
- The Order does not apply to procurement by the private sector.

General Financial Rules:

- GFRs are a set of rules that deals with matters concerning public finances.
- They are issued by the Department of Expenditure under the Finance Ministry.
- These rules are to be followed by all departments/ministries and organisations under the government and other specified bodies while dealing with matters involving public finances.
- They were first issued in 1947, and later were modified in 1963, 2005 and the latest in 2017.

Hydrogen-CNG (H-CNG)

About :

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways invites public suggestions on the inclusion of H-CNG as an automotive fuel.

What is H-CNG?

- H-CNG is a blend of hydrogen and CNG, the ideal hydrogen concentration being 18%.
- This blended gas provides the advantages of both CNG (compressed natural gas) and hydrogen.
- Tests conducted by the Automotive Research Association of India and the IOCL have found that compared to conventional CNG, use of H-CNG can reduce the emission of carbon

monoxide up to 70%, besides enabling up to 5% savings in fuel.

- In 2018, the Environment Pollution Prevention and Control Authority (EPCA) had recommended to the Supreme Court that Delhi's buses switch to H-CNG from the current CNG being used as fuel.

Mission on Integrated Development of Horticulture

About the Mission on Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched in 2014 for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector.
- It covers fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew and cocoa.
- Chief objectives include horticulture sector growth through:
 - Research and technology promotion
 - Extension
 - Post-harvest management
 - Processing and marketing
 - Encouraging aggregation of farmers into farmer groups such as FPOs
 - Augmenting farmers' incomes
 - Enhancing horticulture production
 - Improving productivity by way of quality germ-plasm, planting material and water use efficiency through micro-irrigation
 - Supporting skill development

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- Creating employing generation opportunities for rural youth
- Sub-schemes/components under MIDH:
 - National Horticulture Mission
 - Horticulture Mission for North East and the Himalayan States
 - National Horticulture Board
 - Coconut Development Board
 - Central Institute for Horticulture (Nagaland)
 - National Bamboo Mission
- The MyGov platform is designed, developed and hosted by National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

About :

82nd Raising Day of CRPF.

About CRPF:

- The CRPF is one of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) in India. The other forces under the CAPF are the ITBP, BSF, Assam Rifles, National Security Guard, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).
- Out of these, the CRPF is the largest.
- It is under the Ministry of Home Affairs and is for internal security.
- Established in 1939 as the Crown Representative Police, it is one of the oldest central paramilitary forces in the country.
- In 1949, it was renamed as the Central Reserve Police Force by an act of parliament.
- Its mission is to facilitate the government to maintain the rule of law, public order and internal security.
- It played a key role in the amalgamation of the princely states into the Indian Union.
- **Functions of the CRPF:**
 - Riot control/crowd control
 - Tackling left-wing extremism
 - Counterinsurgency operations
 - Protection of VIPs and vital installations
 - Fighting aggression during times of war

MyGov

About :

Six years of MyGov.

About MyGov:

- MyGov is a citizen engagement online platform that was launched in 2014.
- It has been conceptualized as a common platform for the Indian government to "crowdsource governance ideas from citizens".
- The MyGov platform provides an opportunity to citizens and all stakeholders from across the world to share their views on key governance issues across all stages by directly engaging with government departments, policymakers and implementers.
- Since its launch, it has more than 122 lakh registered users.
- The platform is used by almost all government departments not only to consult on policy formulations but also for disseminating information to the citizens.
- It is also being used to address key citizen concerns.

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- Preventing environmental degradation and protecting local flora and fauna
- Rescue and relief operations during natural calamities
- Taking part in United Nations peacekeeping missions
- Bulk drugs are also called Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API).
- China's Hubei province is considered the hub of the API industry.
- Around 70% of the Indian API imports come from China.

Objectives of the scheme:

The chief objective of the scheme is to reduce the cost of bulk drug manufacturing in the country and reduce dependence on imports for the same.

- To promote setting up of bulk drug parks in the country for providing easy access to world-class Common Infrastructure Facilities (CIF) to bulk drug units located in the park.
- To help industry meet the standards of the environment at a reduced cost through innovative methods of common waste management system.
- To exploit the benefits arising due to the optimization of resources and economies of scale.

About the scheme:

- The scheme envisages the creation of 3 bulk drug parks in the country.
- It is a central sector scheme with a total financial outlay of Rs.3000 Crore.
 - The grant-in-aid will be 90% of the project cost in the case of North-East and hilly States and 70% in the case of other States. Maximum grant-in-aid for one bulk drug park is limited to Rs.1000 crore.
- The duration of the scheme is from 2020 to 2025.
- The parks will have common facilities such as solvent recovery plant, distillation plant, power & steam units, common effluent treatment plant, etc.

Scheme for Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks

About :

Union Minister launched the scheme for the Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks.

Background:

- The Indian pharmaceutical industry is the third-largest in the world in terms of volume and the 14th largest in terms of value.
- India contributes 3.5% of the total medicines and drugs exported globally.
- However, India is still dependent on imports for bulk drugs.
 - Bulk drugs are critical basic raw materials that are used to produce the finished dosage formulations.
- The growth of the pharmaceutical sector is contingent upon the ability to ensure the uninterrupted supply of quality bulk drugs and the capacity to upscale their manufacturing during emergency situations.
- It is therefore highly desirable to achieve self-reliance in bulk drug manufacturing.
- This scheme is promoted with a view to bring down the manufacturing cost of bulk drugs and increase competitiveness in the industry.

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- For implementing the scheme, the respective state government will set up a State Implementing Agency (SIA).
- The SIA will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the Bulk Drug Park.

Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020

About :

Second draft of Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 placed in the public domain inviting suggestions.

About DAP 2020:

- As per the new draft policy, procurement of goods and services (dubbed Capital Acquisition schemes) will be broadly classified as:
 - Buy
 - Buy (Indian – IDDM)
 - Buy (Indian)
 - Buy (Global – Manufacture in India)
 - Buy (Global)
 - Buy and Make
 - Buy and Make (Indian)
 - Buy and Make
 - Leasing
 - Make
 - Design and Development (D & D)
 - Strategic Partnership Model (SPM)
- A Simplified Capital Expenditure Procedure (SCEP) may also be followed for replenishment or repairs or refits of recurring nature of 'In

Service' equipment/systems, which entail high cost and longer service life.

- The most preferred category would be the 'Buy Indian – IDDM' (Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured), wherein at least 50 per cent is Indigenous Content (IC) on the cost basis of the base contract price.
- As per the draft procedure, preference will be given to indigenous design, development and manufacturing of defence equipment.
- The Defence Ministry will notify a list of weapons/platforms banned for import, updated from time to time and SHQ (sector headquarters) will ensure that no weapon/platform figuring on the list is procured ex import.
 - These equipment may, therefore, be procured under the Buy (Indian – IDDM), Buy (Indian), Buy and Make (Indian) (only if Buy quantities are zero) and Buy and Make (only if Buy quantities are zero) categories of procurement.

Global Tiger Day

Context:

Union Environment Minister releases detailed report of Tiger Census on the eve of Global Tiger Day.

About the Tiger Census:

- The Tiger Census, conducted in 2018, showed the population of tigers in the country had increased from 2226 in 2014 to 2967 in 2018 (an increase of 33%).
- India conducts a survey of the tiger population every four years. It's a long, arduous task that involves forest officials and scientists trekking

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across half a million square kilometres looking for evidence of the tiger population.

- Around 70% of the tigers of the world are in India.
- Madhya Pradesh has the most number of tigers in India. This is followed by Karnataka and Uttarakhand is in the third place.
- The tiger reserve having the maximum number of tigers in the country is the Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand.

About Global Tiger Day:

- Also known as the International Tiger Day, this day is observed on July 29th every year.
- The idea behind this observance is to spread awareness of the importance of tiger conservation (which are listed as endangered in the IUCN Red List).
- This day was marked for the first time in 2010 at the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit held in Russia.
 - The Summit aimed to promote a global system for protecting the natural habitats of tigers and to raise public awareness and support for tiger conservation.

Tiger Range Countries

- Tiger Range Countries are those countries where wild tigers still roam free.
- There are 13 such countries, namely: India, Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Bhutan, Russia, Malaysia and Indonesia.

World Hepatitis Day

About :

Empathy e-Conclave on World Hepatitis Day.

About World Hepatitis Day:

- 28th July is observed as World Hepatitis Day every year.
- The idea behind the observance is to raise awareness of the global burden of viral hepatitis.
- The theme for 2020 is "Hepatitis-free future".
- It is one of eight official global public health campaigns marked by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- 28 July was chosen as the day because it is the birth anniversary of Baruch Samuel Blumberg, an American physician who did pioneering work on the hepatitis B virus.

About Hepatitis:

- Hepatitis refers to an inflammatory condition of the liver.
- The condition can progress to fibrosis (scarring), cirrhosis or liver cancer.
- It is commonly caused by a viral infection, but there can be other causes as well (such as toxic substances, autoimmune diseases, etc.)
- There are five main strains of the hepatitis virus – A, B, C, D and E. Together, Hepatitis B and C are the most common cause of deaths, with 1.4 million lives lost each year.
- Hepatitis A and E are typically caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water. Hepatitis B, C and D usually occur as a result of parenteral contact with infected body fluids.

India Report on Digital Education, 2020

Context:

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HRD Minister launches India Report on Digital Education, 2020.

About the India Report on Digital Education, 2020:

- This report details the various initiative and programmes of the MHRD and also the state/UT governments with respect to online learning initiatives.
- It was compiled and released by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).
- Some of the initiatives are:
 - DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) – more on PIB dated 9 April 2020.
 - Swayam Prabha TV Channels
 - Radio broadcasting is being used for children in remote areas who are not online.
 - Differently-abled students: One DTH channel is being operated specifically for hearing impaired students in sign language. For visually and hearing impaired students, study material has been developed in Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language; both are available on NIOS website/YouTube.
 - E-textbooks: The e-textbooks can be accessed using e-Pathshala web portal and mobile app by students, teachers, teacher educators and parents.
 - National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER): NROER is an open storehouse of e-content for students, teachers, teacher educators and parents.
- Future plans include :
 - Developing digital classrooms as an instructional modality – Integration of

use of technology with the education system.

- Inclusion of virtual vocational training, virtual labs & skill development courses.
- Multi-mode access to education using web portals, mobile apps, TV channels, radio, podcasts, etc. with coherent user experience.
- Developing quality e-content in local languages.
- Developing a framework for enhancing learning within and outside the classroom, and for assessments in the era of digital education.
- Framing of Online/Digital Education Guidelines addressing the digital divide.
- Efforts are also underway for developing mechanisms to provide textbooks to all children at home, upskill teachers to leverage e-learning resources, use of mobiles to increase penetration, etc.
- NCERT has also developed an alternate academic calendar.

International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER)

About :

Prime Minister at the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) at the start of the ITER Assembly.

About ITER:

- ITER is an energy project located in Cadarache, Southern France.
- It is the largest plasma-based fusion reactor ever built.

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- It will be the first fusion device to maintain fusion for long periods of time.
- ITER will also be the first fusion device to test the integrated technologies, materials, and physical regimes necessary for the commercial production of fusion-based electricity.
- ITER will work on the "Tokamak" concept where the reaction of hydrogen isotopes Deuterium and Tritium produces energy by the mass-energy conversion principle, thereby proving to be a source of unlimited energy.
- The idea of the ITER was first launched in 1985.
- It is a collaborative project involving thousands of engineers and scientists from 35 countries.
- As of 2019, 66% of the project's construction has been completed.
- ITER members: European Union, China, India, USA, Japan, Russia and South Korea.
- India formally joined the ITER Project in 2005.
- ITER Organization (IO) is the central team responsible for construction at site and operation, while the ITER partners created their own domestic agencies to deliver their commitments to ITER. ITER-India is the Indian domestic agency.
 - ITER-India is a specially empowered project of the Institute for Plasma Research (IPR), an aided organization under the Department of Atomic Energy, Govt. of India.
- India is responsible for the delivery of the following ITER packages:
 - Cryostat
 - In-wall Shielding
 - Cooling Water System
 - Cryogenic System
 - Ion-Cyclotron RF Heating System

- Electron Cyclotron RF Heating System
- Diagnostic Neutral Beam System
- Power Supplies
- Diagnostics

Screening of bilirubin level in newborns

About :

A team from S.N. Bose National Centre For Basic Sciences (SNBNCBS) has developed a 'no-touch' and painless device for non-invasive screening of bilirubin in newborns. The SNBNCBS, located in Kolkata, is an autonomous research Institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

Details:

- The new device developed has been named 'AJO-Neo'.
- The operation of the device is based on non-contact and non-invasive spectrometry-based techniques for measurement of neonatal bilirubin level as an alternative of total serum bilirubin (TSB) test without limitations of other available bilirubin meters.
- According to the team, this is a reliable device for measuring the bilirubin levels in preterm, and term neonates irrespective of gestational or postnatal age, sex, risk factors, feeding behaviour or skin colour.
- The device can give the test result in about 10 seconds compared to the conventional blood test, which can take up to 4 hours for report generation.
- The detection of neonatal blood bilirubin (Hyperbilirubinemia) faster is extremely important for therapeutic management in order

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to avoid Kernicterus leading to neuro-psychiatry problems in neonatal subjects.

What is bilirubin?

- Bilirubin is an orange-yellow pigment that occurs normally when part of the red blood cells break down.
- If the bilirubin levels are abnormally high, it is an indication that the red blood cells are breaking down at unusual rates or that the liver is not breaking down waste properly and clearing the bilirubin from the blood.
- The bilirubin test measures the amount of bilirubin in the blood. It is used to find the cause of health conditions such as jaundice, liver disease and anaemia. The test is used to diagnose and monitor liver and bile duct diseases like hepatitis, cirrhosis and gallstones.

- Conduct investigations into violation of consumer rights
- Institute complaints/prosecution
 - It can file complaints of violation of consumer rights or unfair trade practices before the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, and the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.
- Order recall of unsafe goods and services
- Order discontinuation of unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements
- Impose penalties on manufacturers/endorsers/publishers of misleading advertisements
- The CCPA will be a national-level regulator with its headquarters in Delhi.

Central Consumer Protection Authority

About :

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) established.

About the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA):

- The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 has come into force from 20th July 2020.
- The CCPA has been established as per Section 10 of the Act.
- **The objective of the CCPA is to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers as a class.**
- It will be empowered to:

Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHCs)

About :

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs released guidelines for ARHCs.

About ARHCs Scheme:

- The Housing Ministry had launched the ARHCs scheme as a sub-scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U) as a part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- The chief objective of the initiative is to provide dignified and affordable living spaces to the urban poor/migrants in need.

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- Estimated to benefit about 3.5 lakh people, the government is also considering allowing 100% FDI in the scheme.
- **Implementation models:**
 - The scheme provides an opportunity for all States/UTs to convert their existing vacant houses constructed under various Central/State Government schemes into ARHCs.
 - Another model allows construction, operation and maintenance of ARHCs by public or private entities on their own available vacant land for a period of 25 years.
- ARHCs will be a mix of single/double bedroom Dwelling Units and Dormitory of 4/6 beds including all common facilities which will be exclusively used for rental housing for a minimum period of 25 years.
- **Benefits of the scheme:**
 - Ensure dignified living environments for urban poor and migrants close to their workplaces at affordable rates.
 - This will unlock existing vacant housing stock and make them available in urban space.
 - It will propel new investment opportunities and promote entrepreneurship in the rental housing sector by encouraging Private/Public Entities to efficiently utilize their vacant land available for developing ARHCs.
 - Prevent the proliferation of slums.
 - Strengthen municipal finances at ULB level.
 - Ensure a sustained supply of workforce and increased productivity for industries and manufacturing units.

Finance Commission's report on agricultural exports

About :

15th Finance Commission's HLEG on Agricultural Exports submits report.

Details:

- The 15th Finance Commission had set up a High Level Group (HLG) on Agricultural Exports whose objective was to recommend measurable performance incentives for states to encourage agricultural exports and to promote crops to enable high import substitution.
- The major recommendations of the HLG are:
 - Focus on 22 crop value chains – demand-driven approach
 - Solve Value Chain Clusters (VCC) holistically with a focus on value addition
 - Create State led export plan with participation from stakeholders
 - The private sector should play an anchor role
 - Centre should be an enabler
 - A robust institutional mechanism to fund and support the implementation
- State-led Export Plan
 - This would be a business plan for a crop value chain cluster, that will lay out the opportunity, initiatives and investment required to meet the desired value chain export aspiration.
 - These plans will be action-oriented, time-bound and outcome-focused.
 - The Group recommended that for the success of these plans, they should be prepared by collaboration with private players and commodity boards. The

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Centre should play the role of an enabler.

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