

Portal SANTUSHT

'Santusht' - Implementation Monitoring Cell (IMC) has been constituted in the Office of Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Labour and Employment in January 2020.

Objective -

The objective of 'Santusht' is to promote transparency, accountability, effective delivery of public services and implementation of policies, schemes of Ministry of Labour and Employment at grassroot level through constant monitoring.

Prelims facts -

In 2018, Ministry of Defence, Department of Defence Production has launched a programme '**Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti (MRGS)**' to promote self-reliance and have an enabling framework for creation of Intellectual Property (IP) and management of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) in Indian Defence sector.

Changes in Abortion Law

The Union Cabinet cleared a long-pending change to the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971** that raises the legally permissible limit for an abortion to 24 weeks from the current 20 weeks.

Following the efforts of the Health Ministry, the change also **accepts failure of contraception as a valid reason for abortion not just in married but also in unmarried women.**

Amendments -

- It increases the maximum permissible gestation age for abortion to 24 weeks, with the proviso that for pregnancies that are between 20-24 weeks opinions will be required from two doctors rather than one. This has been specially done keeping in mind "vulnerable women including survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women (like differently-abled women, Minors) etc".
- The upper gestation limit will not apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by a Medical Board.
- The composition, functions and other details of the Medical Board are to be prescribed subsequently in Rules under the Act. This clause has been put to keep such cases out of courts; the government deemed a Medical Board should examine the various aspects of the case and take a call.

Facts on Abortion -

- According to a 2016 study published in The Lancet by the Guttmacher Institute and the World Health Organisation, an estimated 56 million abortions took place globally each year between 2010 and 2014.
- In 2015, a study in The Lancet Global Health, also by Guttmacher Institute and IIPS, estimated that 15.6 million abortions were performed in India in 2015. This translates to an abortion rate of 47 per 1,000 women aged 15-49, which is similar to the abortion rate in neighbouring countries.

National Population Policy

National Population Policy formulated in the year 2000, reaffirms the Government's commitment towards voluntary and informed choice, target free approach and achievement of replacement level of fertility by simultaneously **addressing the issues of contraception, maternal health and child survival.**

Achievements -

As a result of the Government's efforts, the successes achieved are enumerated below:

- The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined from 2.9 in 2005 to 2.2 in 2017 (SRS).
- 25 out of 37 States/UTs have already achieved replacement level fertility of 2.1 or less.
- The Decadal growth rate has declined from 21.54% in 1999-2000 to 17.64 % during 2001-11.

- The Crude Birth Rate (CBR) has declined from 23.8 to 20.2 from 2005 to 2017 (SRS).
- The Teenage birth rate has halved from 16 % (NFHS III) to 8 % (NFHS IV).

Hunar Haat

The Union Minister for Minority Affairs has said that “Hunar Haat”, being organised across the country by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, have proved to be a “Mega Mission” of economic empowerment of needy master artisans and craftsmen.

About Hunar Haat -

- Hunar Haat is an exhibition of handicrafts and traditional products made by artisans from the minority communities.
- These are **organised by the Ministry of Minority Affairs under USTTAD** (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.
- The USTTAD scheme **aims to promote and preserve the rich heritage of the traditional arts & crafts of the minority communities.**
- These Haat **aim to provide market exposure and employment opportunities to artisans, craftsmen and traditional culinary experts.**
- It envisages boosting the skills of craftsmen, weavers and artisans who are already engaged in the traditional ancestral work.

Draft Arbitration Council of India Rules

The **New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC), Act 2019** was enacted with a view to **provide for the establishment and incorporation of the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre for the purpose of creating an independent and autonomous regime for institutionalised arbitration** and to make it a hub for institutional arbitration and to declare the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre to be an institution of national importance. The Act replaced the ordinance on the subject which had come into force on 2nd March, 2019.

Details -

- As per **section 5 of the Act, NDIAC will be headed by a Chairperson, who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court or a Judge of a High Court or an eminent person, having special knowledge and experience in the conduct or administration of arbitration, law or management, to be appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.**
- Besides, it will also have **two Full-time or Part-time Members** from amongst eminent persons having substantial knowledge and **experience in institutional arbitration, both domestic and international.**
- In addition, **one representative of a recognised body of commerce and industry** shall be nominated on rotational basis as a Part-time Member.
- The Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law & Justice; Financial Adviser nominated by Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance and Chief Executive Officer, NDIAC will be ex-officio Members.

Ease of Living Index and Municipal Performance Index 2019 launched

To help assess the progress made in cities through various initiatives and empower them to use evidence to plan, implement & monitor their performance, two Assessment Frameworks, viz. Ease of Living Index (EoLI) and Municipal Performance Index (MPI) 2019 have been **launched by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs.**

Details -

Both these indices are designed to assess quality of life of citizens in 100 Smart Cities and 14 other Million Plus Cities.

Municipal Performance Index -

- With the Municipal Performance Index 2019, the Ministry has sought to assess the performance of municipalities based on five enablers namely **Service, Finance, Planning, Technology and Governance** which have been further divided into 20 sectors which will be evaluated across 100 indicators.
- This will help Municipalities in better planning and management, filling the gaps in city administration, and improving the liveability of cities for its citizens.

Ease of Living Index -

Ease of Living Index is aimed at providing a holistic view of Indian cities - **beginning from the services provided by local bodies, the effectiveness of the administration, the outcomes generated through these services in terms of the liveability within cities and, finally, the citizen perception of these outcomes.**

The key objectives of the Ease of Living Index are four-folds, viz.

- a) generate information to guide evidence-based policy making;
- b) catalyse action to achieve broader developmental outcomes including the SDG;
- c) assess and compare the outcomes achieved from various urban policies and schemes; and
- d) obtain the perception of citizens about their view of the services provided by the city administration.

EoLI 2019 will facilitate the assessment of ease of living of citizens across three pillars: **Quality of Life, Economic Ability and Sustainability** which are further divided into 14 categories across 50 indicators.

Government raps US agency for Nipah work

The Indian government has sharply censured the US government's Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for funding an 'unapproved' Indian laboratory in Manipal, and not securing the necessary permissions for undertaking training in India for work on Nipah virus, considered a potential bio-weapon.

About Nipah virus -

- Nipah is an infectious disease that **broke out in Malaysia and Singapore in 1998 and 1999.**
- It first appeared in domestic pigs and has been found among several species of domestic animals including dogs, cats, goats, horses and sheep.
- The infection is also known to affect human beings.
- The organism which causes Nipah Virus encephalitis is **an RNA or Ribonucleic acid virus of the family Paramyxoviridae, genus Henipavirus**, and is closely related to Hendra virus.
- The virus has been listed in the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code and must be reported to the OIE (OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code).

Symptoms -

- The human infection presents as an encephalitic syndrome marked by fever, headache, drowsiness, disorientation, mental confusion, coma, and potentially death.
- During the outbreak in Malaysia, up to 50 per cent of clinically apparent human cases died.
- There is no specific treatment for Nipah Virus. The primary treatment for human cases is intensive supportive care.

Upgraded 155mm artillery gun handed over to Army

The Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) has handed over Sharang, the first 130mm M-46 artillery gun upgraded to 155mm to the Indian Army.

About Sharang -

- Sharang is the 130mm artillery gun 'up-gunned' to 155mm, 45 calibre up-gunning based on the Army's tender.
- The Army had issued the Request for Proposal (RFP) in 2013 for both OFB and private industry.
- The gun's range has now gone from 27km to over 36km with the upgrade.

- In all, OFB will upgrade 300 130mm guns to 155mm and the contract will be completed in four years.

AJEYA-WARRIOR 2020

The fifth edition of **Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR-2020** between India and United Kingdom Army was held recently at Salisbury Plains, United Kingdom.

Objective -

The aim of exercise is to conduct training of troops in **counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in both Urban and Semi Urban areas.**

22nd Law Commission constituted

Union Cabinet has approved Twenty-second Law Commission of India for a period of three years from the date of publication of the Order of Constitution in the Official Gazette.

Mandate of the Commission -

The Law Commission of India shall, inter-alia, :-

- **identify laws which are no longer needed or relevant and can be immediately repealed;**
- **examine the existing laws** in the light of Directive Principles of State Policy and suggest ways of improvement and reform and also suggest such legislations as might be necessary to implement the Directive Principles and to attain the objectives set out in the Preamble of the Constitution;
- consider and convey to the Government its views on any subject relating to law and judicial administration that may be specifically referred to it by the Government through Ministry of Law and Justice (Department of Legal Affairs);
- Consider the requests for **providing research to any foreign countries** as may be referred to it by the Government through Ministry of Law and Justice (Department of Legal Affairs);
- take all such measures as may be necessary to harness law and the legal process in the service of the poor;
- **revise the Central Acts of general importance** so as to simplify them and remove anomalies, ambiguities and inequities.

Background -

- The Law Commission of India is a **non-statutory body constituted by the Government of India from time to time.**
- The Commission was **originally constituted in 1955 and is re-constituted every three years.** The tenure of twenty-first Law Commission of India was upto 31st August, 2018.
- The various Law Commission have been able to make important contribution towards the progressive development and codification of Law of the country. The Law Commission has so far submitted 277 reports.

22nd Law Commission -

The 22nd Law Commission will be constituted for a period of three years from the date of publication of its order in the Official Gazette. It will consist of:

- a full-time Chairperson;
- four full-time Members (including Member-Secretary)
- Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs as ex-officio Member;
- Secretary, Legislative Department as ex officio Member; and
- not more than five part-time Members.

All India Conference of Central Administrative Tribunal 2020

The annual All India Conference of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) was held in New Delhi recently.

About Central Administrative Tribunal -

- It has jurisdiction to deal with service matters pertaining to the Central Government employees or of any Union Territory, or local or other government under the control of the Government of India, or of a corporation owned or controlled by the Central Government.
- The CAT was set-up on 1 November 1985. It **has 17 regular benches**, 15 of which operate at the principal seats of High Courts and the remaining two at Jaipur and Lucknow.
- These Benches also hold circuit sittings at other seats of High Courts. **The tribunal consists of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Members.**
- The **Members are drawn, both from judicial as well as administrative streams** so as to give the Tribunal the benefit of expertise both in legal and administrative spheres.
- **The appeals against the orders of an Administrative Tribunal shall lie before the Division Bench of the concerned High Court.**

11000 crores project transmission project

The government plans to set up a 900-km power transmission link that will help large solar and wind energy projects in Ladakh supply electricity across the country.

Details -

- The move is part of India's strategy to develop the Union territory of Ladakh.
- The ₹11,000-crore marquee project seeks to resolve grid connectivity problems faced by the region.
- The power link will initially transfer around 2,500 megawatts (MW) and will be developed in the third phase of the green energy corridors to help tap Ladakh's solar energy potential of 40 gigawatts (GW).

Funding of the project -

- Various options are being discussed to facilitate the power transmission project. It can be either a VGF (viability grant funding) project or a PPP (public-private partnership) project or a mix of both. It may also have a generation component.
- VGF is a grant and is at the centre of India's infrastructure-creation plans through PPPs

Significance -

- This is expected to attract investments for setting up green energy projects in the cold desert region.
- The strategic project assumes significance as it will help supply power to the people of Leh and Kargil districts, besides defence establishments, during harsh winters and also help transmit surplus power to the rest of the country in summers.
- However, its construction will be a logistical challenge, considering the region remains snow covered for nearly six months with very low temperature and oxygen levels.
- India is running what will become the world's largest clean energy programme with the aim of achieving 175GW of clean energy capacity by 2022 as part of its global climate change commitments. New Delhi plans to add 100GW of solar capacity by 2022, including 40GW from rooftop projects.

Revamped Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

The Union Cabinet has approved revamping of "**Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**" and "**Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)**" to address the existing challenges in implementation of Crop Insurance Schemes.

Major changes -

- Allocation of business to Insurance Companies to be done **for three years** (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- Flexibility to States/UTs to implement the Scheme with option to select any or many of additional risk covers/features like prevented sowing, localised calamity, mid-season adversity, and post-harvest losses. Further, States/UT can offer specific single peril risk/insurance covers,

like hailstorm etc, under PMFBY even with or without opting for base cover (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).

- **Enrolment under the Scheme to be made voluntary for all farmers (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).**
- Central Share in Premium Subsidy to be increased to 90% for North Eastern States from the existing sharing pattern of 50:50 (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).

About Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana -

- The PMFBY replaces the erstwhile two schemes National Agricultural Insurance Scheme as well as the Modified NAIS.
- It aims to provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
- There is a uniform premium of only 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all Rabi crops.
- In case of annual commercial and horticultural crops, the premium to be paid by farmers will be only 5%.
- The premium rates to be paid by farmers are very low and balance premium will be paid by the Government to provide full insured amount to the farmers against crop loss on account of natural calamities.
- There is no upper limit on Government subsidy. Even if balance premium is 90%, it will be borne by the Government.

Government notifies medical devices as drugs

The Union Health Ministry has notified medical equipment used on humans as drugs under **Section 3 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act** with effect from April 1, 2020. The Ministry, through a gazette notification, also released the **Medical Devices Amendment Rules, 2020**, for mandatory registration of medical devices.

Why?

It is aimed at ensuring that all medical devices meet certain standards of quality and efficacy, the notification will also make medical device companies accountable for quality and safety of their products.

About Medical Devices Amendment Rules, 2020 -

- Called the Medical Devices (Amendment) Rules, 2020, these are applicable to devices “**intended for internal or external use in the diagnosis, treatment, mitigation or prevention of disease or disorder in human beings or animals**” (as notified by the ministry) and require online registration of these devices “with the Central Licensing Authority through an identified online portal established by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation for this purpose”.
- Every medical device, either manufactured in India or imported, **will have to have quality assurance before they can be sold anywhere in the country.**
- A large number of commonly used items including hypodermic syringes and needles, cardiac stents, perfusion sets, catheters, orthopaedic implants, bone cements, lenses, sutures, internal prosthetic replacements etc are covered under the new rules and will have to comply starting April.

Swachh Bharat Mission second phase gets nod

The Centre will begin implementing the second phase of its Swachh Bharat Mission in rural areas from April, focusing on solid and waste management and the sustainability of the abolition of open defecation.

About Phase II of Swachh Bharat Mission -

- The Union Cabinet approved an allocation of ₹52,497 crore for the scheme from the budget of the **Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation over the next four years.**
- The scheme will be implemented by the States, with a **fund sharing pattern of 60:40 between the Centre and the States.** In the northeastern and Himalayan states, the Central share will be 90%.

- Phase II would continue the **provision of a ₹12,000 per household incentive** for households which still do not have toilets.
- **Funding norms** for Solid and Liquid Waste Management **have been rationalised and changed to per capita basis** in place of number of households.
- The financial assistance to gram panchayats for **construction of community managed sanitary complexes** had been increased to **₹3 lakh per complex, from ₹2 lakh.**

About Swachh Bharat Mission -

- The **first phase of the scheme**, carried out between 2014 and 2019, **focused on the goal of abolishing open defecation** by ensuring that all households had access to a toilet and used it.
- According to government data, **more than 10 crore toilets were constructed under the scheme and rural areas in all States** had declared themselves open defecation free (ODF) by October 2019.

What is ODF, ODF+ and ODF++?

- **ODF** - A city / ward can be notified/declared as ODF city/ ODF ward if, at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating in the open.
- **ODF+** - At any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, AND all community and public toilets are functional and well maintained.
- **ODF++** - At any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/ or urinating in the open; all community and public toilets are functional and well maintained, and; faecal sludge/ septage and sewage is safely managed and treated, with no discharging and/or dumping of untreated faecal sludge/septage and sewage in drains, water bodies or open areas.

Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill 2020

The Union Cabinet has approved a historic Bill for the welfare of Women in the Country – the Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill 2020.

Features -

- The **National Board** (envisaged under the Bill) shall lay down code of conduct to be observed by persons working at clinics, to set the minimum standards of physical infrastructure, laboratory and diagnostic equipment and expert manpower to be employed by clinics and banks.
- The States and Union Territories shall constitute the **State Boards and State Authorities** within three months of the notification by the Central Government.
- The **State Board** shall have the responsibility to follow the policies and plans laid by the National Board for clinics and Banks in the State.
- The Bill also provides for **National Registry and Registration Authority** to maintain a Central database and assist the National Board in its functioning.
- The Bill also proposes for a **stringent punishment for those practising sex selection, sale of human embryos or gametes, running agencies/rackets/organisations for such unlawful practices.**

Benefits -

The major benefit of the Act would be that it will regulate the Assisted Reproductive Technology services in the country. Consequently, infertile couples will be more ensured/confident of the ethical practices in ARTs.

Background -

- Assisted reproductive technology (ART) has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few years. India has one of the highest growths in the ART centres and the number of ART cycles performed every year.
- Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART), including In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), has given hope to a multitude of persons suffering from infertility, but also introduced a plethora of legal, ethical and social issues.
- India has become one of the major centres of this global fertility industry, with reproductive medical tourism becoming a significant activity.

- Clinics in India offer nearly all the ART services—gamete donation, intrauterine insemination (IUI), IVF, ICSI, PGD and gestational surrogacy. However, in spite of so much activity in India, there is yet no standardisation of protocols and reporting is still very inadequate.

Kala Kumbh

With an objective to promote Geographical Indication (GI) crafts and heritage of India **the Ministry of Textiles is organising Kala Kumbh - Handicrafts Thematic Exhibition** in various parts of the country through the Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts).

Details -

The exhibitions are planned in various major cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. The exhibitions are **sponsored by Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)**.

What is GI tag?

The GI tag is used on handicrafts which correspond to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g., a town, region, or country). As on August 2019, 178 GI handicraft products were registered from all over India.

Technology Group

The Union Cabinet has approved the Constitution of an empowered “**Technology Group**”.

Details -

- Cabinet has approved constitution of a 12-Member Technology Group with the Principal Scientific Adviser to Government of India as its Chair.
- This Group is mandated to render timely policy advice on latest technologies; mapping of technology and technology products; commercialisation of dual use technologies developed in national laboratories and government R&D organisations; developing an indigenisation road map for selected key technologies; and selection of appropriate R&D programs leading to technology development.

Mandate of the group -

The Technology Group will :-

- render the best possible **advice on technology** to be developed for a **technology supplier and the technology procurement strategy**;
- develop in-house expertise in aspects of policy and **use of emerging technologies**; and
- ensure sustainability of public sector technology developed/being developed at PSUs, national labs and research organisations.

SAMPRIITI-IX

A joint military training exercise SAMPRITI-IX is being conducted at Umroi, Meghalaya between India and Bangladesh.

Details -

- It is the ninth edition of such exercise which is hosted alternately by both countries.
- The exercise is hosted alternately by both countries.
- The **eighth edition** of the exercise was conducted at **Tangail, Bangladesh**.

State of Bird Report 2020

India is hosting the 13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) from 17th to 22nd February, 2020 at Gandhinagar in Gujarat.

Details -

- The theme of CMS COP-13 is '**Migratory species connect the planet and we welcome them home**'.
- The mascot for CMS COP-13 is '**Gibi – The Great Indian Bustard**'.
- Recently, the State of India's Bird 2020 was released at the 13th Conference of Parties of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals is taking place in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

State of Bird Report 2020 -

- The groups that show the greatest decline are raptors, migratory shorebirds, and habitat specialists, including White-rumped Vulture, Richard's Pipit, Indian Vulture, Large-billed Leaf Warbler, Pacific Golden Plover and Curlew Sandpiper.
- Of the 261 species for which long-term trends could be determined, 52 per cent have declined since 2000, with 22 per cent declining strongly
- The species that have shown an increase in numbers include Rosy Starling, Feral Pigeon, Glossy Ibis, Plain Prinia and the Ashy Prinia
- In all, 43 per cent of species showed a long-term trend that was stable and 5 per cent showed an increasing trend.

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals -

- In order to protect the migratory species throughout their range countries, a **Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), has been in force since 1983**, under the aegis of the **United Nations Environment Programme**.
- Also referred to as the **Bonn Convention**, it provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats and brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
- **APPENDIX I** - Under this convention, migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix I and Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them.
- **APPENDIX II** - Migratory species that need conservation and management or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention.

4th anniversary of RURBAN Mission

The 4th Anniversary of the launch of Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) was observed recently.

About RURBAN Mission -

- Undertaken by the Union Ministry of Rural Development, the SPMRM **focuses on cluster-based integrated development through Spatial Planning**.
- Rurban clusters are identified across the country's rural areas showing increasing signs of urbanisation - i.e. **increase in population density, high levels of non-farm employment, presence of growing economic activities and other socioeconomic parameters**.
- The Mission aims to transform these Urban clusters by stimulating local economic development, enhancing basic services, and creating well planned Rurban clusters.
- Under the mission **300 Rurban clusters are envisaged** to be developed in a time bound manner.
- SPMRM is a **Core Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.

National Technical Textiles Mission

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval to set up a National Technical Textiles Mission with a total outlay of Rs 1480 Crore, with a view to position the country as a global leader in Technical Textiles. The Mission would have a four year implementation period from FY 2020-21 to 2023-24.

What are technical textiles?

- Technical textiles are **material and products manufactured primarily for their technical properties and functional requirements** rather than for aesthetic characteristics.
- The scope of use of technical textiles encompasses a wide range of applications such as agro-textiles, medical textiles, geo-textiles, protection-textiles, industrial-textiles, sports-textiles and many other usages.
- Use of technical textiles have benefits of increased productivity in agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture fields, better protection of military, para-military, police and security forces, stronger and sturdier transportation infrastructure for highways, railways, ports and airports and in improving hygiene and healthcare of general public.

About National Technical Textiles Mission -

The mission will have four components -

1. Research, innovation and development
 2. Promotion and market development
 3. Export promotion
 4. Education, training and skill development
- India shares nearly 6% of world market size of 250 Billion USD. However, the annual average growth of the segment is 12%, as compared to 4% world average growth.
 - Penetration level of technical textiles is low in India at 5-10%, against 30-70% in advanced countries. The Mission aims at improving penetration level of technical textiles in the country.

International protection for Great Indian Bustard, Bengal Florican and Asian Elephant

India's proposal to include **Great Indian Bustard, Asian Elephant and Bengal Florican** in **Appendix I of UN Convention on migratory species** was unanimously accepted at the ongoing thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in Gandhinagar.

Asian Elephant –

- The Government of India has declared Indian elephant as National Heritage Animal.
- Indian elephant is also provided highest degree of legal protection by listing it in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Great Indian Bustard –

The Great Indian Bustard, an iconic, critically endangered and conservation dependent species, exhibits transboundary movements, and its migration exposes it to threats such as hunting in boundary area of Pakistan-India and power-line collisions in India.

Bengal Florican –

The Bengal Florican an iconic, critically endangered species of topmost conservation priority, exhibits transboundary movements, and its migration exposes it to threats such as land use changes, collision with power transmission line at boundary area of India-Nepal and probable power-line collisions.

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals –

- In order to protect the migratory species throughout their range countries, a **Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), has been in force since 1983**, under the aegis of the **United Nations Environment Programme**.
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restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them.

- **APPENDIX II** – Migratory species that need conservation and management or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention.

EESL completes 10 years of service to the nation

On the occasion of its tenth anniversary celebrations, the Minister of Power has announced the successful installation of 10 lakh smart meters across India, under the Government of India's **Smart Meter National Programme (SMNP)**.

These smart meters, operational in **Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and Bihar**, aim to bring efficiency in the distribution system leading to better service delivery. The programme is being implemented through **Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)**.

About EESL -

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) was founded in 2009.
- It is a joint venture of four national Public-Sector Undertakings - NTPC Limited; Power Finance Corporation Limited; Rural Electrification Corporation Limited, and; POWERGRID Corporation of India Limited.
- EESL is leading the market-related activities of the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE), one of the eight national missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change.

About Smart Meter National Programme -

- EESL's Smart Meter National Programme (SMNP) is working to eventually **replace 25 crore conventional meters with smart meters across India**.
- The smart meters are **installed as per guidelines issued by the Central Electricity Authority**.
- Smart meters are part of the overall **Advanced Metering Infrastructure solution (AMI)** that measures and records consumers' electricity usage at different times of the day and sends this information to the energy supplier through GPRS technology.
- The programme is expected to better billing efficiency by 75 to 100% while increasing the revenues of the utility companies to Rs. 1,38,100 crore.

Indradhanush-V 2020

The **Indian Air Force (IAF) and Royal Air Force (RAF) of the United Kingdom** jointly commenced the **fifth edition** of Ex Indradhanush at Air Force Station Hindan recently.

Details -

- The focus of this edition of the exercise is 'Base Defence and Force Protection'.
- This theme is of significance considering the recent threats to military establishments from terror elements.
- Ex Indradhanush provides a platform for the IAF and RAF to share and jointly validate strategies and tactics to counter terror threats to their installations.

Cabinet approves Bill to regulate surrogacy

The Union Cabinet has approved the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2020, allowing a "willing" woman to be a surrogate mother and proposing that the Bill would benefit widows and divorced women besides infertile Indian couples.

Changes to the original bill -

- The Cabinet approved the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill after incorporating the recommendations of a Rajya Sabha Select Committee.
- The 15 major changes suggested by the 23-member committee to the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019, also included **deleting the definition of "infertility" as the inability to conceive**

after five years of unprotected intercourse on the ground that it was too long a period for a couple to wait for a child.

- The proposed insurance cover for a surrogate mother has now been increased to 36 months from 16 months earlier.

Features of Bill -

- **The Bill prohibits commercial surrogacy, but allows altruistic surrogacy.** Altruistic surrogacy involves no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother other than the medical expenses and insurance coverage during the pregnancy.
- **Surrogacy is permitted** when it is: (i) for intending couples who suffer from proven infertility; (ii) altruistic; (iii) not for commercial purposes; (iv) not for producing children for sale, prostitution or other forms of exploitation; and (v) for any condition or disease specified through regulations.
- **Surrogacy clinics cannot undertake surrogacy related procedures unless they are registered by the appropriate authority.** Clinics must apply for registration within a period of 60 days from the date of appointment of the appropriate authority.
- The central and the state governments shall constitute **the National Surrogacy Board (NSB) and the State Surrogacy Boards (SSB)**, respectively. Functions of the NSB include, (i) advising the central government on policy matters relating to surrogacy; (ii) laying down the code of conduct of surrogacy clinics; and (iii) supervising the functioning of SSBs.

PM-KISAN Scheme

24th February, 2020 is the 1st anniversary of starting of a new **Central Sector Scheme**, namely, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN).

Background –

- The scheme was started with a view to **augment the income of the farmers** by providing income support to all landholding farmers' families across the country.
- Under the Scheme an amount of Rs.6000/- per year is transferred in three 4-monthly instalments of Rs.2000/- directly into the bank accounts of the farmers, subject to certain exclusion criteria relating to higher income status.
- The Scheme was formally launched on 24th February, 2019 at **Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh**.
- The **Common Service Centres (CSCs)** have also been authorised to do registration of the farmers for the Scheme upon payment of fees.

Eligibility –

- The Scheme initially provided income support to all Small and Marginal Farmers' families across the country, **holding cultivable land upto 2 hectares**.
- Its ambit was later expanded w.e.f. 01.06.2019 **to cover all farmer families in the country irrespective of the size of their land holdings**.
- Affluent farmers have been excluded from the scheme such as Income Tax payers in last assessment year, professionals like Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Chartered Accountants etc and pensioners drawing at least Rs.10,000/- per month (excluding MTS/Class IV/ Group D employees).