

TARGET4IAS: TOGETHER WE CAN



## Weekly Current Affairs

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## Whiteflies

### In news

According to a study by ICAR- National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources, Invasive Whiteflies Species are increasing in India.



**Dusty pest:** Approximately 1.35 lakh hectares of coconut and oil palm in India are affected by rugose spiralling whitefly.

### Key takeaways:

- The species are expanding their host range on valuable plant species (coconut, banana, mango, sapota, guava, cashew, oil palm, and important medicinal plants) due to their **polyphagous nature** (ability to feed on various kinds of food) and prolific breeding.
- Whiteflies have also been **difficult to control by using available synthetic insecticides**. So naturally occurring insect predators, parasitoids and entomopathogenic fungi (fungi that can kill insects) could be used as novel biological control.
- Cotton is one of the worst hit crops by these. **Bt cotton is not resistant against white flies.**

### About Whiteflies

- Whiteflies are Hemipterans that typically feed on the undersides of plant leaves. They comprise the family Aleyrodidae.
- These insects become abundant during warm climates and are found on houseplants and in greenhouses.
- Most of the whitefly species are **native to the Caribbean islands or Central America**.
- The **first invasive whitefly was reported from Kerala in 1995**. These species are now distributed throughout India except Jammu & Kashmir.
- They reduce the yield and damage the crops and excrete sticky honeydew and cause the yellowing or death of leaves.

### INSACOG

- It is a consortium of 10 labs across the country tasked with scanning COVID19 samples from swathes of patients and flagging the presence of variants.
- It an advisory group to the Central government.
- The institutes involved were those with expertise in genome sequencing and included laboratories of the Department of Biotechnology, CSIR, ICMR and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW).

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- The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) under the MoHFW was tasked with coordinating collection of samples from the States as well correlating disease with the mutations.

### Challenges fo INSACOG

- Shortage of funds and insufficient reagents and tools necessary to scale up the process.
- Lack of dissemination of Warnings about emerging variants to public.
- Sharing of datasets.

## Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)

### In news

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has signed a MOU with Microsoft. The MOU aims to support the digital transformation of Tribal schools such as Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS).

### About EMRS

- It is a Government of India scheme for model **residential schools for Scheduled Tribes** across India.
- The scheme was launched by **the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in the year 1997-98**.
- Aim: impart quality education to ST children in remote areas. The schools focus not only on academic education but on the all-around development of the students.
- Government have target to establish EMRS for every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons by the year 2022.
- The government of India provides grants for the construction of schools and recurring expenses to the State Governments under **Article 275 (1)** of the Constitution.

## International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB)

- The United Nations has proclaimed **May 22** as IDB to commemorate the adoption of the text of the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** and to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.
- **Theme for 2021 is “We’re part of the solution”**.

### About Convention on Biological Diversity

- **Legally binding treaty** to conserve biodiversity has been in force since 1993.
- The CBD **Secretariat is based in Montreal**-> operates under the UNEP.
- It has **3 main objectives**-
  - The conservation of biological diversity
  - The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity
  - The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

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- Nearly all countries have ratified it (notably, the US has signed but not ratified).

### Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) programme

#### In news

The Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment has virtually launched a 6-month CBID Program on rehabilitation of Divyangjan.

#### About CBID

- Co-designed by the **Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI)** and the **University of Melbourne**.
- **Aims** to create a pool of Grassroot rehabilitation workers at the community level.
- After training, the workers can work alongside the ASHA and Anganwadi workers->to handle cross-disability issues and facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. The workers will be called '**DivyangMitra**'.
- **Nodal Body:** National Board of Examination in Rehabilitation under the Rehabilitation Council of India will conduct examinations->award certificates to pass-out candidates.

**Note:** RCI was initially set up as a registered society in 1986. It became a Statutory Body in 1993.

### BRICS Astronomy Working Group

#### In news

India virtually hosted the 7th meeting of the BRICS Astronomy Working Group (BAWG) under the Science, Technology, and Innovation track of the BRICS 2021.

#### Key takeaways:

- The countries recommended the networking of existing telescopes in BRICS countries and creating regional data networks.
- The countries indicated research in areas in the future such as building networks of intelligent telescopes, a study of transient astronomical phenomena in the universe, Big data, Artificial Intelligence among others.

#### About BRICS Astronomy Working Group

- The BRICS Astronomy Working Group (BAWG) established in 2015.
- The group provides a platform for the BRICS member countries to collaborate in the field of astronomy.

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### About BRICS

- The acronym BRIC was coined by **Jim O'Neill**, a British economist, in 2001 to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- BRICS does not exist in the form of organization, but it is an annual summit between the supreme leaders of five nations.
- At the **Fortaleza Summit (2014)**, in Brazil, important institutions were created: the **New Development Bank (NDB)** and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**.
- **BRICS 2021**: The chair of BRICS 2021 is in **India**. It will be the third time that India will be hosting the BRICS Summit after 2012 and 2016.
- **The theme of the Summit is, 'BRICS @ 15: Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation, and Consensus.'**

### Dipcovan Kit

#### In news

- Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences lab of DRDO developed a Covid-19 antibody detection kit in association with Delhi's Vanguard Diagnostics Pvt Ltd.
- Its primary purpose is to detect antibodies.
- The kit can detect both spikes and nucleocapsid (S&N) proteins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus with a high sensitivity of 97% and specificity of 99%.
- The kit offers a significantly faster turn-around time. It requires just 75 minutes to conduct the test without any cross-reactivity with other diseases. It also has a shelf life of 18 months.

### UK's Digital border

- Digitising the border will mean officials can now count who is coming in and out of the country and whether they have permission to be here.
- People coming to the U.K. without a visa or immigration status will have to apply for an American style Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA).
- People who wish to stay in the country for a long period of time – for example over six months – would need to obtain a visa rather than an ETA.
- It would allow automated and early security checks. It will stop foreign criminals from arriving in the country.

### Vesak

- Vesak is the most sacred day for Buddhists around the world.
- It is also known as **Buddha Purnima** and Buddha Day.
- The day commemorates **birth, enlightenment and Death (Parinirvana)** of Lord Buddha.
- It falls on the full moon day (Purnima) of the month Vaishakha (May).
- The General Assembly, by its resolution in 1999, recognized internationally the Day of Vesak.

### **National Archives of India (NAI)**

- Originally established as the Imperial Record Department in 1891 in Calcutta->transferred to the new capital, New Delhi, in 1911.
- It is a custodian of the non-current records of enduring value of the Government of India. It holds them in trust for the use of administrators and scholars.
- It functions as an Attached Office of the Department of Culture under the Ministry of Culture.
- It is the biggest archival repository in South Asia.

**Note:** **Abhilekhpatal** is an online portal to access the National Archives of India's reference media and its digitized collections via the internet.

### **National Mobile Monitoring Software app**

- It permits taking **real-time attendance of workers at MGNREGA worksites** along with geotagged photographs.
- Launched by Union Minister of **Rural Development**.
- This will increase citizen oversight of the programme-> enables the potential processing of payments faster.

### **Area Officer Monitoring App**

- Facilitates area officers to record their findings online and even put a time stamp on them.
- Launched by Union Minister of Rural Development.
- This would enable the government to record the inspections by officials. It will also facilitate analysis of the findings for better programme implementation.

### **Bangladesh approves currency swap facility to Sri Lanka**

#### **In news**

Bangladesh's central bank has approved a \$200 million currency swap facility to Sri Lanka. It will help Sri Lanka in its foreign exchange crisis.

#### **Key takeaways**

- A currency swap is a loan that Bangladesh will give to Sri Lanka in dollars, with an agreement that the debt will be repaid with interest in Sri Lankan rupees.
- For Sri Lanka, this is cheaper than borrowing from the market.
- The period of the currency swap will be specified in the agreement.
- This may be the first time that Bangladesh is extending a helping hand to another country.

**Note:** RBI has a framework under which it can offer credit swap facilities to SAARC countries within an overall corpus of \$2 billion.

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### 17+1 cooperation forum

- It is **China-led initiative** founded in the year 2012.
- Aim: To expand cooperation between China and the Central and Eastern European (CEE) member countries. This is done through investments and trade for the development of the CEE region.
- The initiative also focuses on infrastructure projects such as bridges, motorways, railway lines and the modernisation of ports in the member states.
- The initiative is largely seen as an extension of China's flagship Belt and Road initiative (BRI).
- Lithuania has pulled out of China's 17+1 cooperation forum with central and eastern European states.

### Paediatric inflammatory multisystem syndrome (PIMS-TS)

- It is known as **multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C)**.
- It is a rare condition associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection
- **Symptoms:** fever, rash, eye infection, and gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g. diarrhoea, stomach-ache, nausea). In some rare cases, the condition can lead to multi-organ failure.
- **Treatment:** Treatments currently include anti-coagulation to curb blood clotting, IV immunoglobulin and anti-inflammatory drugs.

### National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM)

- It has been **set up by the Ministry of Culture in 2017**.
- Mission will compile data of artists, art forms & geo location with inputs from Central Ministries, State Governments & art/culture bodies.
- Specially designed data capture form with technical collaboration of National E-Governance Division (NEGD)/MEITY has been formulated for data collection.
- Data from art & culture Academies of the Ministry of Culture has been collected and will be entered into database after due correction.

### FDI Inflow in 2020-21 in India

#### In news

The Ministry of Commerce released the data on the FDI (Foreign Direct Investment Inflow) in India for the Financial Year 2020-21.

#### Key takeaways:

- India has received an FDI of \$81.72 billion in 2020-21-> 10% higher than \$74.39 billion received in 2019-20.

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- The **Largest Source of FDI**: Singapore followed by the US and Mauritius.
- **Saudi Arabia is the top investor** in terms of percentage increase during FY21.
- **Gujarat was the top recipient of FDI** followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- **Computer software and hardware emerged as the top sector** followed by construction and infrastructure-related activities and services sector.

Note: FDI has three components: equity capital, reinvested earnings and Intra-company loans.

### White Fungus:

- It is a fungal infection caused **by yeast called Candida**.
- Candida normally lives on the skin and inside the body, in places such as the mouth, throat, gut and vagina, without causing any problems.
- It can cause infections if it grows out of control or if it enters deep into the body (for example, the blood-stream or internal organs like the kidney, heart, or brain).
- Prolonged use of antibiotics and depressed immune system can lead to this infection.

### Yellow fungus:

- Caused by a **common mould, Aspergillus**, that lives indoors and outdoors.
- Most people breathe in Aspergillus spores every day without falling ill.
- People with weakened immune systems or lung diseases are at a higher risk of developing health problems due to Aspergillus

### MCA21 version 3.0 online portal

#### In News

The government of India has launched the first phase of the MCA21 version 3.0 to its digital corporate compliance portal.

#### About MCA21:

- MCA21 is the online portal of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA). It was initially launched in 2006.
- It has made all company-related information accessible to various stakeholders and the public.
- It is India's first mission mode e-governance project.

### SeHAT OPD portal

#### In news

The Defence Minister has launched the '**Services e-Health Assistance & Tele-consultation (SeHAT) OPD** portal.



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### About SeHAT OPD portal:

- **Aims** to provide tele-medicine services to the serving Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families of the three Services.
- Developed and maintained by the Integrated Defence Staff & Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).
- The services will be provided by defence services doctors who are on regular duties.
- The portal has been designed on the lines of e Sanjeevani.
- It provides contactless consultations in an easy and effective manner-> reduce the load on hospitals and patients from the armed services.

### Shahi Litchi

#### In news

In a major boost to export of GI certified products, season's first consignment of Shahi Litchi from Bihar was exported to United Kingdom by air route.

#### About ShahiLichi

- It is mostly grown in Muzaffarpur and its neighbouring districts of East Champaran, Vaishali, Samastipur and Begusarai.
- It was accorded the **Geographical Indication (GI) Tag in 2018**.
- It is a tropical and subtropical fruit tree native to southern China, Taiwan, Bangladesh and Southeast Asia, and now cultivated in many parts of the world.

**Note** - A chemical in the lychee caused **hypoglycemia** led to a catastrophic fall in the children's blood sugar, when consumed on an empty stomach. It became a cause of widespread deaths of children in the region.

### Interpol

#### In news

Fugitive diamantaire MehulChoksi, who had recently fled from Antigua and Barbuda, was captured in neighbouring Dominica after an Interpol Yellow Notice was issued against him.

#### About INTERPOL

- Interpol is the **world's largest international police organisation**, with 184 member countries.
- Established in 1923, it enables cross-border police cooperation.
- **Headquarter:** Lyon, France.
- **Objectives** to facilitate international police cooperation even where diplomatic relations are not present between certain countries.
- Action is taken within the limits of existing laws in different countries and in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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- Each of the member countries hosts an INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB). This connects their national law enforcement with other countries and with the General Secretariat via a secure global police communications network called I-24/7.

### Mekedatu

#### In news

NGT has appointed a joint committee to look into allegations of unauthorized construction activity taking place in Mekedatu in Ramanagaram district, across the river Cauvery.

#### About Mekedatu:

- It means **goat's leap**, is a deep gorge situated at the **confluence of the rivers Cauvery and its tributary Arkavathi**.

#### About NGT

- Statutory body established by a Government under NGT Act 2010.
- **Chairperson and Members of NGT:** At least 10 and max 20 Full time Judicial members and 10 and max 20 Full time Expert Members.
- **Qualification for Chairperson:** either a Judge of India's Supreme Court or Chief Justice of a High Court in India.
- It would deal with all environmental laws on air and water pollution, the Environment Protection Act, the Forest Conservation Act and the Biodiversity Act.

**Note:** If any project is to be implemented without conducting any **EIA study** and without obtaining necessary clearance-> **the NGT would get the jurisdiction of intervening on the issue.**



ZOOMING IN ON PROJECT	
► Karnataka wants to build 67.2tmcft capacity reservoir across Cauvery near Mekedatu to utilize additional 4.8tmcft of water as per modified allocation to provide drinking water to Bengaluru, Ramanagara and Bengaluru Rural	Total cost of project ₹5,912 crore
► Plans to set up hydel power plant with 400MW capacity	Height of dam 99 metre
	Length 674.5 metre
	<b>Area to be submerged</b> 4,996 hectares (4,716 forest land and 280 revenue land)

**DIFFERENT STROKES:** While Karnataka maintains the Mekedatu project aims to address drinking water concerns, Tamil Nadu believes it's meant for irrigation purposes

## Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021

It introduces 3 tier grievance redressal mechanism for OTT platforms.

Tier1: A grievance cell

Tier 2: A self regulatory body of the OTT platform

Tier 3: An inter-ministerial panel to look into complaints if they are not resolved at two levels.

- A key provision empowers the government to ask companies to track down the originator of posts, tweets, and texts within the country.
- The rules state that if an offensive post is found, the govt can lawfully ask these companies to identify the first person who shared it in India.
- The rules also require intermediaries to appoint Indian citizens in compliance roles, create automated processes for taking down pornography, set up mechanisms to respond to complaints, and remove offending content within 36 hours of receiving an order.

### Under watch

On February 25, the government announced the new Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021, which introduced a 3-tier grievance redressal mechanism for OTT platforms

**TIER 1** A grievance cell

**TIER 2** A self-regulatory body of the OTT platforms

**TIER 3** An inter-ministerial panel to look into complaints if they are not resolved at the first two levels



The OTT platforms will have to self-classify content into five age-based categories- U (Universal), U/A 7+, U/A 13+, U/A 16+ and A (Adult). Platforms would be required to implement parental locks for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher, and reliable age verification mechanisms for content classified as "A".

### 'Violation of rights'

■ WhatsApp has filed a plea contending that the new IT rules violate the fundamental right to privacy, and the right to freedom of speech and expression. It highlighted the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in K.S. Puttaswamy case where it held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right

■ "Requiring intermediaries to enable the identification of the first originator of the information in India on end-to-end encrypted messaging services constitutes a dangerous invasion of privacy," WhatsApp said

■ "Privacy is inextricably intertwined with the right to freedom of speech and expression because it protects people from retaliation for expressing unpopular but lawful views," it argued



### Important Terms in news:

**Accommodation syndrome:** where the child keeps the abuse as a secret because of the fear that no one will believe the abuse, which leads to accommodative behaviour.

### Cooperative federalism

- It was introduced into India's political lexicon to justify the transition to GST in 2017.

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- Cooperative federalism has a larger meaning beyond just fiscal federalism. It also entails cooperative political, administrative and governance federalism between the States and the Centre.

**Section 79 Technology (IT) Act:** Intermediary shall not be held legally or otherwise liable for any third party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted on its platform.

### SAARC currency swap facility:

- Came into operation in November 2012.
- Aim of providing to smaller countries in the region “a backstop line of funding for short-term foreign exchange liquidity requirements or balance of payment crisis till longer term arrangements are made”.

### Section 304B

- To make out a case of dowry death, a woman should have died of burns or other bodily injuries or “otherwise than under normal circumstances” within seven years of her marriage.
- She should have suffered cruelty or harassment from her husband or in-laws “soon before her death” in connection with demand for dowry.



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