

TARGET4IAS: TOGETHER WE CAN



Weekly Current Affairs

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NIPUN Bharat Mission

In news

The Ministry of Education will launch the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat) Mission.

About NIPUN Bharat Mission:

- To create an enabling environment to ensure universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy.
- It will enable every child to achieve the desired learning competencies in reading, writing and numeracy by the end of Grade 3 by 2026-27.
- NIPUN Bharat will be implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy.
- A five-tier implementation mechanism will be set up at the national- state- district- block- school level in all states and UTs for the mission.
- Money is being allocated from the Samagra Shiksha scheme, which saw a 20% drop in its budget in 2021.

Note: Foundational literacy and numeracy is one of the goals under the National Education Policy 2020. Initially, the policy had included a 2025 deadline to achieve this goal. But the target has been extended to 2026-27, given that COVID-19 has already disrupted two academic years.

Source-> [PIB](#)

Matsya Setu App

In news

The Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying launched the Online Course Mobile App "MatsyaSetu".

About Matsya Setu App:

- Matsya Setu is an online course app.
- **Aim:** to provide the latest freshwater aquaculture technologies to the aqua farmers of the country.
- **Developed by:** ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA), Bhubaneswar. The National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Hyderabad is providing the funding support.
- The app has species-wise/ subject-wise self-learning online course modules-in which aquaculture experts explain the basic concepts and also better management practices.
- Upon successful completion of each course module, an e-Certificate can be auto-generated. Farmers can also ask their doubts through the app.

About National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB):

- It is an autonomous organization under the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying.
- It was initially established in 2006 under the administrative control of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

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- Aim: To enhance fish production and productivity in the country and to coordinate fishery development in an integrated and holistic manner.

Source-> [PIB](#)

Project BOLD

In news

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has launched a project named **Bamboo Oasis on Lands in Drought (BOLD)** in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

About Project BOLD:

- It seeks to create bamboo-based green patches in arid and semi-arid land zones of the country.
- **Aim:** reducing land degradation and preventing desertification in the country.
- As part of the project, 5000 saplings of bamboo species – Bambusa Tulda and Bambusa Polymorpha specially brought from Assam – have been planted over 16 acres of vacant arid Gram Panchayat land in Rajasthan.
- KVIC is set to replicate the Project at Village Dholera in Ahmedabad district in Gujarat and Leh-Ladakh region.
- The Project will help in reducing the land degradation percentage of the country.
- It will give a boost to self-employment in the region.

Note: KVIC has chosen bamboo for developing green patches because:

- Bamboos grow very fast and in about three years' time could be harvested.
- Bamboos are also known for conserving water and reducing evaporation of water from the land surface.

Source-> [PIB](#)

Section 66A

In news

The Supreme Court has expressed shock at the practice of police registering FIRs under Section 66A of the IT Act. The act was struck down by the SC in the 2015 judgment in the Shreya Singhal case.

About Section 66A:

- Section 66A defines the punishment for sending “offensive” messages through a computer or any other communication device like a mobile phone or a tablet.
- A conviction can fetch a maximum of three years in jail and a fine.

Issues with the Act

- The vagueness about what is “offensive”.
- It was subjective and what may be fine for one person, may lead to a complaint from someone else.

Note: **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India** case, 2015, the Supreme Court had struck the section down, declaring it a violation of freedom of speech and expression.

Source->The Hindu

Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

In news

DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry has set up a nine-member advisory council for creating an Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

About ONDC:

- It is being designed to curb the monopolistic tendencies of e-commerce platforms.
- It brings together all of India's E-commerce marketplaces on a single network on the lines of Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- It will do this by promoting open networks developed on open-sourced methodology using open specifications and open network protocols, independent of any specific platform.
- The task of this project has been assigned to the Quality Council of India (QCI).

Source-> [Indian Express](#)

Ministry of Cooperation

In news

The Government of India has announced the creation of a new Ministry of Cooperation.

About Ministry of Cooperation:

- It has been created for strengthening the cooperative movement in the country.
- **Key Objectives:**
 - Provide a separate administrative, legal, and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement in the country.
 - Make the cooperative movement a true people-based movement by helping it reach the grassroots level.
 - It will work to streamline processes for ease of doing business for cooperatives and enable the development of multi-state cooperatives (MSCS).

Note: The **Constitution (97th Amendment) Act, 2011** made following changes in Constitution.

- New **Part-IXB** regarding the cooperatives working in India added. (Part IXA deals with Municipals)
- In **Art. 19(1)(c)** the word "cooperatives" was added after "unions and associations". This enables all the citizens to form cooperatives by giving it the status of fundamental right of citizens.
- A new **Article 43B** was added in the Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV) regarding the "promotion of cooperative societies"

Source-> [PIB](#), [The Hindu](#)

Mishri Cherries

In news

The first commercial shipment of Mishri variety of cherries from Kashmir valley has been exported to Dubai from Srinagar.

About Mishri Cherries:

- Not only taste delicious but also contain vitamins, minerals, and plant compounds with health benefits.
- The UT of Jammu and Kashmir produces more than 95% of India's production of commercial varieties of cherries. It produces four varieties of cherry — Double, Makhmali, Mishri, and Italy.
- Cherries are harvested, cleaned, and packed by APEDA registered exporters before exports. For ensuring exports of quality agricultural produce, APEDA has also initiated an **awareness program on National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP).**

About National Program for Organic Production (NPOP)

- Launched by the Ministry of Commerce in 2001.
- Grants organic farming certification to products through a process of third-party certification.
- It also involves the accreditation program for Certification Bodies, standards for organic production, promotion of organic farming and marketing, etc.
- It is implemented by APEDA, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Source-> [PIB](#)

Istanbul Convention

In news

Turkey quits Istanbul Convention on Violence Against Women.

About Istanbul Convention

- It is also called as the **Council of Europe Convention** on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- The treaty is the **world's first binding instrument to prevent and tackle violence against women.**
- It is the most comprehensive legal framework that exists to tackle violence against women and girls, covering domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation (FGM), so-called honour-based violence, and forced marriage.
- When a government ratifies the Convention, they are legally bound to follow it.
- The convention was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 7 April 2011.
- The Convention sets minimum standards for governments to meet when tackling violence against women.

Sources-> [Indian Express.](#)

Draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021

In news

The Ministry of Women and Child Welfare has invited suggestions and comments for its Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021.

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Key takeaways:

- **Objective:** to prevent and counter-trafficking in persons, especially women and children.
 - Provide for **care, protection, and rehabilitation** to the victims, while respecting their rights,
 - Creating a supportive legal, economic and social environment for them.
- It has increased the scope of the nature of offences of trafficking, with stringent penalties including life imprisonment, and even death penalty in certain cases.
- The new bill also makes the **NIA the central investigation authority** looking into such offences.
- The bill will extend to **all citizens inside as well as outside India**. It will also be applied to every offence of trafficking in persons with cross-border implications
- **Widens the definition** of the “victim” by including transgenders, besides women and children.
- Once the bill becomes an Act, the central government will notify and set up a **National Anti Trafficking Committee**, while state governments will set up these committees at **state and district levels** to ensure effective implementation.
- It proposes more severe penalties for “**aggravated offences**” and seeks to crack down on organised crime syndicates.
- The bill also says the **investigation needs to be completed within 90 days** from the date of the arrest of the accused.
- The Punishment will be for a **minimum of seven years** period, which can go up to an imprisonment of 10 years and a fine of Rs 5 lakh. However, in cases of the trafficking of more than one child, **the penalty is life imprisonment**. In certain cases, even the death penalty can be sought.
- It will also allow the properties of the convicts, bought using money from trafficking, to be forfeited.

Source->PIB

Harit Dhara

In news

ICAR has developed an anti-Methanogenic feed supplement ‘Harit Dhara’ (HD). This supplement can **cut down cattle methane emissions by 17-20%** and can also result in **higher milk production**.

About Harit Dhara

- It has been made from **tannin-rich plant-based sources** abundantly available in the country.
- Tropical plants containing tannins, bitter and astringent chemical compounds, are known to suppress or remove protozoa from the rumen.
- Benefits:

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- It decreases the population of protozoa microbes in the rumen, responsible for hydrogen production and making it available to the archaea (structure similar to bacteria) for reduction of CO₂ to methane.
- Fermentation after using this supplement will help produce more propionic acid, which provides more energy for lactose (milk sugar) production and body weight gain.
- An average lactating cow or buffalo in India emits around **200 litres of methane per day**. Feeding Harit Dhara can reduce these by a fifth.

Note: Methane's global warming potential 25 times of carbon dioxide (CO₂) over 100 years, makes it a more potent greenhouse gas.

Source->[Indian Express](#)

Spinner Dolphin (*Stenellalongirostris*)

In news

The carcass of a male Spinner dolphin washed ashore in Odisha's port town of Paradip within the Bhitarkanika National Park on June 30, 2021.

About Spinner Dolphin

- The species' name, longirostris, is Latin for "long beak," referring to their **slender shaped beak** or rostrum.
- Spinner dolphins live in large pods from a few dozen to a thousand or more in tropical and subtropical zones around the world.
- They are the **most abundant dolphin species in the Indian Ocean**. The spinner dolphin is a **rare mammal in Odisha** as it is an offshore species and is found in deeper waters as part of large schools.
- Spinner dolphin is famous for its **acrobatic displays** in which it spins along its longitudinal axis as it leapt through the air.
- These dolphins **need to resurface every 10 to 15 minutes to breathe**.
- **Threats**: Some dolphins die every year after being mistakenly caught in trawling and other nets
- **IUCN red list**-> Least Concern (LC) and Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 ->Schedule I



Source: [Down to Earth](#)

Discrete auroras on Mars

In news

UAE's Hope Spacecraft, which has been orbiting Mars, has captured images of glowing atmospheric lights in the Red Planet's night sky known as discrete auroras.

About Auroras

- Auroras are a mysterious and unpredictable display of light in the night sky.

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- Caused when charged particles ejected from the Sun's surface called the **solar wind enter the Earth's atmosphere.**
- They are seen from the **Earth's high latitude regions (called the auroral oval)** and are active all year round.
- In the **northern part** of our globe, these lights are called **aurora borealis or Northern Lights.** In the **south**, they are called **aurora australis or southern lights.**

Discrete Auroras (DA) on Mars:

- While Auroras on Earth are seen only near the north and south poles, **DA on Mars are seen all around the planet at night time.**
- Unlike Earth, which has a strong magnetic field, **the Mars magnetic field has largely died out. Reason-** the molten iron at the interior of the planet (which produces magnetism) has cooled.
- **Magnetism on Mars is unevenly distributed**, with fields strewn across the planet and differing in direction and strength.
- These disjointed fields channel the solar wind to different parts of the Martian atmosphere, creating "discrete" auroras over the entire surface of the planet as charged particles interact with atoms and molecules in the sky– as they do on Earth.
- Studying Martian auroras is important for scientists, for **it can offer clues as to why Mars lost its magnetic field and thick atmosphere**– among the essential requirements for sustaining life.

HOPE Spacecraft: It is a **Mars mission launched by the UAE.** It is also the **first interplanetary mission for the Arab World.** The primary objective of the mission is to study Martian weather dynamics. The data gathered by the orbiter "include far and extreme ultraviolet auroral emissions which have never been imaged before at Mars.

Source-> [Indian Express](#)

SPARSH Portal

In news

The Ministry of Defence has launched **SPARSH (System for Pension Administration Raksha) Portal.**

About SPARSH Portal:

- Integrated system for automation of sanction and disbursement of defence pension.
- The portal processes **pension claims and credits pension directly into the bank accounts** of defence pensioners without relying on any external intermediary.
- Pensioners can view their pension related information, access services and register complaints for redressal of grievances.
- **Service Centres** will be established to provide last mile connectivity to pensioners who may be unable to directly access the SPARSH portal for any reason.

- In addition to several offices of the Defence Accounts Department, the two largest banks **State Bank of India (SBI)** and **Punjab National Bank (PNB)** – have been selected as **Service Centres**.

Source: [PIB](#)

Gravitational Waves

In news

Scientists have for the first time detected gravitational waves produced by the collision of a neutron star and black hole.

About Gravitational Waves

- Gravitational waves are '**ripples**' in **space-time** caused by some of the most violent and energetic processes in the Universe.
- **Albert Einstein predicted the existence of gravitational waves in 1916 in his general theory of relativity.**
- The strongest gravitational waves are produced by **cataclysmic events such as colliding black holes, supernovae** (massive stars exploding at the end of their lifetimes), and **colliding neutron stars**.
- Other waves are predicted to be caused by the rotation of neutron stars that are not perfect spheres, and possibly even the remnants of gravitational radiation created by the Big Bang.

Source->The Hindu

Recusal of judges

In news

The Calcutta high court has imposed a penalty of ₹5 lakh on West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee for seeking recusal of Justice Kaushik Chanda from her Nandigram election petition over the judge's alleged links with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

About Recusal

- Recusal is "**removal of oneself as a Judge or policymaker in a particular matter, especially because of a conflict of interest**".
- Some examples of conflicts of interest where a Judge should likely recuse themselves from the case include:
 - personal connection to one of the parties to the case,
 - personal knowledge of the facts of the case,
 - familial relationship to one of the attorneys and
 - financial interest in the result of the case and other.
- There are no formal rules governing recusals, although several Supreme Court judgments have dealt with the issue.
- **Supreme Court judgments**

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- In **Ranjit Thakur v Union of India (1987)**, the SC held that the **test of the likelihood of bias** is the reasonableness of the apprehension in the mind of the party. The judge needs to look at the mind of the party before him, and decide that he is biased or not.
- Justice J. Chelameswar in his opinion in **Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (2015)** held that “Where a judge has a **pecuniary interest**, no further inquiry as to whether there was a ‘real danger’ or ‘reasonable suspicion’ of bias is required to be undertaken”.

Source->[Indian Express](#)

Polavaram Dam

In news

Increased inflows and stagnated backwaters caused a breach in the Godavari bund located upstream of the Polavaram dam in Andhra Pradesh.

About Polavaram Irrigation Project

- It is a **multi-purpose irrigation project, located in Andhra Pradesh on the river Godavari**, near Polavaram village.
- Once completed, it will provide **Irrigation benefits and will generate Hydro Electric Power and supply drinking water**.
- It will facilitate an **inter-basin transfer to the Krishna river basin** through its Right canal.
- Indirect benefits include development of Pisciculture (breeding and rearing of fish), tourism and urbanisation.
- The Project has been accorded **national project status** by the union government in 2014.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Tele-Law programme

In news

Recently, the Justice Department commemorated the milestone of crossing 9 lakh beneficiaries under its Tele-Law programme through Common Service Centres.

About Tele- Law Programme

- Launched by the **Ministry of Law and Justice** in collaboration **with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** in 2017 to address cases at pre-litigation stage.
- Tele-Law means the use of communications and information technology for the delivery of legal information and advice.
- This **e-interaction between lawyers and people** would be through the video-conferencing infrastructure available at the CSCs.
- The concept of Tele-Law is to facilitate **delivery of legal advice through a panel of lawyers stationed at the state Legal Services Authorities (SALSA) and CSC**.

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- The project initiates to connect citizens with lawyers through video conferencing facilities
- The service is free for those who are eligible for free legal Aid as mentioned under Section 12 of the Legal Services Authority Act, 1987. For all others a nominal fee is charged

Note: Common Services Centre (CSC) programme: It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY)**, that serves as the access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India

Source->The Hindu,PIB

Bhalia wheat

In news

The first shipment of Geographical Indication (GI) certified Bhalia variety of wheat was exported to Kenya and Sri Lanka from Gujarat.

About Bhalia Wheat

- It is **also known as Daudkhani Wheat**. This wheat is **rich in Gluten**, a type of amino acid. It has high protein content and is sweet in taste.
- The crop is grown mostly across the Bhal region in the north of Gulf of Khambhat of Gujarat.
- It is grown in rainfed conditions without irrigation and cultivated in around two lakh hectares of agricultural land in Gujarat.
- The Bhalia variety of wheat **received GI certification in 2011**.

Source->PIB

dbGENVOC

In news

The National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG) has created a database of genomic variations in oral cancer called dbGENVOC.

About dbGENVOC

- It is the **world's first database of genomic variants of oral cancer**.
- It is **created by the DBT-National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (NIBMG)**, Kalyani an autonomous institute funded by the Department of Biotechnology, GOI.
- The database also has a built-in search engine. This allows researchers to carry out analysis of identifying variants in associated altered pathways in oral cancer.

About Oral Cancer:

- Oral cancer is the most prevalent form of cancer among men in India, largely fuelled by tobacco-chewing.
- Tobacco-chewing causes changes in the genetic material of cells in the oral cavity. These changes (mutations) precipitate oral cancer.

Source: [PIB](#)

Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)

In news

Some modifications were approved by the Union Cabinet in Central Sector Scheme of Financing Facility under 'Agriculture Infrastructure Fund'. The modifications in the Scheme will help to achieve a multiplier effect in generating investments while ensuring that the benefits reach small and marginal farmers.

About Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** under Union Ministry of Agriculture to inject formal credit into farm and farm-processing based activities.
- **Aim:** To provide **medium – long term debt financing facility** for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management Infrastructure and community farming assets.
- It is financing facility for setting up **warehousing, cold chain, processing and other post-harvest management infrastructure**.
- It provides an **interest subvention of 3 per cent on loans of up to Rs 2 crore** for a maximum seven-year period.
- **Duration:** Financial Year 2020 to 2029.
- To implement the fund effectively and in order to make it attractive for banks, the loans would also have **government-backed credit coverage** against defaults.
- The borrowers are mainly to be FPOs (farmer producer organisations) and primary agricultural cooperative societies
- The fund will be managed and monitored through an online Management Information System (MIS) platform.
- The **National, State and District level monitoring committees** will be set up to ensure real-time monitoring and effective feed-back.

Source->The Hindu

INS Tabar Exercises

In news

INS Tabar Exercises were held recently **with Italian navy off Naples, Italy** as part of an ongoing deployment to the Mediterranean.

Key takeaways

- The exercise covered a wide range of naval operations including air defence procedures, communication drills etc.
- The exercise was mutually beneficial in enhancing interoperability and towards consolidating combined operations against maritime threats.

About Indian Naval Ship Tabar

- INS Tabar was commissioned on April 19, 2004, in Kaliningrad, Russia. **Tabar is the third Indian warship of Talwar-class frigate in the Indian Navy.**
- Equipped with supersonic BrahMos anti-ship cruise missiles. The vessel is armed with Barak 1 missiles. It is a warship that can withstand air, surface, and sub-surface missions.

Source->PIB

Terms in news

Cooperative: Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.

Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam: Formerly known as the Millennium Dam, it is under construction in the Benishangul-Gumuz region of Ethiopia, on the Blue Nile River, which is located about 40 km east of Sudan. After completion, it'll be Africa's largest hydroelectric project.

Revenge travel or revenge tourism: stems from a feeling of wanting to break free from the monotonous life of lockdowns. It is a product of another phenomenon called 'lockdown-fatigue', coined last year by AIIMS Delhi director Dr Randeep Guleria.

Facial recognition Technology is a biometric technology that uses distinctive features on the face to identify and distinguish an individual.

Pegasus spyware: It works by sending an exploit link, and if the target user clicks on the link, the malware or the code that allows the surveillance is installed on the user's phone. It can also control the phone's camera and microphone and has access to the device's location data.

