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1 BRICS Anti-Drug Working Group

CONTEXT:

- The 4th Session of the BRICS Anti-Drug Working Group comprising of Brazil, Russia, China, South Africa and India was held this week.

Key-takeaways:

- Fruitful exchange of opinions concerning the drug situation in the BRICS states, the international and regional trends of illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, as well as the impact of various internal and external factors on the situation took place during the summit.
- The common points emerged during the discussions include need for real time information sharing among the member states and need to curb increased drug trafficking through maritime routes.
- Misuse of darknet and other advanced technologies for drug trafficking was one of the key focal areas of the meeting.
- The member nations adopted a communiqué that covered all the points discussed in the meeting.

BRICS:

- BRICS is the acronym coined for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The BRICS members are known for their significant influence on regional affairs.
- Since 2009, the BRICS nations have met annually at formal summits. Brazil hosted the most recent 11th BRICS summit on 13–14 November 2019.
- The growing economic might of BRICS countries, their significance as one of the main driving forces of global economic development, their substantial population and abundant natural resources form the foundation of their influence on the international scene and are the driving forces behind the grouping.
- Among other areas of collaboration, matters pertaining to drug trafficking is an important area of cooperation among the BRICS member states.

2 Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme (PCGS) 2.0

CONTEXT:

- Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme (PCGS) 2.0 extended with greater flexibility to respond to emerging demands

About:

- As part of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, announced by the Government, **Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme (PCGS) 2.0** was launched on to provide Portfolio Guarantee for purchase of Bonds or Commercial Papers (CPs) with a rating of AA and below issued by NBFCs/HFCs/ MFIs by Public Sector Banks (PSBs).

- It was envisaged to purchase Bonds/ CPs of Rs. 45,000 crore under PCGS 2.0 of which the maximum headroom permissible for purchase of Bonds/ CPs rated AA/AA- was 25% of the total portfolio i.e. Rs. 11,250 crore.
- In addition, the Government had separately announced the Special Liquidity Scheme for purchase of Commercial Papers (CPs) and Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) issued by NBFCs/HFCs with a residual maturity of upto 3 months, which could be extended for a further period of upto 3 months, of a total value not exceeding Rs. 30,000 crore to be extended by the amount required as per need.
- Keeping in view the progress under the Scheme and the fact that the stipulated limit for AA/AA-rated Bonds/CPs has been nearly reached while the appetite for lower rated Bonds/CPs is nearing saturation considering their lower ticket size, **the Government has now decided to modify PCGS 2.0 for purchase of Bonds/CPs.**

Atmanirbhar Bharat

- ▶ Atmanirbhar Bharat is the vision of the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi of making India a self-reliant nation.
- ▶ The first mention of this came in the form of the 'Atmanirbhar Bharata Abhiyan' or 'Self-Reliant India Mission' during the announcement of the coronavirus pandemic related economic package on 12 May 2020.
- ▶ As part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package, numerous government decisions have taken place such as changing the definition of MSMEs, boosting scope for private participation in numerous sectors, increasing FDI in the defence sector; and the vision has found support in many sectors such as the solar manufacturers sector.

3

Exports of Agricultural Commodities

CONTEXT:

- Exports of agricultural commodities during March to June 2020 increased by 23.24% compared to corresponding period in 2019.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- As per WTO's Trade Statistics, share of India's agricultural exports and imports in the world agriculture trade in 2017 was 2.27% and 1.90%, respectively.
- Even during the difficult time of pandemic lockdown, India took care to not to disturb the world food supply chain and continued to export. The exports of Agri commodities during March 2020 to June 2020 were Rs. 25552.7 Crore against an export of Rs. 20734.8 Crore during the same period in 2019, showing a sharp increase of 23.24%.
- The agricultural exports as a percentage of India's agricultural GDP has increased from 9.4 % in 2017-18 to 9.9 % in 2018-19.
- While the agricultural imports as a percentage of India's agricultural GDP has declined from 5.7 % to 4.9 % indicating exportable surplus and decreased dependence on import of agricultural products in India.
- Giant strides have been made in agri export since independence. In 1950-51, India's agri export was about Rs. 149 crores which has risen to the level of Rs. 2.53 lakh crores in 2019-20.

- There has been substantial increase in export of almost all the agricultural items in the last 15 years, but despite being one of the top producers of agricultural products, India does not figure among top exporters of agricultural produce. For example, India holds second rank in the world wheat production but ranks 34th in export.
- Similarly, despite being world No. 3 in production of vegetables, the export ranking of India is only 14th. Same is the case for fruits, where India is the second largest producer in the world but export ranking is 23rd. To reach the ranks of top exporting nation in Agriculture, commensurate with the production, there is a clear and categorical need to take proactive interventions.

4

Drone based surveillance system for Railway Security

CONTEXT:

- Indian Railways introduces Drone based surveillance system for Railway Security.

ABOUT:

- Drone surveillance technology has emerged as an important and cost effective tool for security surveillance over large areas with limited manpower.
- Mumbai Division of Central Railway in Indian Railways has recently procured two Ninja UAVs for better security and surveillance in Railway areas like station premises, Railway track sections, yards, workshops, etc.
- A team of four staff of Railway Protection Force (RPF), Mumbai has been trained for drone flying, surveillance and maintenance. These drones are capable of Real Time Tracking, Video Streaming and may be operated on Automatic Fail Safe Mode.
- The purpose of the drone deployment is to provide a force multiplier and aid to the effectiveness of the security personnel deployed.
- It can help in inspection of Railway assets and safety of Yards, Workshops, car sheds etc. it can be used to launch surveillance on criminal and anti-social activities like gambling, throwing of garbage, hawking etc in Railway premises.
- It may be deployed for data collection Analysis of such data collected may prove to be extremely useful in vulnerable sections for safe operations of trains.
- The drone may be pressed in service at disaster sites for helping in rescue, recovery and restoration and coordinating of efforts of various agencies.
- It is very useful while undertaking mapping of railway asset to assess the encroachments on railway property.
- During large scale crowd management efforts, it may give vital inputs like crowd magnitude, probable time of arrival and dispersal based on which crowd regulation efforts may be planned and executed. Drones were used to enforce lockdown and monitor the movement of migrants during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- A drone camera can cover large area which requires 8-10 RPF personnel. Thus, it may lead to substantial improvement in utilization of scarce manpower. Drone beats have been designed based on railway asset, sensitivity of area, activity of criminals etc.
- Drone acts as an **"EYE IN THE SKY"** and monitors the whole area. Any suspicious activity if noticed is intimated to the nearest RPF post of division to apprehend the criminal LIVE.

5 National Recruitment Agency

CONTEXT:

- The Union Cabinet given its approval for creation of National Recruitment Agency (NRA), paving the way for a transformational reform in the recruitment process for central government jobs.

National Recruitment Agency (NRA)

- A multi-agency body called the National Recruitment Agency (NRA) will conduct a Common Eligibility Test (CET) to screen/shortlist candidates for the Group B and C (non-technical) posts.
- NRA will have representatives of Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Finance/Department of Financial Services, the SSC, RRB & IBPS.
- It is envisioned that the NRA would be a specialist body bringing the state-of-the-art technology and best practices to the field of Central Government recruitment.

Recruitment Reform - a major boon for the youth

- At present, candidates seeking government jobs have to appear for separate examinations conducted by multiple recruiting agencies for various posts, for which similar eligibility conditions have been prescribed.
- Candidates have to pay fee to multiple recruiting agencies and also have to travel long distances for appearing in various exams.
- These multiple recruitment examinations are a burden on the candidates, as also on the respective recruitment agencies, involving avoidable/repetitive expenditure, law and order/security related issues and venue related problems. On an average, 2.5 crore to 3 crore candidates appear in each of these examinations.
- A common eligibility Test would enable these candidates to appear once and apply to any or all of these recruitment agencies for the higher level of examination. This would indeed be a boon to all the candidates.

Major Relief to poor Candidates

- Presently, the candidates have to appear in multiple examinations conducted by multiple agencies. Apart from the examination fees, candidates have to incur additional expenses for travel, boarding, lodging and other such. A single examination would reduce the financial burden on candidates to a large extent.

Women candidates to benefit greatly

- Women candidates especially from rural areas face constraints in appearing in multiple examinations as they have to arrange for transportation and places to stay in places that are far away. They sometimes have to find suitable persons to accompany them to these Centres that are located far away. The location of test centres in every District would greatly benefit candidates from rural areas in general and women candidates in particular.

Bonanza for Candidates from Rural Areas


- Given the financial and other constraints, the candidates from rural background have to make a choice as to which examination they want to appear in.
- Under the NRA, the candidates by appearing in one examination will get an opportunity to compete for many posts. NRA will conduct the first-level /Tier I Examination which is the stepping stone for many other selections.

Single exam

The National Recruitment Agency (NRA) will conduct a Common Eligibility Test (CET) for recruitment to government jobs

- The NRA will initially conduct the CET for three sectors – Railway Recruitment Board, Staff Selection Commission and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection
- It will be held separately for three levels – graduate, 12th pass and 10th pass – for the non-technical posts of the three agencies
- Examination will be conducted online twice a year in 12 languages and will be based on a common curriculum

- Scores will be valid for a three-year period. Students can write the test multiple times and their best score will be taken into account
- According to the DoPT Secretary, there are 1.25 lakh vacancies every year in Group B and C for non-gazetted officers, and about 2.5 crore people apply every year for examinations to fill these vacancies



6 One Nation One Ration Card

Context:

- The implementation of One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) plan is one of the top priorities of Department of Food & Public Distribution, Government of India to provide an option to all eligible ration card holders/beneficiaries covered under NFSA to access their entitlements from anywhere in the country.

ABOUT:

- Under this plan, the distribution of highly subsidized food grains is enabled through nation-wide portability of ration cards through the implementation of IT-driven system by installation of ePoS devices at FPSs, seeding of Aadhaar number of beneficiaries with their ration cards and operationalisation of biometrically authenticated ePoS transactions in the State/UTs.
- The progress of implementation of this plan is regularly reviewed by Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution through time to time meetings and video conferences with State Food Ministers and State Food Secretaries.
- Presently, the facility of national portability of ration cards under "One Nation One Ration Card plan" is seamlessly enabled in an integrated cluster of **24 States/UTs** w.e.f. August 1, 2020, covering approx which include 65 Crore beneficiaries (80% of total NFSA population) in these States/UTs.

What is the one 'One Nation, One Ration Card' system?

- ▶ Under the National Food Security Act, 2013, about 81 crore persons are entitled to buy subsidized foodgrain — rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg, and coarse grains at Re 1/kg — from their designated Fair Price Shops (FPS) of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).
- ▶ Currently, about 23 crore ration cards have been issued to nearly 80 crore beneficiaries of NFSA in all states and UTs.
- ▶ In the present system, a ration cardholder can buy foodgrains only from an FPS that has been assigned to her in the locality in which she lives. However, this will change once the 'One Nation, One Ration Card' system becomes operational nationally. This is how it will work:
- ▶ Suppose a beneficiary lives in the district of Basti in Uttar Pradesh and migrates to Mumbai for work. Currently, she is no longer able to purchase subsidised foodgrains from a PDS shop in her new locality in Mumbai. However, under the 'One Nation, One Ration Card' system, the beneficiary will be able to buy subsidised foodgrains from any FPS across the country.
- ▶ The new system, based on a technological solution, will identify a beneficiary through biometric authentication on electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices installed at the FPSs, and enable that person to purchase the quantity of foodgrains to which she is entitled under the NFSA.

Easy access

Under the 'One nation, one ration card' system, beneficiaries can buy subsidised foodgrains from a ration shop in any part of the country

**Ration card-
Aadhaar linkage
must to access
the portability
scheme**

**The scheme will be rolled out
across the country on: July 1, 2020**



A migrant will be allowed to buy a maximum of 50% of the family quota. This is to ensure that the individual, after shifting to another place, does not buy the entire family quota in one go

States providing portability of PDS entitlements:

- Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana and Tripura

- A person will only be eligible for the subsidies supported by the Centre, which include rice sold at ₹3/kg and wheat at ₹2/kg

- Even if a beneficiary moves to a State where grains are given for free, he/she will not be able to access those benefits

7

Case study on decentralized Water Management through Community Participation

CONTEXT:

- Jal Jeevan Mission-A novel approach to provide safe drinking water through Community Participation.

ABOUT:

- 'Water cannot be increased but can only be managed'- Ramdas's face turns stoic and tone more controlled while he delivers these wise lines. Being the deputy Sarpanch of a water stressed area of Pune district, he has earned this wisdom by seeing his clan suffer and struggle for every drop of water.
- Ramdas is a resident of Bhojanewadi, a hillock habitation placed at an altitude of 927 metres of Ugalewadi village of Pune, which has about 40 households. For years he has seen his community particularly women, living a life full of hardship due to acute crisis of clean water. Undulating topography of the village has made it difficult to provide piped water supply to this habitation from the village drinking water well that is situated downhill.
- Main hamlet (Gaothan) of Ugalewadi has tap water supply system where the water is pumped from dug-well as well as lifted from river and is stored in the tank from where it is distributed to every household in the main hamlet.
- But Bhojanewadi has to completely rely on the local ground water sources to meet the drinking water needs as being situated on the hill slope and underlain by the hard-massive basalt, the groundwater potential of the area is limited.
- Earlier, Bhojanewadi relied on the tank constructed in the hard-massive basalt under 'Shivakalin tank scheme' to cater their drinking and domestic water needs. It had limited inflows and the community faced water scarcity during the lean season. The community had to walk 500 meter uphill to fetch water.
- In order to reduce the drudgery of the community, especially women, Ramdas took the lead in facilitating clean water to his hamlet. To achieve that, a 5,000 liter tank was constructed near the habitation. This helped in saving time and effort of the community in fetching water from the distance.
- The water to the tank is brought by siphon method from the Shivakalin tank and distributed to all the 40 households through tap connections. To improve the storage capacity of the tank, it was deepened and repaired under the UNICEF - Mumbai supported 'Drops of Hope' and Jal Jeevan Mission.
- In order to streamline the use of water and to maintain the quality, Ramdas mobilized the residents and explained the need for adopting some protocols to cater to year-round drinking water needs of the habitation. The community also developed some protocols for judicious utilization of water.
- Bhojanewadi residents decided to use water by siphon system only during the monsoon, when there is enough water in the tank. In the remaining eight months, the community fetches water from the Shivkalin tank. In this way, community is keeping a check on excessive use of water.
- Strict monitoring is done to maintain the quality of water in the tank and to refrain people to wash clothes near the tank and also not to allow direct entry of livestock in the tank.
- This has become an excellent example of decentralized water management through community participation. As the water is used judiciously, water scarcity even during summer months in Bhojanewadi has become a thing of the past.
- The water crisis in Maharashtra has worsened due to years of drought and with intermittent rainfall and to compound the calamity, water table is shrinking at an alarming rate. Amidst, such a grim situation the positive stories of community participation in Bhojanewadi village are like a fresh breeze.

Jal Jeevan Mission:

- ▶ Jal Jeevan Mission aims at ensuring potable water supply in adequate quantity (@ the rate of 55 litres per person per day) and of prescribed quality to every rural household of the country on regular and long-term basis.
- ▶ The provision of household tap connection in rural areas will help in removing 'drudgery' of women, especially the girls. It will also improve the 'ease of living' for people living in rural areas.

8**Oral Nanomedicine****CONTEXT:**

- Scientists from the **Institute of Nano Science & Technology (INST), Mohali**, have developed an oral nanomedicine with the help of surface-modified solid lipid nanoparticles based combinational cargo system for combating visceral leishmaniasis. Oral nanomedicine may bring relief for Kala-Azar & other neglected diseases

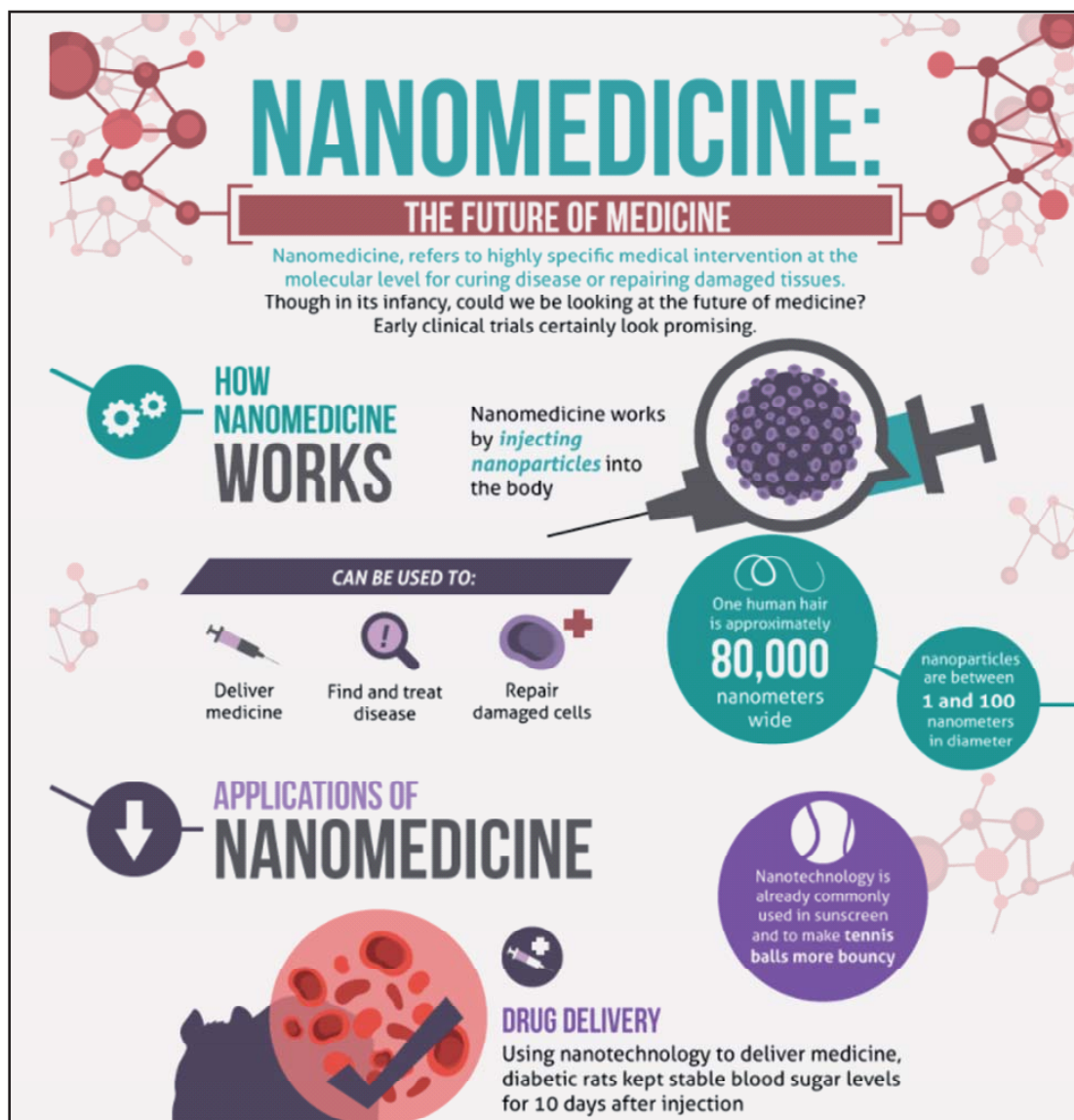
ABOUT:

- Kala- Azar, scientifically called Visceral leishmaniasis (VL) is one of the most neglected tropical diseases.
- The oral therapeutics could help in the control and elimination of VL, around 95 % of which is reported from Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nepal, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.
- According to the INST team, till-date there is no study reported where a combination of two anti-leishmanial drugs has been delivered through nanomodification as a potential therapeutic strategy against visceral leishmaniasis.
- The scientists explored the oral therapeutic potential of the formulation in the treatment of visceral leishmaniasis. They employed an emulsion solvent evaporation method to prepare HPCD modified dual drug-loaded solid lipid nanoparticles (m-DDSLNs).
- The nanoparticle-based combinatorial drug delivery system developed by them enhanced the efficacy of the formulation in both *in vitro* and *in vivo* models by reducing intracellular amastigote growth in *L. donovani*-infected macrophages and hepatic parasite burden in *L. donovani*-infected BALB/c mice model, respectively without causing any significant toxic side effects.
- According to the INST team, the solid lipid nanoparticles (SLNs) can help enhance the oral uptake of the therapeutic agent by retaining a solubilized state of the drug in the Gastrointestinal Tract and favors the formation of mixed micelles (a special case of solubilization) by inducing the secretion of bile salts and phospholipids.
- Further, 2-hydroxypropyl- β -cyclodextrin (HPCD) are cyclic oligosaccharides that are known to be molecular hosts which can selectively include water-insoluble guest molecules within their hydrophobic cavity through non-covalent interactions.

Nanomedicine

- ▶ Nanomedicine, branch of medicine that seeks to apply nanotechnology—that is, the manipulation and manufacture of materials and devices that are smaller than 1 nanometre [0.000001 cm] in size—to the prevention of disease and to imaging, diagnosis, monitoring, treatment, repair, and regeneration of biological systems.

- ▶ Although nanomedicine remains in its early stages, a number of nanomedical applications have been developed. Research thus far has focused on the development of biosensors to aid in diagnostics and vehicles to administer vaccines, medications, and genetic therapy, including the development of nanocapsules to aid in cancer treatment.
- ▶ An offshoot of nanotechnology, nanomedicine is an emerging field and had garnered interest as a site for global research and development, which gives the field academic and commercial legitimacy.



9 Ethanol Production

CONTEXT:

- A meeting co-chaired by Secretary (Food & Public Distribution), Secretary (MoPNG) and Secretary (DFS) was held with the representatives of leading banks and Oil Marketing Companies, Cane

Commissioners of major sugar producing States and sugar industry associations, in which ways and means to increase the supply of ethanol to OMCs was discussed to achieve the objective of the Government to increase blending percentage in petrol.

Key-takeaways from the meeting:

- It was agreed that as producers of ethanol (sugar mills), buyers of ethanol (OMCs) and the lenders (banks) are willing to enter into a tri-partite agreement (TPA) about producing, buying and paying for the ethanol through an escrow account etc., the banks can consider giving loans to sugar mills even with weak balance sheets.
- This would facilitate mills to avail loans from banks to set up new distilleries or to expand their existing distilleries, thereby enhancing the overall distillation capacity in the country and thus would help in achieving the blending target under Ethanol Blended with Petrol programme.
- The Government has 10% blending target for mixing ethanol with petrol by 2022 & 20% blending target by 2030. To achieve the objective of the Government, Department of Food & Public Distribution is regularly holding meetings.
- With a view to achieving blending targets, Government is encouraging sugar mills and molasses based standalone distilleries to enhance their ethanol distillation capacity.
- To encourage sugar mills to divert excess sugarcane to produce ethanol for blending with petrol, the Government has allowed production of ethanol from B-Heavy Molasses, sugarcane juice, sugar syrup and sugar; and has also fixed the remunerative ex-mill price of ethanol derived from these feed-stocks.

10

Dwarf Galaxy

CONTEXT:

- ARIES astronomers trace the mystery behind dwarf galaxy aberrations of massive star formation

ABOUT:

- Amidst the billions of galaxies in the universe, a large number are tiny ones 100 times less massive than our own Milky-way galaxy. While most of these tiny tots called dwarf galaxies form stars at a much slower rate than the massive ones, some dwarf galaxies are seen forming new stars at a mass-normalized rate 10-100 times more than that of the Milky-way galaxy.
- These activities, however, do not last longer than a few tens of million-years, a period which is much shorter than the age of these galaxies - typically a few billion years.
- Scientists observing dozens of such galaxies using two Indian telescopes have found that the clue to this strange behaviour of these galaxies lies in the disturbed hydrogen distribution in these galaxies and also in recent collisions between two galaxies.
- To understand the nature of star formation in dwarf galaxies astronomers observed many such galaxies using the 1.3-meter Devasthal Fast Optical Telescope (DFOT) near Nainital and the Giant Meter wave Radio Telescope (GMRT).
- While the former operated at optical wavelengths sensitive to detect optical line radiation emanating from the ionized Hydrogen, in the latter 30 dishes of 45-meter diameter, each worked in tandem and produced sharp interferometric images via spectral line radiation at 1420.40 MHz coming from the neutral Hydrogen in galaxies.
- Star formation at a high rate requires very high density of Hydrogen in the galaxies. According to the study conducted by the ARIES team, the 1420.40 MHz images of several intense star-forming dwarf galaxies indicated that hydrogen in these galaxies is very disturbed.

- While one expects a nearly symmetric distribution of hydrogen in well-defined orbits in galaxies, hydrogen in these dwarf galaxies is found to be irregular and sometimes not moving in well-defined orbits. Some hydrogen around these galaxies is also detected in forms of isolated clouds, plumes, and tails as if some other galaxy recently has collided or brushed away with these galaxies, and gas is scattered as debris around the galaxies.
- The optical morphologies sometimes revealed multiple nuclei and high concentration of ionized hydrogen in the central region. Although galaxy-galaxy collision was not directly detected, various signatures of it were revealed through radio, and optical imaging, and these are helping to build up a story. The research, therefore, suggests that recent collisions between two galaxies trigger intense star formation in these galaxies.

Dwarf star:

- ▶ A dwarf star is a star of relatively small size and low luminosity. Most main sequence stars are dwarf stars. The term was originally coined in 1906 when the Danish astronomer Ejnar Hertzsprung noticed that the reddest stars—classified as K and M in the Harvard scheme could be divided into two distinct groups.
- ▶ They are either much brighter than the Sun, or much fainter. To distinguish these groups, he called them "giant" and "dwarf" stars, the dwarf stars being fainter and the giants being brighter than the Sun. Most stars are currently classified under the Morgan Keenan System using the letters O, B, A, F, G, K, and M, a sequence from the hottest: O type, to the coolest: M type. The scope of the term "dwarf" was later expanded to include the following:
- ▶ Dwarf star alone generally refers to any main-sequence star, a star of luminosity class V: main-sequence stars (dwarfs):
 - Red dwarfs are low-mass main-sequence stars.
 - Yellow dwarfs are main-sequence (dwarf) stars with masses comparable to that of the Sun.
 - Orange dwarfs are K-type main-sequence stars.
 - A blue dwarf is a hypothesized class of very-low-mass stars that increase in temperature as they near the end of their main-sequence lifetime.
 - A white dwarf is a star composed of electron-degenerate matter, thought to be the final stage in the evolution of stars not massive enough to collapse into a neutron star or black hole—stars less massive than roughly 9 solar masses.
 - A black dwarf is a white dwarf that has cooled sufficiently such that it no longer emits any visible light.
 - A brown dwarf is a substellar object not massive enough to ever fuse hydrogen into helium, but still massive enough to fuse deuterium—less than about 0.08 solar masses and more than about 13 Jupiter masses.

CONTEXT:

- Experts from India – Bangladesh – Nepal and Myanmar come together for enhancing conservation of river Dolphins in the region paving way for regional cooperation.

ABOUT:

- River Dolphins a unique species found mainly in rivers of Asia and South America are vanishing rapidly. Gangetic Dolphin, the national aquatic animal of India has been declared endangered by International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- While working on rejuvenation of river Ganga, continuous efforts in the Namami Gange programme to bring Dolphin Conservation to national attention has resulted in the announcement of "Project Dolphin" by the Hon'ble Prime Ministry under MoEF.
- This project will be in-line with "Project Tiger" which has successfully helped in increasing tiger population. However, the most important thing to focus on now is community participation along with scientific interventions.
- Namami Gange has given importance to biodiversity and ecological improvement along with pollution abatement and projects have been taken up for improvement of fisheries with CIFRI and for biodiversity conservation with Wildlife Institute of India (WII). Under this framework, this is a first of its kind occasion where the fishery sector is leading the Dolphin Conservation discourse.
- Fishery conservation efforts under Namami Gange through CIFRI would improve prey base in Dolphin habitat leading to enhanced Dolphin population. Livelihood improvement of fishermen to help them join conservation efforts.
- Coordinated approach needed for synergising transboundary efforts and to develop a regional program. Small habitats in North East Rivers need special study for local propagation or translocation.
- Dolphin education for students, community engagement and improving overall awareness. Latest under water acoustic methodology to be applied for Dolphin census. E-flow assessment and implementation from biodiversity point of view.
- Sunderban delta is an unique ecological space where Gangetic as well as Irrawaddy Dolphin are present, spread over India as well as Bangladesh. The Conference gave a unique opportunity to share experience on the Dolphins.
- It was also supplemented by Myanmar and Chilika Lake authority in the context of the Irrawaddy Dolphin. The Webinar was attended by more than 1000 participants across the world.

The Ganges river dolphin:

- ▶ The Ganges river dolphin has a sturdy, yet flexible, body with large flippers and a low triangular dorsal fin. It weighs upto 150kg. The calves are chocolate brown at birth and become grayish brown in adulthood with a smooth and hairless skin. Females are larger than males. The maximum size of a female is 2.67 m and of a male 2.12 m.
- ▶ Females attain sexual maturity at an age of 10-12 years, while the males mature earlier. The gestation period is 9-11 months and a female gives birth to only one calf, once in 2-3 years. Dolphins are among one of the oldest creatures in the world along with some species of turtles, crocodiles and sharks. The Gangetic Dolphins are generally blind and catch their prey in a unique manner. They emit an ultrasonic sound which reaches the prey. The dolphin then registers this image in its mind and subsequently catches hold of its prey.

Conservation Issues

- ▶ Once present in tens of thousands of numbers, the Ganges river dolphin has dwindled abysmally to less than 2000 during the last century owing to direct killing, habitat fragmentation by dams and barrages and indiscriminate fishing. It is for these reasons that despite high level of protection, its numbers continue to decline. The absence of a coordinated conservation plan, lack of awareness and continuing anthropogenic pressure, are posing incessant threats to the existing dolphin population.

WWF-India's Initiatives

- WWF-India identified optimal habitats in 9 stretches in 8 rivers as ideal habitats for Ganges river dolphin population and hence for prioritized conservation action. These include: Upper Ganga River (Brijghat to Narora) in the state of Uttar Pradesh (Proposed Ramsar Site), Chambal River (up to 10 km downstream of Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary) in the state of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, Ghagra and Gandak River, in the state of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Ganga River, from Varanasi to Patna in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar respectively, Son and Kosi River in Bihar, Brahmaputra River from Sadia (foothills of Arunachal Pradesh) upto the Dhubri (Bangladesh Border), Kulsi River a tributary of Brahmaputra.
- Education and awareness programmes for fishermen and other riparian population are conducted for communities along the rivers. A strategy and Action Plan for the Ganges river dolphin conservation has been formulated for Uttar Pradesh with the help of the State Forest Department. A network of partners for the Ganges River Dolphin Conservation in the country is also created.

12 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)

CONTEXT:

- NITI Aayog Launched Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)–Transport Initiative for Asia (TIA) India Component.

ABOUT:

- NITI Aayog virtually launched the India Component of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)–Transport Initiative for Asia.
- The event informed the transport, energy, and climate stakeholders in India about planned project activities for the upcoming year.
- It will also offer the opportunity to provide input about India's transport challenges and how they relate to CO2 reduction ambitions. The discussion will help focus the programme further on India's specific needs and circumstances.
- With the aim to promote a comprehensive approach to decarbonize transport in India, Vietnam, and China, NDC–TIA is a joint programme, supported by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) and implemented by a consortium of seven organisations, namely:
- The NDC-TIA programme has a duration of 4 years and will allow India and other partner countries to achieve accountable long-term targets by making a sectoral contribution through various interventions, coordinated with a large number of stakeholders in the domain.
- This will contribute towards achieving their NDCs and increasing their ambition in the transport sector of 2025 NDCs.
- India has a massive and diverse transport sector that caters to the needs of billion people. It has the world's second-largest road network, which contributes to maximum greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through all means of transportation. With increasing urbanisation, the fleet size i.e. the number of sales of vehicles is increasing rapidly. It is projected that the total number of vehicles will be doubled by 2030.

- The NDC–TIA India Component will focus on establishing a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform for decarbonizing transport in India, strengthening GHG and transport modelling capacities, providing technical support on GHG emission reduction measures, financing climate actions in transport, offering policy recommendations on electric vehicle (EV) demand and supply policies, evaluating business models through cost-benefit analyses and so forth.

13 Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2020

CONTEXT:

- NITI Aayog in partnership with the Institute of Competitiveness released the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2020.

ABOUT:

- The first report to examine export preparedness and performance of Indian states, EPI intends to identify challenges and opportunities; enhance the effectiveness of government policies; and encourage a facilitative regulatory framework.
- The structure of the EPI includes 4 pillars –Policy; Business Ecosystem; Export Ecosystem; Export Performance – and 11 sub-pillars –Export Promotion Policy; Institutional Framework; Business Environment; Infrastructure; Transport Connectivity; Access to Finance; Export Infrastructure; Trade Support; R&D Infrastructure; Export Diversification; and Growth Orientation.
- The Indian economy holds immense potential to become a strong exporter on the world stage. To realize this potential, it is crucial that India turns to its states and union territories and makes them active participants in the country's export efforts.
- In an attempt to realize this vision, the Export Preparedness Index 2020 evaluates states' potentials and capacities. It is hoped that the detailed insights from this Index will guide all stakeholders towards strengthening the export ecosystem at both the national and sub-national levels.
- The Export Preparedness Index is a data-driven effort to identify the core areas crucial for export promotion at the sub-national level. All the states and union territories have been assessed on crucial parameters that are critical for any typical economic unit to achieve sustainable export growth.
- The Index would be a helpful guide for the state governments to benchmark regional performance with respect to export promotion and thus deliver key policy insights on how to improve and enhance the same."
- Based on the findings of the report, export promotion in India faces three fundamental challenges: intra- and inter-regional disparities in export infrastructure; poor trade support and growth orientation among states; and poor R&D infrastructure to promote complex and unique exports.
- There is a need to emphasize on key strategies to address these challenges: a joint development of export infrastructure; strengthening industry-academia linkages; and creating state-level engagements for economic diplomacy. These strategies could be supported by revamped designs and standards for local products and by harnessing the innovating tendencies to provide new use cases for such products, with adequate support from the Centre.
- To achieve the target of making India a developed economy by focusing on 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', there is a need to increase exports from all the states and union territories. The EPI provides invaluable insights on how states can attain this goal.

14 14th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue

CONTEXT:

- 14th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue held via video conferencing

ABOUT:

- The 14th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue (DPD) was held via video conferencing . It was co-chaired by Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar and Permanent Secretary (Defence), Singapore Mr Chan Heng Kee.
- Both sides held discussions on a number of issues of bilateral defence engagements between India and Singapore.
- Both sides committed to further enhance the security partnership between the two countries.
- At the end of the DPD, the Implementing Arrangement on Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) between India and Singapore was also signed.

15 Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

CONTEXT:

- Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) - National Mission for Financial Inclusion, completes six years of successful implementation.

ABOUT:

- PMJDY was announced by Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi in his Independence Day address on 15th August 2014. While launching the programme on 28th August, the Prime Minister had described the occasion as a festival to celebrate the liberation of the poor from a vicious cycle.

BACKGROUND

Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner.

- **Objectives:**
 - Ensure access of financial products & services at an affordable cost
 - Use of technology to lower cost & widen reach
- **Basic tenets of the scheme**
 - **Banking the unbanked** - Opening of basic savings bank deposit (BSBD) account with minimal paperwork, relaxed KYC, e-KYC, account opening in camp mode, zero balance & zero charges
 - **Securing the unsecured** - Issuance of Indigenous Debit cards for cash withdrawals & payments at merchant locations, with free accident insurance coverage of Rs. 2 lakh
 - **Funding the unfunded** - Other financial products like micro-insurance, overdraft for consumption, micro-pension & micro-credit

• Initial Features

The scheme was launched based upon the following 6 pillars:

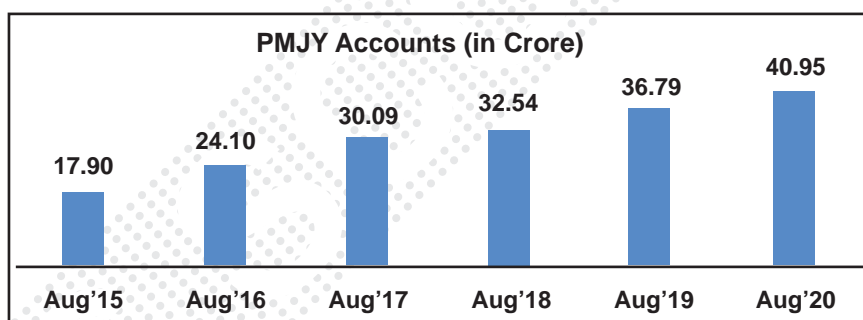
- Universal access to banking services – Branch and BC
- Basic savings bank accounts with overdraft facility of Rs. 10,000/- to every household
- Financial Literacy Program– Promoting savings, use of ATMs, getting ready for credit, availing insurance and pensions, using basic mobile phones for banking
- Creation of Credit Guarantee Fund – To provide banks some guarantee against defaults
- Insurance – Accident cover up to Rs. 1,00,000 and life cover of Rs. 30,000 on account opened between 15 Aug 2014 to 31 January 2015
- Pension scheme for Unorganized sector

• Important approach adopted in PMJDY based on past experience:

- Accounts opened are online accounts in core banking system of banks, in place of earlier method of offline accounts opening with technology lock-in with the vendor
- Inter-operability through RuPay debit card or Aadhaar enabled Payment System (AePS)
- Fixed-point Business Correspondents
- Simplified KYC / e-KYC in place of cumbersome KYC formalities

Achievements under PMJDY- As on 19th Aug'2020:

• PMJDY Accounts



- As on 19th Aug'20 Number of Total PMJDY Accounts: 40.35 Crore; Rural PMJDY accounts: 63.6%, Women PMJDY accounts: 55.2%
- During first year of scheme 17.90 crore PMJDY accounts were opened
- Continuous increase in no of accounts under PMJDY

CONTEXT:

- 17TH ASEAN-India Economic Ministers' Consultations was held

ABOUT:

- The meeting was attended by the Trade Ministers of all the 10 ASEAN countries Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

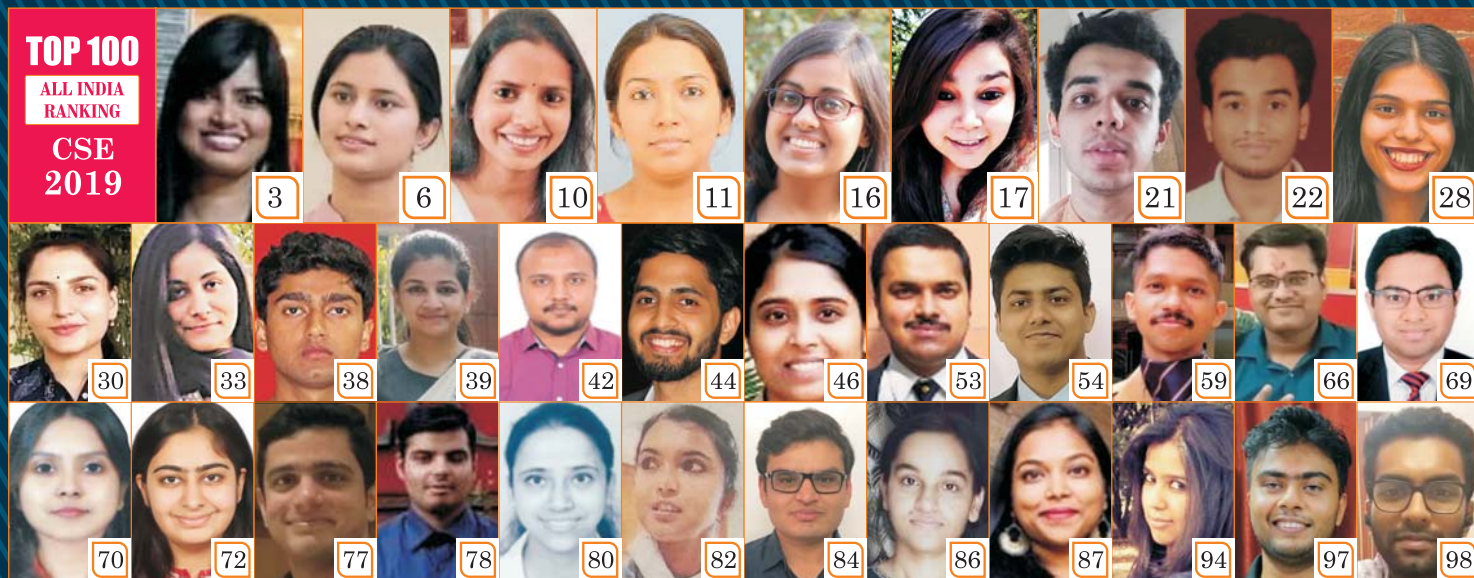
- The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to take collective actions in mitigating the economic impact of the pandemic and resolved to ensure macroeconomic and financial stability and resilient supply chain connectivity, particularly the unimpeded flow of essential goods and medicines in the region, in compliance with the WTO rules.
- The Ministers' discussion centred on the review of the ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA). The Ministers appreciated the growing trade ties and deepening economic engagement between two parties.
- The report of the ASEAN India Business Council (AIBC) was placed before the Ministers. The AIBC Report has recommended that the AITIGA be reviewed for mutual benefit.
- The Ministers from India and ASEAN countries instructed the senior officials to start the discussions to determine the scope of the review at the earliest to, inter-alia, make the Free Trade Agreement more user-friendly, simple, and trade facilitative for businesses.
- The review will make the Agreement modern with contemporary trade facilitative practices, and streamlined customs and regulatory procedures.
- India also made suggestions to further strengthen the AIBC and the Forum agreed to consider these suggestions to deepen the economic engagement between the two parties.



TOP 100

ALL INDIA
RANKING

CSE
2019



TOP 100

ALL INDIA
RANKING

CSE
2018



TOP 100

ALL INDIA
RANKING

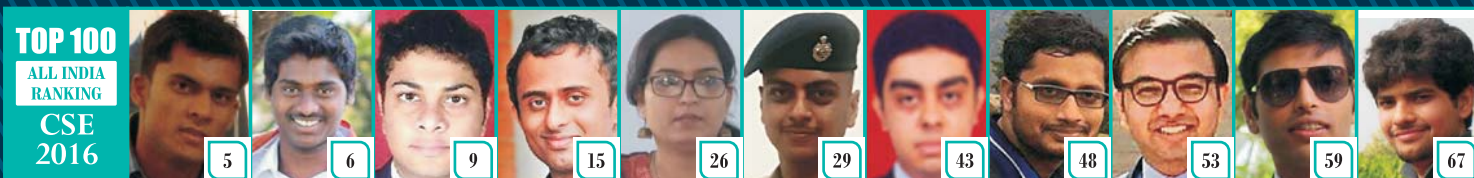
CSE
2017



TOP 100

ALL INDIA
RANKING

CSE
2016



TOP 100

ALL INDIA
RANKING

CSE
2015



SUCCESS IS A PRACTICE WE DO!