

Wetlands

❖ Context

- Recently, On **World Wetlands Day** (2 February), **India added two more Ramsar sites** upscaling the number from 47 to 49.

❖ Key Highlights

- The two new Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance) are **Khijadia Bird Sanctuary in Gujarat and Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh**.
- India now has a network of **49 Ramsar sites covering an area of 10,93,636 hectares**, the highest in South Asia.
- The **47th Ramsar site was Uttar Pradesh's Haiderpur Wetland**.
- World Wetland Day, which was on February 2, is celebrated worldwide to **raise awareness about the critical importance of wetlands**.
 - Besides, it is also an occasion to **commemorate the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971**.
 - Theme of World Wetlands Day: **"Wetlands Action for People and Nature"**

❖ About Wetlands

- Wetlands are **ecosystems saturated with water, either seasonally or permanently**.
- They include mangroves, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice-fields, coral reefs, marine areas **no deeper than 6 meters** at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.
- **Importance of Wetlands**
 - 40% of the world's species **live or breed** in wetlands.
 - Wetlands are **"nurseries of life"** – 40% of animals breed in wetlands.
 - Wetlands are **"kidneys of the earth"** – they clean the environment of pollutants.
 - Wetlands **"matter for climate change"** – they store 30% of land based carbon.
 - Wetlands **"minimize disaster risks"** – they absorb storm surge.

❖ About Ramsar Convention

- The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of **Ramsar in 1971** and came into force in 1975.
- It is one of the **oldest intergovernmental treaties** signed by member countries to preserve the ecological character of their wetlands of international importance.
- The convention **entered into force in India on 1 February 1982**.
- **Purpose:** To develop and maintain an **international network of wetlands** that are **important for the conservation of global biological diversity** and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits.
- Wetlands declared as **Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines of the convention**.

Coal Gasification (CG)

❖ Context

- Recently, the Finance Minister while presenting the budget 2022-23 in Lok Sabha announced setting up **four pilot projects for coal gasification**.
- The Delhi-based non-profit, **Center for Science and Environment (CSE)**, has **raised concerns** about the Union Government's announcement on coal gasification projects.

❖ Key Highlights

- Four pilot projects for coal gasification and conversion of coal into chemicals required for the industry **will be set up for technical and financial viability**.
- India aims to achieve a target of **100 million tonnes CG by 2030**.
- CSE's assessment shows that the CG process is **not attractive from a climate change point of view**.

❖ CSE's Concern over CG

- Coal gasification actually **produces more carbon dioxide (CO2)** than a conventional coal-powered thermal power plant.
- The syngas process converts a relatively high-quality energy source (coal) to a **lower quality state (gas)** and consumes a lot of energy in doing so.
- CG plants are **costlier than thermal power plants**.
- It is **water intensive** process

❖ About Coal Gasification

- Coal gasification is the **process of converting coal into synthesis gas** (also called syngas).
- This gas is a mixture of **hydrogen (H2), carbon monoxide (CO) and carbon dioxide (CO2)**.
- Coal gasification process requires **1100° C to 1400° C** and a limited amount of oxygen.

❖ Advantage of CG

- The syngas can be used in a variety of applications such as in the **production of electricity and making chemical products, such as fertilizers**.
- Removes impurities like sulphur and mercury from coal to make it **more efficient**.
- **No need for landfill** for disposing of ash.
- Boosts domestic production of methanol, dimethyl ether and ammonia, **reducing import dependency**.

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NGDRS

❖ Context

- FM in her budget speech had stated that the adoption or linkage of NGDRS with 'One-nation-one-Registration software' will be promoted

❖ Key Highlights

❖ National Generic Document Registration System

- It is an **in-house advanced software application** for the land deed registration system **developed by NIC**.
- It was launched by the **Department of Land resources, MoRD** in Nov-21.
- The application is **scalable, flexible, configurable and compatible with the state-specific needs** in the country.
- It ensures transparency, accountability of the officials executing the documents and reduction in cost, time and number of visits and procedures required for the execution of the registration documents.
- More emphasis is given on the **integration of the Registry Office with other offices** where some information are required for the completion of registration deeds. **Information for mutation is automatically sent** to the concerned department after the registration of deeds.
- As of Nov-21, it has already been implemented in 12 States and pilot tested in 3 States covering more than 10 crore population.
- **One nation one registration software** will provide option for uniform process of registration and 'anywhere' registration of deeds and documents

❖ Other initiatives of DoLR

- **Digital India Land Record Modernisation Programme (DILRMP)** - It is a central sector scheme to develop **Integrated Land Management Information System (ILMIS)**. Over 90% of the land records have been digitized in 24 states
- **Integrated Land Management Information System (ILMIS) Project** - To integrate the land records database with the banks, financial institutions, circle rates, Registration Offices and other sectors so as to provide effective and efficient service deliveries by the respective offices. As of Nov-21, it has already been implemented in 283 districts of the country. The aim is to make land related information available in single window
- **Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN)** - It will have **14 digits - Alpha-numeric unique ID for each land parcel**. The Unique IDs based on **Geo reference coordinate** of vertices of the parcel would be of international standard and compliance of the Electronic Commerce Code Management Association (ECCMA) standard and Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) standards. It will lead to resolution of land related disputes.

News in Between the Lines

India Press Freedom Report 2021



❖ Context

- Recently, the **India Press Freedom Report, 2021** was released by the **Rights and Risks Analysis Group**.

❖ Key Highlights

- According to the report, **13 media houses and newspapers were targeted** in the country, **108 journalists were attacked, and 6 journalists were killed**.
- **Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Tripura topped the list** of States and Union Territories where journalists and media houses were targeted in 2021.
- **Jammu and Kashmir had maximum number of attacks by state actors**. On the other hand, **Tripura had a maximum number of attacks by non-state actors**.

❖ Significance of the Report

- The widespread attacks on press freedom are an indicator of the continuing **deterioration of civic space in the country**.
- **It represents the status of free speech exercised in our country**.

❖ The Rights & Risks Analysis Group (RRAG)

- It is an **independent think-tank** based in New Delhi.
- It **conducts risk analysis to prevent violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms** with specific focus on the threats to the rule of law and democracy.
- It **provides early warnings on impending conflicts**, and analysis of policies and programmes of the State and non-State actors contributing to proliferation or perpetuation of conflicts.

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Plastic Snowfall



❖ Context

- Recently, the researchers from Austria, Netherlands and Switzerland have found that **trillions of plastic particles fall along with snow in Switzerland.**
- These particles **travel 2000 kilometers through air.**

❖ Key Highlights

- About **43 trillion plastic particles land in the Alps** of Switzerland. They fall along with the snow and are **carried by the wind.**
- It has been found that around **3,000 tonnes of Nano plastics get deposited in Swiss soil every year.** The spread of the Nano plastics is still unexplored.
- About **30% of the nanoplastic particles** measured on the mountain top originate **from a radius of 200 kilometers**, mainly from cities.
- Plastics from the world's oceans apparently also **get into the air via the spray of the waves.**

❖ About Nano Plastics

- Nanoplastics are **particles resulting from the degradation of plastic objects.**
- Nanoplastics **exhibit a colloidal behavior** within size ranging from 1 to 1000 nm.
- **Sources of nanoplastics:** Densely populated and urban areas; oceans (plastics entering the air via spray of waves) etc.
- **Impact:** Unlike micro-particles, they are likely capable of crossing the cell-blood barrier after respiration into the lungs and eventually entering the bloodstream.
 - These particles have **invaded the entire terrestrial and marine environment.**

Pola Vatta



❖ Context

- Recently, **The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)** has identified a new carangid (Vatta) species from the Indian coast.
- The fish is **locally known as pola vatta.**

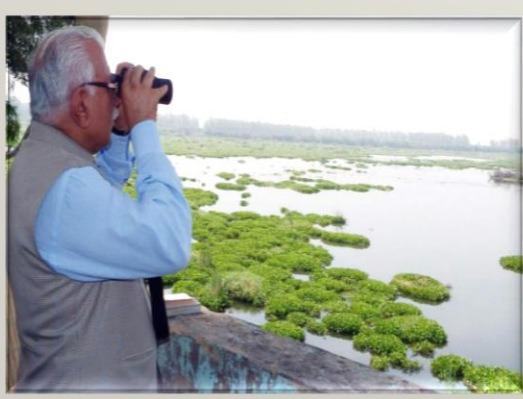
❖ Key Highlights

- It **belongs to the 'queen fish' group** and is named *scomberoides pelagicus*.
- There are more than **60 species of carangids in Indian seas**, out of which four belong to the 'queen fish'.
 - The **newly described one is the fifth queenfish** from Indian waters
- All over the world, **three queen fishes were extinct earlier.**
- Identification of more new fishes assumes significance as it helps enrich marine biodiversity.

❖ About Pola Vatta

- The new fish is **distinct by the deep ovate body**, concave dorsal head profile, and stout and less numerous gill rakers on the first-gill arch compared to the closely related species.
- The new fish is **available across coasts in the country including Kerala**

Bhindawas Wildlife sanctuary



❖ Context

- Haryana government has announced setting up of homestays at the sanctuary and **Sultanpur national park**, on world wetland day, to promote tourism

❖ Key Highlights

- Every year **50,000 birds** of more than **100 species** and **40,000 birds** of more than **80 species reach Sultanpur and Bhindawas respectively.**
- Many tourists come to **Sultanpur and Bhindawas Sanctuary in Jhajjar to spot migratory birds**
- Homestays would also enable them to **experience local culture and catch a glimpse of rural life**
- Recently, homestay policy was also made for **Tikkar Tal in Morni Hills**
- **The sanctuary is also a Ramsar wetland site**

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Punaura Dham



❖ Context

- As informed by the Minister of Tourism, it had been included in the **Ramayana circuit** of the **SWADESH DARSHAN** scheme upon the request of Bihar state

❖ Key Highlights

- It has also been recently included in **PRASHAD** scheme
- **Punaura Dham Janki Mandir** is one of the holiest Hindu temples dedicated to goddess Sita located in Sitamarhi, Bihar. **Sita-Kund** is believed to be the birthplace of goddess Sita
- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**, launched in 2014-15, by the M/o Tourism, aims for integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits by providing Central financial assistance to State/UT governments for infrastructure development
- **PRASHAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive)** scheme, launched in 2014-15, focuses on developing and identifying pilgrimage sites across India for enriching the religious tourism experience
- The Ministry has identified fifteen destinations including Sitamarhi, Bihar for development under the **Ramayana Circuit** theme namely Ayodhya, Nandigram, Shringverpur & Chitrakoot (**Uttar Pradesh**), Sitamarhi, Buxar & Darbhanga (**Bihar**), Chitrakoot (**Madhya Pradesh**), Mahendragiri (**Odisha**), Jagdalpur (**Chattisgarh**), Nashik & Nagpur (**Maharashtra**), Bhadrachalam (**Telangana**), Hampi (**Karnataka**) and Rameshwaram (**TamilNadu**).

TIGR2ESS



❖ Context

- It is a research programme between India and UK institutions to improve Indian crop science and food security

❖ Key Highlights

- Under the programme, the **second Green Revolution**, aimed at increasing food production in India to **400 million tonnes in the next 15 years**, is led by plant ecology scientist and co-chair of the Global Food Security Strategic Research Initiative **Prof. Howard Griffiths** of **Cambridge University**
- The research programme, **funded by Cambridge University** to the tune of **£9 million**, will have diverse partners such as the University of Cambridge (leader), Rothamsted Research, John Innes Centre, Centre for Global Equality, Universities of Essex and East Anglia, The British Dietetic Association and 19 higher education and research institutes in India including the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Hyderabad and seven NGOs.
- It would **strengthen the alliance between Indian and British experts** in social policy and science, hydrology and crop science based on the thesis of making modern agricultural practices reflect the needs of society acceptable to India today.

Project Sadbhawana



❖ Context

- Under the project, the **files pending, petitions, pending in our secretariat will be disposed of within a year**. for several reasons for years together will be disposed of so that **quick governance can be rendered to the people of the state**.

❖ Key Highlights

- **Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma** informed that **approx 4-5 lakh pending files** till the period of May 10, 2021 **lying in the State secretariat** will be **disposed of within a year** under the "**Project Sadbhawana**".
- Potential step towards **citizen-centric governance**
- The move is aimed at giving **succour to people as well as taking governance** to people's doorsteps.
- Along with **project Sadbhawana**, a **Swachhata Abhiyan** in Janata Bhawan will also be launched to give a facelift of the cleanliness aspect in all the departments in the Secretariat.

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