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Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)

Context: Scientists from Bangladesh and Mauritius have joined forces on India's research vessel 'Sagar Nidhi' as part of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) initiative.

- The cruise is conducted by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad.
- INCOIS operates under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- The cruise is an outcome of the first-ever CSC Oceanographers and Hydrographers conference.
- The conference was held in Goa and Hyderabad in November 2022.

CSC

- Members of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) include India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Mauritius as permanent members.
- Bangladesh and Seychelles participate as observers.
- The secretariat of the CSC is located in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- The CSC operates at the National Security Advisor (NSA)-level.
- The primary objective of the CSC is to focus on security issues in the Indian Ocean region.
- The CSC has adopted an agenda consisting of five pillars, which include:
 - Maritime safety and security.
 - Countering terrorism and radicalization.
 - Combating trafficking and transnational organized crime.
 - Cybersecurity and protection of critical infrastructure and technology.
 - Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Timeline of CSC

- 2011: Trilateral meetings between NSAs and Deputy NSAs of India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka lay the foundation for the CSC.
- 2014-2020: Meetings between the three nations are suspended due to India's strained relationship with then-President Abdulla Yameen of Maldives.
- 2020: The CSC is revived and re-branded, with Mauritius joining as a member.
- Bangladesh and the Seychelles, currently observers, have been invited to join as full members and are expected to join soon.

Addition of Australia?

- Australia's inclusion in the CSC is being considered to expand participation and benefit from its expertise.
- Australia could contribute by providing training and hosting security-focused exercises within the CSC.
- The CSC countries, including India, would welcome Australia's experience in the five pillars of the CSC's agenda.

Scheme to support minor rape victims

Context: The government has made a decision to offer medical, financial, and infrastructure assistance to victims in cases where sexual assault leads to pregnancies.

- The Women and Child Development Ministry (WCD) has introduced a special scheme to support victims of sexual assault resulting in pregnancies.
 - The scheme will operate under the Nirbhaya Fund, and an allocation of ₹74.1 crore has been made for its implementation.
- The government will collaborate with State governments and Child Care institutions (CCIs) through the administrative structure of **Mission Vatsalya**, launched in 2021, which focuses on the protection and welfare of children.

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➤ **Objectives of the scheme:**

- Provide integrated support and assistance to girl child victims under one roof.
- Ensure immediate access to emergency and non-emergency services, including education, police assistance, healthcare (maternity, neonatal, and infant care), psychological support, and legal assistance.
- Provide insurance coverage for the minor girl victim and her newborn.

➤ **Coverage of the scheme:**

- Eligible girls: Those below 18 years of age who are victims of rape as per the provisions of the POCSO Act and have become pregnant due to the assault.
 - Eligibility conditions: The victim should be either an orphan or have been abandoned by the family.
- The victim is not required to possess a copy of the First Information Report (FIR) to avail the benefits under the scheme.

Other Initiatives

- The government has established **415 POCSO fast-track courts** for swift justice in cases of rape involving minors.
- Additional support will be provided at **Child Care Institutions (CCIs)** up to the age of 18, and in aftercare facilities for victims up to the age of 23.
- The **Nirbhaya Fund** is a dedicated fund set up by the Government of India to enhance women's safety and security.
- **One Stop Centres (OSCs) or Sakhi Centres** offer integrated support to women affected by violence and distress.
- **'Mission Shakti'** is an umbrella scheme launched for the safety, security, and empowerment of women during the 15th Finance Commission period from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

Deep Sea Mining

Context: The International Seabed Authority's Legal and Technical Commission will meet in July 2023 to discuss the mining code draft, and mining under ISA regulations may start by 2026.

What is Deep Sea Mining?

- Deep sea mining involves extracting mineral deposits and metals from the seabed.
- It encompasses three main types:
 - collecting polymetallic nodules from the ocean floor
 - mining seafloor sulphide deposits, and
 - removing cobalt crusts from rocks.
- These deposits contain valuable materials like nickel, rare earths, cobalt, etc., which are crucial for renewable energy technologies, batteries, and electronic devices.
- Companies and governments consider these resources strategically important due to the depletion of onshore reserves and increasing demand.
- Deep sea mining aims to tap into these resources to meet future demands and support technological advancements.

How is Deep Sea Mining regulated?

➤ **Deep sea mining regulation:**

- Managed through international agreements and organizations.
- UNCLOS governs maritime territories and exclusive economic zones of countries.
- UNCLOS considers the seabed and its mineral resources as the "common heritage of mankind."

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➤ **Objectives of regulation:**

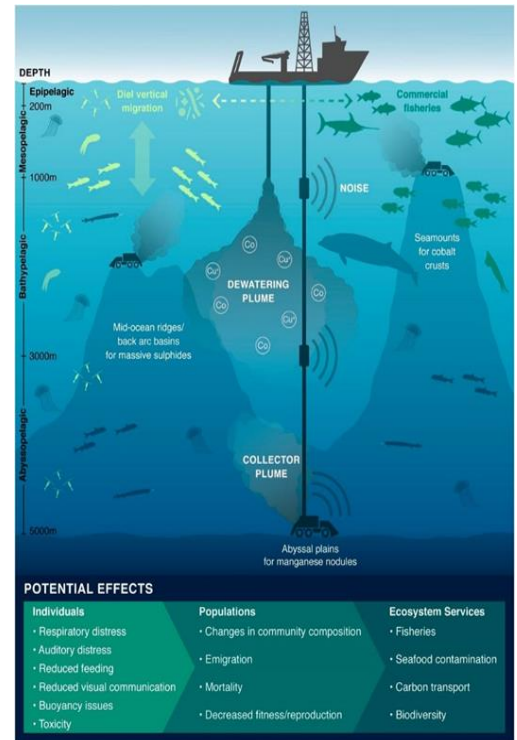
- Protect the interests of humanity.
- Share economic benefits.
- Support marine scientific research.
- Protect marine environments.

➤ **The International Seabed Authority (ISA):**

- Autonomous organization within the United Nations.
- Headquarters located in Kingston, Jamaica.
- Membership: 168 members, including the European Union.

➤ **Role and functions:**

- Regulate exploration and exploitation of deep seabed minerals.
- **Focus on the Area:**
 - Definition of Seabed and subsoil beyond national jurisdiction.
 - Area covers over 50% of the Earth's seabed.
- **Collaboration with other UNCLOS institutions:**
 - Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.
 - International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.



Additions in Floral and Faunal Diversity Database in India

Context: In 2022, India made notable strides in expanding its understanding of biodiversity by adding numerous animal and plant species to its faunal and floral databases.

- The findings were compiled in two publications:
 - "Animal Discoveries - New Species and New Records 2023" by Zoological Survey in India
 - "Plant Discoveries 2022" by Botanical Survey of India.

Faunal Discoveries in 2022

- A total of 664 animal species were added to India's faunal database.
- This includes 467 new species and 197 new records.
- The discoveries encompassed various categories:
 - Mammals: Three new species and one new record.
 - Birds: Two new records.
 - Reptiles: 30 new species and two new records.
 - Amphibians: Six new species and one new record.
 - Fish: 28 new species and eight new records.
- Invertebrates accounted for 583 of the new species, while vertebrates constituted 81 species.
- Insects were the largest group among invertebrates, and fish dominated among vertebrates.
- Kerala recorded the highest number of new discoveries (14.6%), followed by Karnataka (13.2%) and Tamil Nadu (12.6%).
- Other significant contributions came from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, West Bengal, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Notable new mammal species discovered:**
 - **Miniopterus phillipsi:** A long-fingered bat found in Meghalaya.
 - **Glischropus meghalayanus:** A bamboo-dwelling bat found in Meghalaya.
 - **Sela macaque (Macaca selai):** A new macaque species found in Arunachal Pradesh.

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➤ **Notable new records:**

- **Macaca leucogenys:** White-cheeked macaque sighted in West Siang, Arunachal Pradesh (previously found in southeastern Tibet).
- **Yellow-rumped flycatcher (Ficedula zanthopygia):** Found in Narcondam Island of the Andaman archipelago.

➤ India's faunal diversity increased to 103,922 species with these new additions.

Floral Discoveries in 2022:

➤ India added 339 new plant taxa to its floral database.

➤ This includes 186 taxa new to science and 153 taxa as new distributional records within the country.

➤ **The discoveries encompassed various plant groups:**

- Seed plants: 37%
- Fungi: 29%
- Lichens: 16%
- Algae: 8%
- Bryophytes: 6%
- Microbes: 3%
- Pteridophytes: 1%

➤ Seed plants constituted the largest proportion of new discoveries, with dicotyledons accounting for 73% and monocotyledons for 27%.

➤ **Regions with significant discoveries:**

- Western Himalayas: 21%
- Western Ghats: 16%

➤ Kerala had the highest number of plant discoveries (16.8% of the total).

➤ **Notable plant discoveries:**

- **New genera:**
 - **Nandadevia Pusalkar:** Found in the Uttarakhand Himalayas.
 - **Nilgiriella Pusalkar:** Endemic to the southern Western Ghats in Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
 - **Calanthe lamellosa:** An orchid species previously recorded in China and Myanmar, found for the first time in India in the Japfu mountain range in Kohima, Nagaland.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Leptospirosis

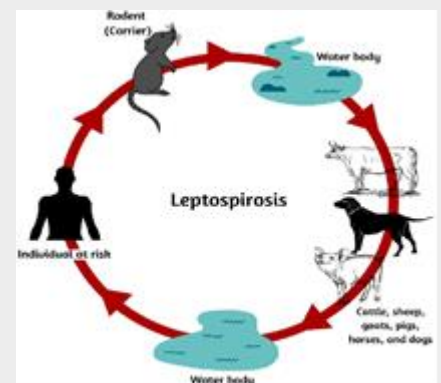
Context: Recently, Leptospirosis has emerged as an important infectious disease in the world.

What is Leptospirosis?

- Leptospirosis is a potentially fatal zoonotic bacterial disease that tends to surge during the monsoon season.
- The disease has been called "ili jwara" in Kannada and "eli pani" in Malayalam, both meaning "rat fever," this disease is caused by the bacterium *Leptospira interrogans* and can affect both animals and humans.

Leptospirosis as a Monsoon Disease:

- Leptospirosis tends to have large outbreaks after heavy rain or flooding, making it a disease that surges during the monsoon season.
- The disease is more prevalent in warm and humid countries, both in urban and rural areas.



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Transmission and Reservoir Hosts:

- Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease that can be transmitted to humans from infected animals.
- Reservoir hosts of leptospirosis include rodents (such as rats), cattle, pigs, dogs and other animals.
- The bacteria *Leptospira interrogans* are shed in the urine of infected animals, contaminating the environment and potentially infecting humans.

Symptoms and Severity:

- Leptospirosis can range from mild flu-like symptoms to life-threatening conditions.
- Symptoms may include sudden fever, chills, headache and, in severe cases, dysfunction of multiple organs such as the liver, kidneys, lungs and brain.
- Animals also exhibit a range of symptoms, including fever, jaundice, vomiting, diarrhea and renal failure.

Collaboration for Prevention: Public health professionals should collaborate with the animal husbandry department to raise awareness and implement effective countermeasures for leptospirosis prevention.

Context: Recently, the Odisha government has announced the launch of a state forest rights scheme called "Mo Jungle Jami Yojana."

Mo Jungle Jami Yojana:

- Mo Jungle Jami Yojana is a scheme launched by the Odisha government in India to strengthen forest rights among tribals and forest dwellers in the state.
- The scheme aims to work in parallel with The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA), which recognizes individual forest rights at the central level.
- By implementing this scheme, Odisha becomes the first state in India to recognize community forest rights in addition to individual rights offered by the central government.

Objectives of the Scheme:

- The scheme aims to ensure livelihood and food security for the Scheduled Tribe and forest-dwelling population in Odisha.
- It aims to provide ownership of land and access to forest resources to the beneficiaries according to their entitlement.
- The scheme aims to integrate the beneficiaries with mainstream development programs of the government.

Potential Beneficiaries and Scope:

- Odisha has 32,562 potential villages and 7.35 potential Scheduled Tribe families, covering an area of 35,739 sq km, which are targeted to be benefited from the scheme.
- The state is home to 62 different tribes, with 13 recognized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- The scheme prioritizes the rights of single women and PVTGs and ensures land titles and record corrections for all eligible claimants.

Implementation and Features: The scheme will convert unsurveyed, forest, and zero area villages into revenue villages, providing households access to water supplies, road connectivity, schools and healthcare.

Context: A recent study conducted in the Bengal delta in Bangladesh revealed that 90% of the sampled frogs had microplastics.

Microplastics in Frogs in the Bengal Delta:

- Microplastics are tiny particles of plastic that can cause severe damage including mortality in organisms.
- Toxic chemicals present in microplastics pose a significant threat to the health of wetland ecosystems.

Importance of Frogs in Ecosystems:

- Frogs play a vital role in the food web and contribute to the health of aquatic ecosystems.
- They help control insect populations including disease-carrying insects such as mosquitoes responsible for diseases like malaria and dengue.

Mo Jungle Jami Yojana



Microplastics



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Sources and Types of Microplastics:

- Personal care products, cosmetics, textile fibers and air blasting media are primary sources of microplastics in aquatic environments.
- Microplastics can originate from the breakdown of larger plastic items through chemical and photochemical reactions.
- Microplastics can be in various forms, including fiber-like particles.

Frog Species and Conservation Status in Bangladesh:

- Bangladesh is home to 47 frog species with nine species classified as threatened and six as near-threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- The decline in frog populations due to environmental degradation, toxicants, diseases and abnormalities caused by microplastics has been observed.

Context: Recently, the four multilateral agencies, namely, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health have jointly launched the One Health Priority Research Agenda on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR).



One Health

What is One Health?

- One Health is an integrated approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of human health, animal health and environmental health.

Concept of One Health:

- The concept of One Health emphasizes the need for a multisectoral and multidisciplinary response to global health issues, such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
- It involves collaboration and cooperation among various stakeholders, including human health professionals, veterinarians, environmental scientists, policymakers, researchers and others.

Purpose and Significance:

- The agenda aims to guide countries, research institutes and funding bodies in supporting One Health AMR research.
- It provides a framework for collaboration among policymakers, researchers, and the multidisciplinary scientific community across sectors.

Key Pillars and Cross-Cutting Themes:

The agenda identifies five key pillars:

1. **Transmission:** Focuses on AMR transmission, circulation, and spread across different sectors and their impact.
2. **Integrated surveillance:** Aims to improve common technical understanding and information exchange among One Health stakeholders.
3. **Interventions:** Focuses on programs, practices, and tools to prevent, contain, or reduce the incidence and spread of AMR.
4. **Behavioural insights and change:** Addresses human behavior and ways to combat AMR by understanding the behavior of various groups and actors involved.
5. **Economics and policy:** Considers investment, action and cost-effectiveness of AMR prevention and control.

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Place in News

Chabahar Port

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister of India (Narendra Modi) in a video conference at the 23rd SCO Council of Heads of State, highlighted the opportunity to leverage Iran's SCO membership by optimizing the utilization of the Chabahar Port.



Geographical Location:

- Chabahar Port is a seaport situated in the Sistan-Balochistan province of Iran, along the Gulf of Oman.
- It has the potential to become one of the most important commercial hubs due to its geographic proximity to Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and the INSTC (International Transport and Transit Corridor).

India's Access to Central Asia:

- The port plays a crucial role in India's efforts to enhance connectivity with Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- It offers India a route to bypass Pakistan and establish direct trade links with these regions.

International Connectivity:

- Chabahar Port connects India with the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimodal transportation route linking India, Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.
- It provides an alternative trade route, reducing dependence on traditional sea routes.

Significance of the Chabahar Port Project:

- The project enables cargo transportation to the Bandar Abbas port and Chabahar port, reducing Kabul's dependence on Pakistan for trade routes.
- The Chabahar Port provides India with access to Afghanistan and beyond including Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Europe.
- This access is facilitated by the 7,200-km-long multi-modal North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), promoting trade and connectivity in the region.

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