

Fortified Rice

❖ Context

- The Union Cabinet on Friday (April 8) approved a **scheme to distribute fortified rice** under government programmes.

❖ Key Highlights

- Food Corporation of India and state agencies have **already procured 88.65 LMT (lakh tonnes) of fortified rice** for supply and distribution.
- Earlier, the PM announced the **fortification of rice distributed under various government schemes**, including the **public distribution system (PDS) and midday meals in schools, by 2024.**

❖ About Rice Fortification

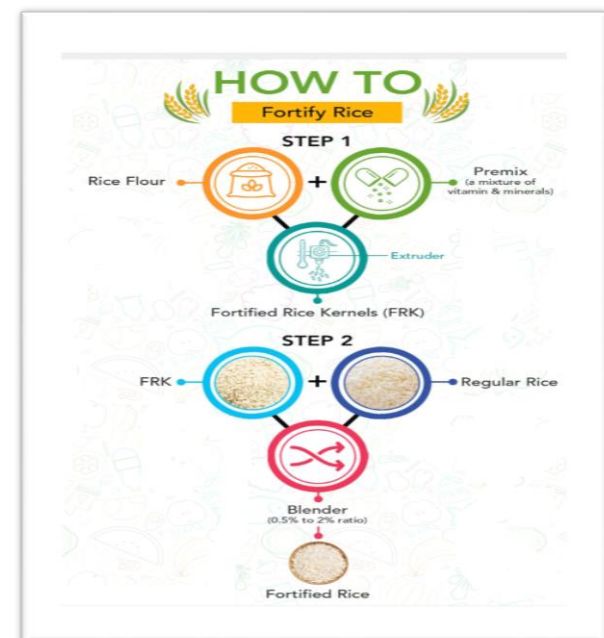
- Rice fortification is a **process of adding micronutrients** like iron, folic acid and vitamin B12.
- The micronutrients are added keeping in mind dietary requirements.
- The cooking of fortified rice **does not require any special procedure.**
- **Fortification Process:**
 - **Various technologies** are available for rice fortification, such as **coating and dusting.**
 - For rice fortification in India, **'extrusion' is considered to be the best technology.**
 - This involves the production of **fortified rice kernels (FRKs)** from a mixture using an extruder machine.
 - The **fortified rice kernels are then blended with regular rice** to produce fortified rice.
 - Under the Ministry's guidelines, **10 g of FRK must be blended with 1 kg of regular rice.**

❖ India's Capacity for Fortification

- Nearly **2,700 rice mills had installed blending units** for production of fortified rice.
- India's blending capacity stood at **13.67 lakh tonnes in 14 key states.**
- **FRK production** had increased rapidly from **7,250 tonnes to 60,000 tonnes within 2 years.**

❖ Need for Rice Fortification

- According to the Food Ministry, **every second woman** in the country is **anaemic** and **every third child is stunted.**
- **India ranks 94 out of 107 countries** and is in the **'serious hunger'** category on the Global Hunger Index (GHI).
- Fortification of food is considered to be one of the **most suitable methods to combat malnutrition.**
- Rice is one of India's staple foods, **consumed by about two-thirds of the population.**
 - Per capita rice consumption in India is 6.8 kg per month.
 - Therefore, fortifying rice with micronutrients is an option to supplement the diet of the poor.
- It **improves the nutritional quality** of food and provides public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- It is an effective, preventive and cost-efficient complementary strategy to **address the nutrition problem** within a short period.



Forest Fires

❖ Context

- Study **'Managing Forests Fires in a Changing Climate'**, released by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (not-for-profit research institution).

❖ Key Highlights

- **Ten-Fold** increase in forest fires in the **past two decades.**
- **62% of Indian states** prone to **high-intensity forest fires caused by rapid change in climate.**
- **Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Odisha & Maharashtra** - the most.
- **Mizoram** had the highest number of forest fires incidence in last two decades with 95% of its districts - forest fire hotspots.
- **Northeastern India** despite a rain-fed area is **witnessing more** such incidences during dry spell between March-May.

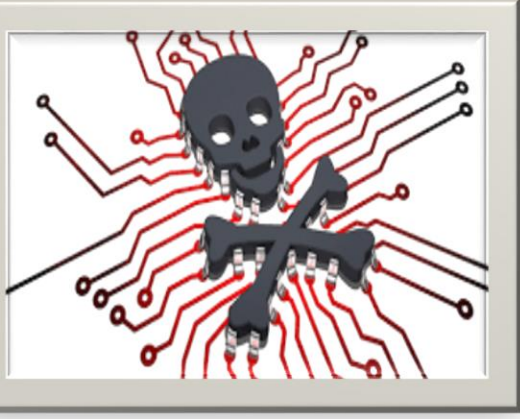
❖ Impact of Climate Change

- The **recent fire at Sariska Tiger reserve unseasonal**, with high temperature exacerbating the spread of fire.
- **Four fires** were observed in the **same week** in the spring season (March-May).
- Earlier forest fires would take place during summer months (between May & June).
- More than **75% of districts** - extreme climate event hotspots.
- More than **30% of districts** - extreme forest fire hotspots.

Face to Face Centres

News in Between the Lines

Shadowpad



❖ Context

- Recorded Future, a Massachusetts based cybersecurity firm has released a report.

❖ Key Highlights of the Report

- The report says that **Chinese hackers (Threat Activity Group, TAG 38)** has targeted **power grid of North India** with a family of malware (trojan) attacks known as **Shadowpads**.
- The targeted **State Dispatch Load Centres (SLDC)** were in the **proximity to the disputed Indo-China border**. SLDCs are responsible for real time operations for grid control and electricity dispatch.
- The hackers are **backed by Chinese state entities**, People Liberation Army and Chinese Ministry of Security.

Parliamentary Official Language Committee



❖ Context

- In the 37th meeting, the committee unanimously approved sending the 11th volume of the committee's report to the President.

❖ Constitution of the Committee and Its Function

- The Committee has been constituted under the mandate of **Section 4 of the Official Language Act, 1963**.
- It has to be constituted after the expiry of a period of 10 years from the date on which **section 3** comes into effect i.e. 26 Jan 1965. Section provides for use of Hindi and continuation of English language for official purposes of the Union and Parliament.
- Section 4 also provides that the **resolution** to constitute the committee shall be moved in either house, with previous sanction of President, and be **passed in both the Houses**.
- The committee consists of **thirty members, 20 - LS and 10 -RS**, elected according to the system of proportional representation through single transferable vote by members of the Lok Sabha and members of Rajya Sabha respectively.
- The committee review the progress made in the use of Hindi for the official purposes of the Union and submit report to the President while making recommendations on it.
- The President will get that report laid before every House of Parliament thereafter and send it to all the State Governments.

Digital Banking Units



❖ Context

- RBI has released guidelines on establishment of Digital Banking Units (DBUs).

❖ About the Committee

- It is a **specialised fixed point business unit or hub**.
- It houses certain minimum digital infrastructure for delivering digital banking products and services or servicing existing financial products and services digitally in **self service mode**.
- It will function any time, **24X7**.
- **Commercial banks (other than RRBs, payment banks and LABs)** with past working experience are **permitted** to open DBUs.
- DBUs can be opened in tier 1 to tier 6 cities. **Each DBU will be housed distinctly**, with the separate entry and exit provisions.
- RBI has defined **Digital Banking** as present and future electronic banking services which involve significant level of process automation running under enhanced technical architecture and differentiated business model.
- Retail Banking segment will now be subdivided into **Digital banking and Other Retail Banking**.
- The back-end including the Core Banking System and other back office related information systems for the digital banking products and services will be logically separated from the incumbent system but can be shared with it.

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Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife



❖ Context

- In respect of the **Goa-Tamnar Power line project**, the SC accepted the recommendation of the Centrally Empowered Committee to use the existing 220 KV power line alignment against the newly proposed line project which had been earlier cleared by NBW standing committee.

❖ About the Committee

- The committee has been **constituted by the National Board of Wildlife under Section 5B of the Wildlife Protection Act.**
- The committee has been **delegated all the powers of the National Board** (exercisable under the Act) subject to its general superintendence, direction & control.
- While PM is the chairperson of National Board, **Environment Minister** is the **chairperson** of the standing committee.

❖ Approval/Rejection of Projects

- The Standing Committee **meets once every three months** to deliberate and grant or reject approvals.
- Every proposal is required to be submitted by the State Government in the approved format with complete details.
- It must also contain the **clear opinion of the officer in charge of a PA**, the Chief Wildlife Warden and the **State Government** in consultation with the State Board for Wildlife.
- The Standing Committee will then have to consider such proposals in accordance with the provisions of the WLPA.

❖ Other Important Functions of the Committee

- To make recommendations on setting up and management of Protected Areas, including restriction of activities.
- To promote conservation and development of wildlife and forest.
- To effectively control poaching and illegal trade.
- To advise Central and State governments for the purpose.

Indian Tent Turtle (Pangshura Tentoria)



❖ Context

- Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change informed Rajya Sabha that **Indian tent turtle is listed in Schedule –I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** and is thereby provided the highest degree of protection.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Indian tent turtle (Pangshura tentoria) is a **species of turtle in the family Geoemydidae.**
- The species is **endemic to India and Bangladesh.**
- It is a small species of turtle, growing to a maximum straight carapace length of 27 cm.
- **Distribution:** Mahanadi, Godavari and Krishna river drainages in India.
- **Habitat:** The preferred habitats of P. tentoria are freshwater rivers and swamps.
- **Threat:**
 - The Indian tent turtle is threatened due to **illegal mining in Narmada River.**
 - This turtle has also been **widely traded as a pet at aquariums.**
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List- Least Concern.**
 - **WPA- Schedule –I.**
 - **CITES Status- Appendix II.**

International Energy Agency (IEA)

❖ Context

- Recently, India has welcomed the decision by the **International Energy Agency (IEA) to release 120 million barrels of crude oil** from its strategic reserves.
- It is in addition to the release of **180 million barrels of crude oil from the strategic reserves of the US.**

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❖ Key Highlights

- This is the **largest stock release in the history of the organization**.
- **India** had in November announced that it would **release 5 million barrels** from the strategic reserve as part of a coordinated effort. The release of crude reserves aims to drive down the rising fuel prices around the globe.

❖ About IEA

- It is an **autonomous intergovernmental organization**.
- Established in the framework of the **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** in **1974** in the wake of the **1973 oil crisis**.
- It mainly focuses on its **energy policies** which include **economic development, energy security and environmental protection**.
- IEA member countries are required to **maintain total oil stock levels equivalent to at least 90 days** of the previous year's net imports.
- **Membership:**
 - **Only OECD member** states can become members of the IEA (31 Member). **India became an Associate member** of IEA in March 2017.
- **Headquarter** : Paris.
- **Publication**- World Energy Outlook (Annual).

EOS-02 Satellite



❖ Context

- Recently, the Union Minister of Science & Technology said that **EOS (Earth Observation Satellite)-02 satellite will be launched in the second quarter of 2022**.

❖ Key Highlights

- The launch was **delayed due to pandemic** and consequent lockdown.
- Earlier, the ISRO's earth observation satellite EOS-04 and two small satellites (**INSPIRESat-1 and INS-2TD**) were successfully placed into the intended orbit by the PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle)-C52 rocket.
- **EOS-02:** It is a **Technology demonstration satellite** for various new technologies with applications that include **agriculture, forestry, geology, hydrology, miniaturized power electronics, reaction wheels etc.** and forming the payload for SSLV (Small Satellite Launch Vehicle)-1.
- **SSLV:** It is the **smallest vehicle weighing only 110-tonne**. It will take only 72 hours to integrate, unlike the 70 days taken now for a launch vehicle.

Indonesia's Palm Oil Crisis

INDIA'S IMPORTS OF PALM OIL (IN LAKH TONNES)						
Fiscal (Apr-Mar)	Crude palm oil		Refined palm oil		Total palm oil	
	Indonesia	Malaysia	Indonesia	Malaysia	Crude	Refined
2015-16	37.09	33.76	21.48	4.24	71.12	25.72
2016-17	33.37	19.61	23.15	6.27	53.56	29.43
2017-18	45.85	17.21	23.57	4.16	67.50	27.73
2018-19	41.57	17.13	16.78	7.17	64.15	25.21
2019-20	42.72	14.89	3.71	17.9	61.76	25.02
2020-21	40.95	27.99	1.13	0.05	73.92	1.32
2021-22*	21.27	28.43	6.93	2.15	59.78	11.19

*Apr-Jan. Source: Department of Commerce

❖ Context

- The world's **largest producer and exporter of palm oil Indonesia is facing domestic shortages**, leading to price controls and export curbs.

❖ Key Highlights

- The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has estimated **Indonesia's palm oil production for 2021-22 (October-September) at 45.5 million tonnes (mt)**.
- It is almost **60% of the total global output** and way ahead of the next bigger producer: **Malaysia (18.7 mt)**. It is also the **world's No. 1 exporter of the commodity**, at 29 mt, followed by **Malaysia (16.22 mt)**.
- **Plausible Factors of the Crisis:**
 - **Supply disruptions** due to manmade (**Russia's invasion of Ukraine**) and natural (**drought**) causes in other cooking oils, especially sunflower and soybean.
 - **Use of palm oil as a bio-fuel:** The Indonesian government has, since 2020, made **30% blending of diesel with palm oil mandatory** as part of a plan to slash fossil fuel imports.
- **India and Vegetable Oil:**
 - India is the **world's biggest vegetable oils importer**.
 - Out of its annual imports of 14-15 mt: **Palm oil 8-9 mt, Soyabean 3-3.5 mt and Sunflower 2.5 mt**.
 - Indonesia has been India's top supplier of palm oil, though it was **overtaken by Malaysia in 2021-22**.

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