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CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. FOR CARBON SINK TARGET, INDIA LOOKS AT CATCHMENT AREA PLAN

- ❑ Having committed a target of creating an additional carbon sink the equivalent of 2.5 billion to 3 billion tonnes carbon dioxide by 2030, India now anticipates that it might not be able to meet that through forests alone.
- ❑ It is now looking at the soil of catchment areas as an additional alternative; the Ministry of Environment and Forest is working on a landscape-based catchment treatment plan to bridge the gap.
- ❑ A carbon sink is a system that absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Catchment areas, the alternative that is being planned, can be natural carbon sinks that, if properly managed, can sequester substantial amounts of atmospheric carbon dioxide in the form of organic carbon in the soil.
- ❑ 65 per cent of carbon stock is stored in soil, and 35 per cent in trees and a plan targeting catchment areas will prevent soil erosion, help recharge groundwater and help retain moisture in the soil that will deter forest fires. The plan will require massive investment.

2. BHARATNET PROJECT: CENTRE MAY ACHIEVE EARLY COMPLETION OF 2ND PHASE

- ❑ Having completed the first phase of BharatNet project to provide broadband connectivity to 1 lakh gram panchayats, the Centre is expecting to preempt its original target of March 2019 for the second phase by concluding it ahead of schedule by December this year. Under the first phase, one lakh gram panchayats have been provided with high-speed broadband connectivity.
- ❑ The objective of the government's flagship project is to provide affordable broadband services in rural and remote areas, in partnership with states and the private sector.

3. STAY ORDER ON NATIONAL ANTHEM IN CINEMAS, GOVERNMENT TELLS SC

- ❑ The Central government asked the Supreme Court to put on hold its December 2016 order making mandatory the playing of national anthem in cinema halls and the audience to stand up during its rendition.
- ❑ Telling the top court that it has set-up an inter-ministerial committee for framing guidelines describing occasions and circumstances in which the national anthem is to be played or sung and the observance of proper decorum, it said that it would require extensive discussions on wide ranging issues.
- ❑ Telling the court that the committee has been asked to submit report with its recommendations in six months, the Centre urged the top court to put on hold its direction vis-a-vis playing of national anthem in cinema halls.

4. SC TO REVISIT 377

The Supreme Court said it will re-examine its verdict upholding Section 377 of the IPC that criminalises gay sex.

377. Unnatural offences: Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India is a landmark decision by the Supreme Court of India, which declared transgender people to be a 'third gender', affirmed that the fundamental rights granted under the Constitution of India will be equally applicable to transgender people, and gave them the right to self-identification of their gender as male, female or third-gender. This judgement is a major step towards gender equality in India. Moreover, the court also held that because transgender people were treated as socially and economically backward classes, they will be granted reservations in admissions to educational institutions and jobs.

Naz Foundation v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi is a landmark Indian case decided by a two-judge bench of the Delhi High Court, which held that treating consensual homosexual sex between adults as a crime is a violation of fundamental rights protected by India's Constitution. The verdict resulted in the decriminalisation of homosexual acts involving consenting adults throughout India. This was later challenged in the Supreme Court of India.

Suresh Kumar Koushal and another v NAZ Foundation and others is a 2013 case by the Supreme Court of India which overturned the Delhi High Court case Naz Foundation v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi and reinstated Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code

5. SAUDI ARABIA GIVES NOD TO INDIA'S PLAN TO FERRY HAJ PILGRIMS BY SEA

- ❑ Saudi Arabia has agreed with India's decision to revive the option of sending Haj pilgrims to Jeddah by sea.
- ❑ A decision was taken during the signing of the annual Haj agreement between India and Saudi Arabia. India had discontinued the practice of sending Haj pilgrims by sea in 1995.
- ❑ Sending pilgrims on ships will help cut travel expenses significantly. It will be a revolutionary, pro-poor, pilgrim-friendly decision.
- ❑ The ships are well equipped to ferry 4,000-5,000 people at a time. They can cover the 2,300-odd nautical miles one-side distance between Mumbai and Jeddah in three or four days. Earlier, ships used to take 12 to 15 days to cover this distance.

6. FREE TREATMENT FOR HEPATITIS C IN NEW SCHEME

- ❑ The health ministry is set to roll out a National Programme for Control of Viral Hepatitis from the 2018-19 financial year, for which a budget of Rs 600 crore for the next three years has been approved. With the focus on Hepatitis C, an anti-viral treatment that costs \$63,000-94,000 for the full course in the US and Europe will be provided free at all government health set-ups.
- ❑ Hepatitis C is caused by a blood-borne virus which **affects the liver**. It could spread through use of injectable drugs, unsafe injection practises, unsafe health care, and transfusion of unscreened blood and blood products. However, unlike Hepatitis B, it is **not sexually transmitted**. There is **no** known vaccine for Hepatitis C. A significant number of people infected with Hepatitis C develop cirrhosis of the liver or liver cancer, which are responsible for a bulk of the 3, 99,000 Hepatitis C deaths annually across the world, according to WHO estimates. Sofosbuvir is recommended under the new WHO treatment guidelines for Hepatitis C.
- ❑ The health ministry is looking at screening vulnerable groups, including drug users and people who underwent surgeries/ blood transfusion before 2002, when the screening protocol was not robust.

7. TERRITORIAL ARMY BATTALION OF EX-ARMYMEN TO CLEAN GANGA

- ❑ AS PART of its mission to clean the Ganga by 2020, the Central government has sanctioned the raising of a Territorial Army (TA) battalion comprising ex-servicemen of the Army.
- ❑ This battalion will be raised as a Composite Ecological Task Force (CETF) battalion of TA for National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
- ❑ The government has allocated Rs 167 crore for the battalion under NMCG, the nodal agency for cleaning the Ganga. The battalion will work on a book debit system with funding provided from the budget of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
- ❑ Territorial Army, which comes under the Defence Ministry, is considered a second line of defence after the regular Army. Nine Ecological Task Force (ETF) battalions of TA have been raised to execute specific environment-related projects.

8. SWACHH SURVEKSHAN

Every year, cities and towns across India are awarded with the title of 'Swachh Cities' on the basis of their cleanliness and sanitation drive as a part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan that was launched in 2014.

- ❑ As a prelude to encouraging cities to improve urban sanitation, **Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs** (formerly Ministry of Urban Development) had conducted 'Swachh Survekshan-2016' survey for the rating of 73 cities in January 2016 followed by 'Swachh Survekshan-2017' conducted in January- February 2017 ranking 434 cities.

- ❑ In a bid to scale up the coverage of the ranking exercise and encourage towns and cities to actively implement mission initiatives in a timely and innovative manner, MoHUA now proposes to conduct its third survey to rank all 4041 cities based on assessment of progress from January 2017 till December 2017 under **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)**.

Objective:

- ❑ The objective of the survey is to encourage large scale citizen participation and create awareness amongst all sections of society about the importance of working together towards making towns and cities a better place to live in.
- ❑ Additionally, the survey also intends to foster a spirit of healthy competition among towns and cities to improve their service delivery to citizens, towards creating cleaner cities.

9. PRATYUSH-INDIA'S FASTEST SUPERCOMPUTER

Pratyush High Performance Computing (HPC) system will **generate weather and climate forecasts in just one hour.**

- ❑ The Pratyush HPC system is housed at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (**IITM**), **Pune**, which is under the **Ministry of Earth sciences (MoES)**.
- ❑ It will also be hosted at the Noida-based National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (**NCMRWF**) **within a few weeks.**
- ❑ The Rs450 crore project will increase India's total computational capacity to 6.8 petaflops, which will place it among the **top 30 fastest computers in the world, from its current ranking of 368.**
- ❑ It will occupy the **fourth place** in rankings after Japan, UK and USA as far as using supercomputers for weather and climate information is concerned.
It will improve weather and climate forecasts by reducing the time and increasing the resolution.
- ❑ It can **predict extreme weather events**, cyclones, tsunamis with more lead time. It will help in seismological studies and also provide information on potential fishing zones.

10. SPACEX LAUNCHES SECRETIVE 'ZUMA' MISSION:

- ❑ SpaceX blasted off a secretive U.S. government payload known as **Zuma**, a mission whose nature — and the agency behind it — remains a mystery.
- ❑ The launch was initially supposed to take place in November but was postponed so the California-based company could take a closer look at potential problems with the fairing, or the nose cone part of the rocket that protects the payload.

11. GOVERNMENT TO LAUNCH E-SANSAD AND E-VIDHAN IN PARLIAMENT AND STATES

- ❑ The Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) has proposed rolling out of **e-Sansad in Parliament** and **e-Vidhan in State Legislatures** to digitize and make their functioning **paperless**.
- ❑ MoPA(Parliamentary Affairs) is the Nodal Ministry for implementation of both the projects.

12. FLAMINGO FESTIVAL HELD AT PULICAT LAKE

- ❑ The three-day annual Flamingo Festival was held at **Pulicat lake and Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary** in Sullurpet mandal.
- ❑ Flamingo Festival is held every year to **promote tourism** in Pulicat and Nellapattu.
- ❑ Flamingo Festival is being **organised** for the **past 12 years**. Migratory birds from Siberia have visited this place during winter season for breeding.
- ❑ Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary is **one of the biggest habitats** for some hundreds of **pelicans** and other birds. It is located about 20 km north of the Pulicat Lake on the Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu border.

Pulicat lake

- ❑ Pulicat Lake is the **second largest brackish water** lake or lagoon in India after Chilika Lake.
- ❑ It is located on border of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu with over **96% of it in Andhra Pradesh** and **4% in Tamil Nadu** situated on Coromandal Coast in South India.
- ❑ The Buckingham Canal, a navigation channel, is part of the lagoon on its western side.

Questions:

1. Consider the following statements about Hepatitis C

1. Hepatitis C is caused by a blood-borne virus which affets the lungs.
2. Unlike Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C is sexually transmitted.

Choose the incorrect statement

- A.1 only B. 2 only C.None D.Both

2. Which among the following are Carbon sinks that prevent global Warming?

- 1) Coral Reefs 2) Rainforests 3) Catchment Areas

- A.1 and 2 B.2 and 3 C. 1,2 and 3 D.1 and 3

3. Consider the following statements about BharatNet

1. It is world's largest rural broadband connectivity programme using Optical fibre
2. The project is being funded by Universal service Obligation Fund (USOF)

Choose the correct answer

A.1 only B. 2 only C.None D.Both

4. Which one of the following statements are true about whip:

1. He is responsible for the party's discipline and behaviour on the floor of the house.
2. The office of Whip, in India, is mentioned neither in the Constitution nor in the rules of the house, nor in the Parliamentary statutes.
3. The consequences of not following a whip's order may result in the defection of the member from the party and subsequently lose their seat in the Parliament as per the 10th schedule of the Indian Constitution or Anti-defection law.

A) 1 and 3 only B) 2 and 3 only C) 1 and 2 only D) 1, 2, 3

5. Which one of the following statements are true?

1. Flamingo Festival is being organised for the past 12 years in Pulicat Lake.
2. Pulicat Lake is located on border of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

A) 1 and 2 only B) 2 only C) 1 only D) none

6. Government is set to launch e-Sansad and e-Vidhan in Parliament and State, its related to-

- A. Internet connectivity for their functioning
- B. Digitize and make their functioning paperless
- C. Web portal for press release
- D. None.