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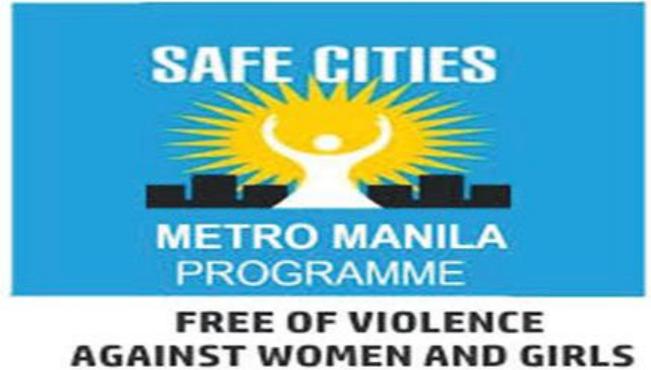
SAFE CITIES PROGRAMME

Why in news?

- According to recent media reports, not much progress has been made under Safe City Programme.
- The report highlights the poor guidelines and improper utilisation of fund.

About Safe City Programme:

- It was launched with a focus on increasing safety features of women in public places.
- The programme is implemented by Ministry of Home Affairs in consultation with Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoW&CD), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ministry of Information Technology (MeitY)
- The funds for this programme are derived from the Nirbhaya fund.



About Nirbhaya Fund:

- Nirbhaya Fund was announced by the Finance Minister in his 2013 budget speech, with Government contribution of Rs. 1000 Crores for empowerment, safety and security of women and girl children.
- The Fund is administered by Department of Economic Affairs of the finance ministry.

NH 1D opened for traffic

In news:

The 434-km strategic Srinagar-Leh National Highway (National Highway 1D), connecting the Kashmir Valley with the Ladakh region, was thrown open for traffic after being closed for over four months due to heavy snowfall.

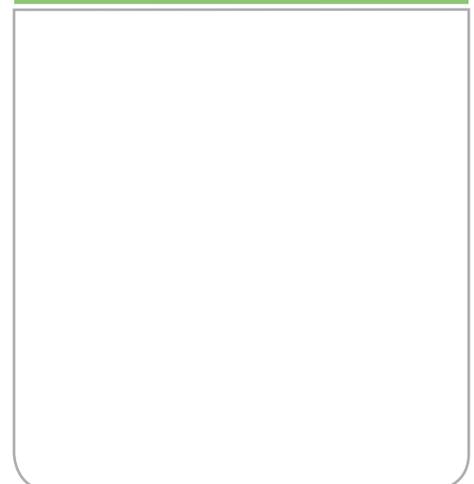
In brief:

- The two highest passes on NH 1D include Fotu La at 4,108 m elevation and Zoji La at 3,528 m elevation.
- It was one of the only two roads that connected Ladakh with the rest of India, the other being Leh-Manali Highway.
- Snow clearance operation was undertaken by the Border Road Organisation under Project Beacon from Gagangir to Zero Point (33 km from 75 km marker to 108 km).
- Under Project Vijayak, the road was cleared from Drass to Zero Point (39km from 108 km marker to 147 km).
- Border Road Organisation was involved in the snow clearance operation.

About BRO:

- Formed on 1960, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighboring countries.
- It functions under Ministry of Defence.
- Officers from the Border Roads Engineering Service (BRES) and personnel from the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) form the

Note



parent cadre of the Border Roads Organisation.

- Currently, the organisation maintains operations in twenty-one states, one UT (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), and neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.

During Peace

1. To Develop & Maintain the Operational Road Infrastructure of General Staff (GS) in the Border Areas.
2. To Contribute to the Socio-Economic Development of the Border States.



During War

1. To Develop & Maintain Roads to Keep Line of Control through in Original Sectors and Re-deployed Sectors.
2. To Execute Additional Tasks as laid down by the Govt Contributing to the War Effort.

IMD records 27% dip in Pre monsoon rainfall

In news:

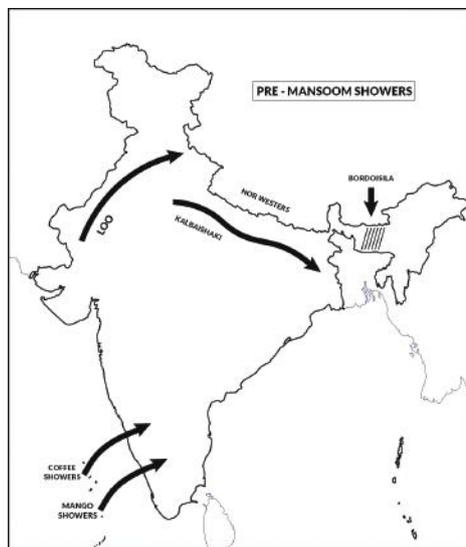
The IMD recorded 43.3 millimetres of rainfall across the country from March 1 to April 24 as against the normal precipitation of 59.6 millimetres. This was 27% less of the Long Period Average (LPA). The highest deficiency of 38% was recorded in the northwest India.

In brief:

- Pre-monsoon rainfall from March to April, is important for horticulture crops in some parts of the country. In the forested regions of Himalayas, pre-monsoon rainfall is necessary for plantations like apple.
- Crops like sugarcane and cotton, planted in central India, survive on irrigation, but also require supplement of pre-monsoon rains
- Due to moisture, pre-monsoon rainfall also helps in minimising the occurrence of forest fires.
- The Central India division is the only one to have recorded more 5% rainfall than the normal.
- One of the reasons for a pre-monsoon rainfall is excessive heating from March to June which several parts of the country witness. The moisture from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal aids in creation of thunderstorms

Pre-monsoon Showers:

- Mango showers is the name of the pre-monsoon showers in Karnataka, Kerala, Konkan and Goa that help in the ripening of mangoes.
- ‘Cherry Blossom’ or ‘Coffee showers’ are local wind that blows over the interior Karnataka during the pre-monsoon season and is extremely helpful for coffee cultivation.



Note



- The Loo is a strong, dusty, gusty, hot and dry summer wind from the west which blows over the western Indo-Gangetic Plain region of North India. The Loo mainly originates in the large desert regions of the north-western Indian subcontinent.
- Violent thunderstorms in the Gangetic plains of India are locally known as KalBaisakhi or Nor'westers. These localised events are generally associated with thunderstorms accompanied by strong squally winds and torrential rainfall. It originates over Bihar and Jharkhand area, moves eastwards and strikes West Bengal and Odisha.
- They are known as Bordoisila in Assam

BCIM CORRIDOR

In News:

Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor no longer listed under BRI umbrella

In Brief:

1. The Chinese foreign ministry website has not listed the BCIM as a project covered by the BRI—the giant connectivity initiative spearheaded by China to revive the ancient Silk Road across Eurasia and Africa.
2. India's decision to skip the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) may have led to the exclusion of the Bangladesh- China- India- Myanmar (BCIM) Economic corridor from the list of projects covered by the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) umbrella.

South Asia is covered by three major undertakings—the

1. China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC),
2. Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network, including Nepal-China cross-border railway and
3. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

India's Stand:

Citing "sovereignty" concerns, India, for the second time, has not officially participated in the BRF, as CPEC—a flagship of the BRI—passes through Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

BCIM:

1. The 2800 km BCIM corridor proposes to link Kunming in China's Yunnan province with Kolkata, passing through nodes such as Mandalay in Myanmar and Dhaka in Bangladesh before heading to Kolkata.
2. A report titled, "The Belt and Road Initiative Progress, Contributions and Prospects," released by the Leading Group for Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative of the Communist Party of China (CPC) does list the BCIM as a BRI project.
3. The report also highlights that over the past five years or so the four countries of BCIM have worked together to build the corridor in the framework of joint working groups, and have planned a number of major projects in institutional development, infrastructure connectivity, cooperation in trade and industrial parks, cooperation and opening up in the financial market, cultural exchange, and cooperation in enhancing people's wellbeing.

Note



BASMATI RICE

In News:

The Delhi High Court has struck down the decision of the Central government restricting the famously aromatic basmati rice production to only seven States in the Indo-Gangetic plains.

In Brief:

The High Court’s verdict came on the Madhya Pradesh government’s plea to include 13 districts in the State under the Geographical Indications (GI) category for basmati rice.

Two memos

The Ministry of Agriculture had through two Office Memorandums (OM) confined the GI certification for basmati to rice grown in the Indo-Gangetic plains in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

GI certification gives recognition and several protections to a basmati rice producer and help in maintaining the specific qualities of the rice grown in that particular region.

The Madhya Pradesh government contended that the two OMs were outside the scope of the Seeds Act, 1966. It additionally argued that the OMs encroach upon its power to pass laws in relation to agriculture, which is a State subject.

The 2008 OM of the Ministry set forth the standards of the ‘basmati’ variety of rice.

The Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB) cleared the decks for issuing the ‘Geographical Indication’ tag for Indian basmati rice grown in some States.

Basmati Rice:

Basmati rice cultivated in the Indo-Gangetic Plains on the foothills of the Himalayas, covering areas of the rice grown in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Western U.P. and two districts of Jammu and Kathua, will now be issued the GI tag.

Litigation involved:

- The application has been mired in litigation after farmers and exporters and Madhya Pradesh wanted to be included in the list of States approved by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority

- It is the statutory body responsible for export promotion and development of certain scheduled products.

Way ahead for the litigant States:

- Justice Basha also ordered the assistant registrar to reconsider the issue of addition of areas of basmati cultivation in States such as Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan.

- The assistant registrar has now been asked to ‘reconsider the matter afresh’ and listen to arguments of both parties — APEDA and the respondents — and pass an order within the next six months.

Basmati Exports

- In 2014-15, India exported 37 lakh MT of Basmati Rice to the world worth Rs. 27,597.87 crore and is the world’s leading exporter of the rice, according to APEDA.



Note



- India exports a major quantity of basmati rice to Saudi Arabia, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Kuwait.

Background:**What is Geographical Indication?**

Geographical Indication is a genre of Intellectual Property.

GI tag is an insignia on products having a unique geographical origin and evolution over centuries with regards to its special quality or reputation attributes.

The status to the products marks its authenticity and ensures that registered authorised users are allowed to use the popular product name.

These could be naturally grown crops like Assam Chilies or manufactured products like Jaipur Pottery.

GI tags are given on the basis of the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.

The registration of GI is valid for 10 years after which it needs to be renewed.

Violation of GI tags is punishable offence under law.

What are the benefits of a GI Tag?

- Legal protection to the products
- Prevents unauthorised use of a GI tag products by others
- Helps consumers to get quality products of desired traits
- Promotes economic prosperity of producers of GI tag goods by enhancing their demand in national and international markets.
- The GI tag allows the producers of the objects to claim a premium for their products. Thus, it is financially beneficial to them.
- The GI tag can also pique interest of consumers and thus raise demand for a product again benefiting the producer.

What are the legalities related to GI Tag?

- It is covered as an element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.
- At international level, GI is governed by World Trade Organisation's (WTO's) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- In India, GI registration is governed by the Geographical Indications of goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- This Act is administered by Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, who is also Registrar of Geographical Indications and is based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Note