

16 MAY 2019

GLOBAL DRUG SURVEY

In news:

It has found that Indians, more than from other nationalities, are seeking help to reduce their alcohol intake. Alcohol, tobacco and cannabis were the most common stimulants used by Indians.

About GDS:

- GDS is an independent research company based in London.
- Using anonymous online research methods Global Drug Survey runs an annual survey that uses a detailed questionnaire to assess trends in drug use and self-reported harms among regular drug users and early adopters of new trends.
- GDS aims to make drug use safer, regardless of the legal status of the drug, by sharing information with individuals, communities, health and policy organisations.
- Alcohol and tobacco apart, the most used drugs globally were cannabis, MDMA (or Ecstasy), cocaine, amphetamines, LSD (or 'acid'), magic mushrooms, benzodiazepines, prescription opioids, ketamine, nitrous oxide.

ICGS VIGRAHA

After 29 glorious years of service from 1990 to 2019, Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Vigraha, a frontline offshore patrol vessel was decommissioned. It was based at Visakhapatnam.

It had participated in major coast guard operations involving search and rescue, anti-poaching, pollution response, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, repatriation and joint exercises among others.



GLOBAL FACILITY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION AND RECOVERY (GFDRR)

In news:

India is unanimously chosen as co-chair of the Consultative Group (CG) of Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) for the fiscal year 2020.

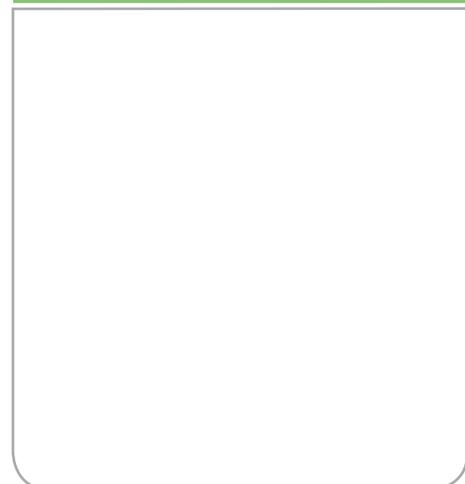
The decision was taken during the 6th Session of the GFDRR, 2019 at Geneva.

About GFDRR:

- GFDRR is a global partnership that helps developing countries better understand and reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change.
- GFDRR is a grant-funding mechanism, managed by the World Bank, that supports disaster risk management projects worldwide.
- It provides technical assistance, helps in capacity building and enables analytical work to help vulnerable nations improve resilience and reduce disaster risk.



NOTE



- It also works to implement the “Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction” by helping countries to integrate disaster risk management and climate change adaptation together towards development strategies and investment programs.
- India became member of CG of GFDRR in 2015.

NEWS BROADCASTING STANDARDS AUTHORITY

Why in news?

- Justice A.K. Sikri has been appointed as the Chairperson of the News Broadcasting Standards Authority.

About News Broadcasting Standards Authority:

- It is an independent body set up by the News Broadcasters Association.
- Its task is to consider and adjudicate upon complaints about broadcasts.
- The nine-member authority comprises of a Chairperson, being an eminent jurist; four eminent persons having special knowledge in related fields; four eminent editors employed with a broadcaster.
- This authority lays down the Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards.

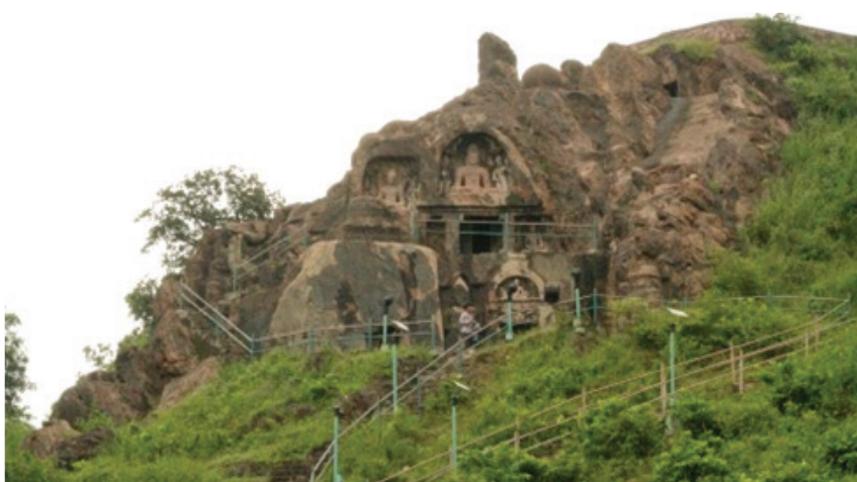


BOJJANNAKONDA AND LINGALAKONDA

- Bojjannakonda and Lingalakonda are two Buddhist rock-cut caves on adjacent hillocks, in Sankaram village of Vishakapatnam district of Andhrapradesh.
- The sites are believed to date between 4th to 9th century BCE.
- Both caves contain numerous monolithic stupas, chaityas and viharas.
- The coins issued by Samudragupta (important Gupta ruler) is also found here.
- Other Buddhist centres nearby include Thotlakonda, Bavikonda, Pavurallakonda, all around Vishakapatnam.

Nirvana:

- It is the most common term used to describe the goal of the Buddhist path.
- The literal meaning is “blowing out” or quenching”.
- It is the ultimate spiritual goal in Buddhism and marks the extinction of the “three fires”, or “three poisons”, passion, aversion and ignorance.
- When these fires are extinguished, one can get released from the cycle of rebirth.



NOTE



- Nirvana, or the liberation from cycles of rebirth, is the highest aim of the Hinayana or Theravada Buddhist tradition.
- Whereas in Mahayana tradition, the highest spiritual goal is not Nirvana but the attainment of Buddhahood, in which there is no abiding in Nirvana, but a Buddha continues to take rebirths in the world to help liberate beings from taking rebirth by teaching the Buddhist path.

Stupa:

- Stupa is a mound like or hemispherical structure containing relics that is used as a place of meditation.
- Some notable buddhist stupas are at Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh), Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh), Amaravathi (Andhra Pradesh) and Bharhut (Madhya Pradesh).

Chaitya: It refers to buddhist prayer hall

Vihara: It refers to buddhist monasteries.

TRA UNVEILS AI TOOL TO IMPROVE TEA QUALITY

In news

Tea Research Association (TRA) has introduced artificial intelligence (AI)-based technology aimed at improving quality.

In Brief

The machine, called TRA Agnext Qualitea Profiler (QTP), developed through this technology would help determine the ‘fine leaf’ of a tea batch ‘without human intervention.’

The objective is to improve accuracy and reduce time. Fine leaf count (FLC) determines the presence of the two (or three) leaves and a bud in a batch, which go towards enhancing quality.

The technology has been developed through a collaboration between TRA and Agnext, a start-up which was incubated by IIT Kharagpur.



Tea Research Association

Tea Research Association popularly known as TRA Tocklai looks after the research and development needs of the Indian tea industry.

It carries out and promotes research on tea with the principal objective of improving overall productivity and quality.

Research on all aspects of tea cultivation is carried out at Tocklai Tea Research Institute, Jorhat, Assam and at North Bengal R&D Centre, Nagrakata, West Bengal.

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is wide-ranging branch of computer science concerned with building smart machines capable of performing tasks the typically require human intelligence. AI is an interdisciplinary science with multiple approaches, but advancements in machine learning and deep learning are creating a paradigm shift in virtually every sector of the tech industry.

NOTE

AT WTO, INDIA MOOTS ‘UNBIASED’ ASSESSMENT OF TRADE POLICIES

India is trying to rally the support of other developing countries in the World Trade Organisation to reform the “biased” system of assessing a country’s services trade policies, according to an official associated with the development.

The system, developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has significant flaws. It is biased towards developed countries.



The study also found that the OECD method resulted in several counter-intuitive results as compared with the real policies implemented by the countries in question, such as ranking India very high in terms of restrictiveness. India has come up with a “better and more reliable” mechanism to measure restrictiveness in the services trade, and has approached China, Brazil, Indonesia, Turkey and South Africa to highlight the importance of the new system.

WTO:

- WTO is an inter-governmental organization for governments to negotiate global trade agreements and progressively liberalizing trade.
- It operates system of trade rules that apply to all its members.
- It is also a place for Member governments to settle their trade disputes.
- Its headquarters are located in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It was established on 1 January 1995 and its official languages are English, French and Spanish.

OCED:

- It is an international economic organization, Established in 1961
- Secretariat : Paris
- Members : 35
- Latvia has joined in July, 2016
- Aims to stimulate economic progress and world trade
- Its members are committed to Democracy and Market Economy
- Most OECD members are high-income economies with a very high Human Development Index (HDI) and are regarded as developed countries
- India is not a member of OECD.

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