

## **25<sup>th</sup> -31<sup>st</sup> Oct Weekly Compilation**

### **(The Hindu+ Indian Express + PIB + Other World Wide News)**

#### **❖ Climate Finance Shadow Report 2020**

**(The Hindu)**

**Oxfam has released a report titled Climate finance shadow report 2020** assessing progress towards the \$100 billion commitment.

#### **Highlights**

- Developed countries had committed in 2009 to mobilise \$100 billion every year by 2020 to help developing countries cut their carbon dioxide emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change.
- Developed countries have pledged around \$59 billion in 2017-18. However, around \$47 billion of the pledged amount was forwarded as loans.
- Only around a third of climate finance projects are estimated to take account of gender equality.
- Only a fifth (20.5%) of climate financing went to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and just 3% to Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

#### **Recommendations**

- Climate financing could be funded through a range of sources including redirecting some fossil-fuel subsidies which cost governments over \$320 billion in 2019 alone.
- Developed countries should scale-up grant-based financing for adaptation and reduce the share of climate financing provided in the form of loans.
- Mobilise more Private, locally led and Gender responsive finance.
- Increase Grants and Finance for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

#### **❖ Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme**

**(Source: The Hindu)**

Government plans to extend the deadline for Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for MSMEs beyond October 31 in case the targeted loan sanction amount of Rs 3 Lakh crore is not achieved.

#### **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)**

**Aim:** To mitigate the economic distress being faced by about 45 lakh MSMEs by providing them additional funding of up to Rs 3 lakh crore in the form of a fully guaranteed emergency credit line.

**Eligibility:** All MSME borrower accounts with outstanding credit of up to Rs.25 crore as on 29th February, 2020 and with annual turnover of up to Rs.100 crore would be eligible for the scheme. They can get up to 20% fresh loans of their entire outstanding credit.

**Guarantee:** National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC) will provide 100% guarantee against losses on loans advanced to eligible MSMEs and MUDRA borrowers.

**Duration:** The loan will be provided for four years with a moratorium of one year on the principal amount.

**Interest Rates:** The Interest rates under the Scheme are capped at 9.25% for banks and financial institutions and at 14% for non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

### **National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC)**

- It was set up in 2014 as a private limited company by the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance under the Indian Companies Act, 1956.
- Purpose: To act as a common trustee company to manage and operate various credit guarantee trust funds.

### **❖ Habitat Decline in Himalayan Region (Source: The Hindu)**

**The Zoological Survey of India has released a study titled 'Adaptive spatial planning of protected area network for conserving the Himalayan brown bear'.**

- The study was carried out in the western Himalayas. It has predicted a 73% decline of habitat of Himalayan Brown Bear by the year 2050.
- This decline will also impact 13 protected areas. Out of these 13 protected areas, eight will become completely uninhabitable by 2050.

**Recommendations:** The study has suggested adopting an adaptive spatial planning of protected area networks in the western Himalayas for conserving the Himalayan Brown Bear species.

**Adaptive Spatial Planning:** It refers to the process of conserving the existing landscape and augmenting the fragmented areas of the habitat of the species.

**Himalayan brown bear:** It is one of the largest carnivores in the highlands of Himalayas.

**Habitat:** It occupies the higher reaches of the Himalayas in remote, mountainous areas of Pakistan and India, in small and isolated populations and is extremely rare in many of its ranges.

**IUCN:** The brown bear as a species is classified as Least Concern by the IUCN.

However, the Himalayan Brown Bear as a subspecies is highly endangered and populations are dwindling. It is Endangered in the Himalayas and Critically Endangered in Hindu Kush region.

## ❖ **Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2020-25** (Source: PIB)

National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has approved an Action Plan for Vulture Conservation 2020-2025.

### **Highlights**

- **Vulture Conservation centre:** Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu will get vulture conservation and breeding centre each.
- **Vulture Safe zone:** Establishment of at least one vulture-safe zone in each state for the conservation of the remnant populations in that state.
- **Rescue Centers:** Establishment of four rescue centers, in Pinjore (Haryana), Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), Guwahati (Assam) and Hyderabad (Telangana). There are currently no dedicated rescue centers for treating vultures.
- **Toxic Drugs:** A system to automatically remove a drug from veterinary use if it is found to be toxic to vultures with the help of the Drugs Controller General of India.
- **Vultures Census:** Coordinated nation-wide vulture counting involving forest departments, the Bombay Natural History Society, research institutes, nonprofits and members of the public. This would be for getting a more accurate estimate of the size of vulture populations in the country.
- **Database on Threats to Vulture:** A database on emerging threats to vulture conservation including collision and electrocution, unintentional poisoning.

**Vultures in India:** Out of 23 species of vultures in the world, nine are found in India. These include:

- White rumped vulture (Critically Endangered)
- Slender billed vulture (Critically Endangered)
- Long billed vulture (Critically Endangered)
- Red headed vulture (Critically Endangered)
- Egyptian vulture (Endangered)
- Himalayan Griffon (Near Threatened)

- Cinereous vulture (Near Threatened)
- Bearded vulture (Near Threatened)
- Griffon Vulture (Least Concern)

## ❖ **Strategic Autonomy**

**(Source: The Hindu)**

The engagement of India and China in the West Asia region is a good example of their evolving strategic autonomy.

### **Strategic Autonomy**

- Strategic autonomy is the ability of a state to pursue its national interests and adopt its preferred foreign policy without being constrained in any manner by other states.
- The concept of 'strategic autonomy' is much different from the Nehruvian era thinking of 'non-alignment'.
- Now, the alignment is issue based, and not ideological. For example, India's equitable engagement with Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel, without entering into the region's multi-layered conflicts and political fissures.

### **How China's relation with West Asia is evolving**

- With the West Asian countries started thinking over the need to invest more in others countries as the American security safety net is not absolute, China is trying to capitalise this.
- China is now ready to offer an alternative model for "investment and influence" and wants to play much active role in West Asia through concepts such as "negative peace" and "peace through development."
- The fact that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) obtained Chinese Wing Loong drones in 2016 a copy of U.S.'s infamous armed MQ-9 'Reaper' drone that U.S refused to sell is a good example of the Gulf's resolve of attaining military capabilities from wherever possible.
- Also, the Gulf economies such as Saudi Arabia need growing markets of China and India to sell oil in the coming decade.
- According to a report, the China is also taking advantage of U.S. abandonment of the Iran nuclear deal by signing \$400 billion, 25-year understanding agreement between Iran and China.
- To address the region's tensions, China is pursuing to establish an alternative forum to the West-led ecosystems.

### **How India's relation with West Asia is evolving**

- India's outreach to West Asia has increased since 2014.
- India, by giving open economic and political preference to the larger Gulf region it increased its cooperation with Abu Dhabi and Riyadh.
- India has realised the economic realities of this region with, Saudi Arabia and the UAE announcing multi-billion-dollar investments on Indian shores.
- Even, there has been a steady development with Israel but the relation with Iran has lagged behind due to U.S sanctions.
- The Israel's recent peace accords with the UAE and Bahrain signifies a more stable gulf region which opens up tremendous opportunities for India's engagement with West Asia.
- From the perspectives of both the India and China, the theory of interests superseding ideology in foreign policy is fast disappearing; It signifies the departure from ideological based cooperation to issue based alignment.

## ❖ **Kabartal Wetland**

**(The Hindu)**

Kabartal Wetland has been designated as Ramsar sites. With this, the total number of Ramsar sites in India is 39, the highest in South Asia.

**Kabartal Wetland:** It is also known as Kanwar Jheel. It covers 2,620 hectares of the Indo-Gangetic plains in the Begusarai district of Bihar.

**Significance:** It acts as a vital flood buffer for the region besides providing livelihood opportunities to local communities.

**Biodiversity:** Significant biodiversity is present in the wetland. It is also an important stopover along the Central Asian Flyway for migratory water- birds.

**Species:** It is home to species such as white rumped vulture (Critically Endangered), red-headed vulture (Critically Endangered)

**Ramsar Convention on Wetland (1971):** It is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources

**Montreux Record:** It is a register of wetland sites on the List of Ramsar wetlands of international importance. It shows such sites where there has been or likely to be adverse ecological changes due to anthropogenic activities. Indian sites in the Montreux Record are Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan), Loktak Lake (Manipur).

## ❖ **India Energy Forum**

**(Source: Indian Express)**

Prime Minister (PM) has delivered an inaugural address at the India Energy Forum.

**Organised by:** It is an annual event organized by NITI Aayog and Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

**Objective:** To deliver a global platform to understand best-practices, discuss reforms, and inform strategies for accelerating investments into the Indian Oil and Gas value chains.

## **Highlights**

- **Renewable Energy Target:** India has the target to increase the installed renewable energy capacity to 175 GW by 2022 that has been further extended to 450 GW by 2030.
- **Aviation Market:** India is the third largest and the fastest growing aviation market in terms of domestic aviation and Indian carriers are projected to increase their fleet size from 600 to 1200 by 2024.
- India allows 100% FDI in exploration and production projects and has permitted 49% FDI in public sector refining under the automatic route.
- **Seven Key Drivers:** India's energy map will have seven key drivers:
  - Accelerating our efforts to move towards a gas-based economy.
  - Cleaner use of fossil fuels particularly petroleum and coal
  - Greater reliance on domestic sources to drive bio-fuels.
  - Achieving the renewable target of 450 GW by 2030.
  - Increasing the contribution of electricity to de-carbonise mobility.
  - Moving into the emerging fuels including hydrogen
  - Digital innovation across all the energy systems

## **❖ India-Australia Hackathon on Circular Economy (I-ACE) (The Hindu)**

**Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** in association with Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) has launched a two day India–Australia Circular Economy Hackathon (I-ACE).

**I-ACE Hackathon:** It aims to focus on identification and development of innovative technology solutions by bright-minded students, startups and MSMEs of both nations.

**Themes:** The four key themes for the hackathon are as follows:

- Innovation in packaging reducing packaging waste
- Innovation in food supply chains avoiding waste
- Creating opportunities for plastic waste reduction

- Recycling critical energy metals and e-waste.

**Atal innovation Mission (AIM):** It was set up by NITI Aayog in 2016 to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship by creating institutions and programs that enhance innovation in schools, colleges, and entrepreneurs in general.

**Circular Economy:** It is an economic system aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of resources. It employs reuse, sharing, repairing, refurbishment, remanufacturing and recycling to create a closed-loop system minimising the use of resource inputs and the creation of waste, pollution and carbon emissions.

### ❖ **The World's Women 2020 : UNDESA** **(The Hindu)**

The World's Women 2020: Trends and Statistics report has been released by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

- The report has been produced every five years since 1990 and provides the latest data on the state of gender equality worldwide.
- It provides a reality-check on the global status of women 25 years since adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (for advancing women's rights).

#### **Highlights**

**Gender Gap:** In 2020, only 47% of women of working age participated in the labour market, compared to 74% of men – a gender gap that has remained relatively constant since 1995.

**Unpaid domestic and care work holding women back:** On an average day, women globally spend about three times as many hours on unpaid domestic and care work as men (4.2 hours compared to 1.7).

**Women's In terms of power and decision making:** Women held only 28% of managerial positions globally in 2019 – almost the same proportion as in 1995.

**Women in Politics:** In political life, women's representation in parliament has more than doubled globally. However, it has still not crossed the barrier of 25% of parliamentary seats in 2020.

**Women's participation in education on the rise worldwide:** School closures related to COVID-19 are likely to set back progress on access to education. But evidence has shown that girls, once they have access to schooling; tend to do better than boys in terms of academic achievement.

In tertiary education, women outnumber men and enrolment is increasing faster for women than for men.

However, women continue to be underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, representing only slightly more than 35% of the world's STEM graduates.

**Violence against women and girls remains a global issue:** Around one third of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner and 18% have experienced such violence in the past 12 months.

### ❖ **India-US Defence Pact BECA** **(Indian Express)**

India and the US have signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for geospatial cooperation.

#### **BECA**

- It is a communication agreement between the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency of the US Department of Defence and the Ministry of Defence of the Government of India.
- **Purpose:** It allows India and the US to share military information including advanced satellite and topographic data such as maps, nautical and aeronautical charts and geodetic, geophysical, geomagnetic and gravity data.
- **Significance:** It will enable India to use US geospatial maps to enhance military accuracy of automated hardware systems and weapons such as cruise and ballistic missiles.

### ❖ **Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project** **(The Hindu)**

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) Phase II & Phase III.

**Aim:** To improve the safety and operational performance of selected dams across the whole country along with institutional strengthening and generating revenue for sustainable operation and maintenance of dams.

**Funding:** It is an externally aided project with the financial assistance of the World Bank(WB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank(AIIB).

**Duration:** The Project will be implemented over a period of 10 years duration in two Phases each of six years duration with two years overlapping from April, 2021 to March, 2031.



## **Components:**

- Rehabilitation and improvement of dams and associated appurtenances
- Dam safety institutional strengthening in participating States and Central agencies
- Exploration of alternative incidental means at few of selected dams to generate the incidental revenue for sustainable operation and maintenance of dams and
- Project management.

## **❖ National Program and Project Management Policy Framework (The Hindu)**

NITI Aayog and Quality Council of India (QCI) has launched the National Program and Project Management Policy Framework (NPMPPF).

**Aim:** To bring radical reforms in the way infrastructure projects are executed in India.

**Action Plan:** It has an action plan to:

- Adopt a program and project management approach to infrastructure development
- Institutionalize and promote the profession of program and project management and build a workforce of such professionals,
- Enhance institutional capacity and capability of professionals.

**Quality Council of India (QCI):** It was set up in 1997 jointly by the Government of India and the Indian Industry to establish and operate national accreditation structure and promote quality through National Quality Campaign.

**Nodal Ministry:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry is the nodal department for QCI.

**Chairman:** The Chairman of QCI is appointed by the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the industry to the government.

## **❖ SERB-POWER Scheme**

**(Source: PIB)**

**Union Minister for Science & Technology has launched a Scheme titled “SERB-POWER (Promoting Opportunities for Women in Exploratory Research)”.**

**Aim:** To encourage emerging as well as eminent women researchers to undertake R&D activities in frontier areas of science and engineering.

**Components:** The Scheme will have two components namely:

## **SERB-POWER Fellowship**

**Target:** Women researchers in 35-55 years of age.

Up to 25 Fellowships per year and not more than 75 at any point in time.

**Components of support:** Fellowship of Rs 15,000/- per month in addition to regular income; Research grant of Rs 10 lakh per annum and Overhead of Rs 90,000/- per annum.

**Duration:** Three years without the possibility of extension and once in a career.

- SERB – POWER Research Grants: POWER Grants will empower women researchers by funding them under the following two categories:
- Level I (Applicants from IITs, IISERs, IISc, NITs, Central Universities, and National Labs of Central Government Institutions): The scale of funding is up to 60 lakhs for three years.
- Level II (Applicants from State Universities / Colleges and Private Academic Institutions): The scale of funding is up to 30 lakhs for three years.

**SERB:** It is a statutory body established through an Act of Parliament in 2008. It is chaired by the Secretary to the Department of Science and Technology and has other senior government officials and eminent scientists as members.

### **❖ Escaping the Era of Pandemics**

**(Source: The Hindu)**

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has released a research paper titled “**Escaping the Era of Pandemics: Experts Warn Worse Crises to come**”.

**Objective:** The report has analysed the contribution of human-induced environmental damages in the emergence of new diseases.

- Pandemics like COVID-19 would hit us more frequently unless there is a change in the global approach to dealing with infectious diseases.
- We are yet to identify some 1.7 million viruses that exist in mammals and birds. Out of these, 50% have the potential or ability to infect humans.
- Land use change is a significant driver of pandemics and caused the emergence of more than 30% of new diseases reported since 1960.

## **Recommendations**

**Intergovernmental Council:** Launch a high-level intergovernmental council on pandemic prevention to provide decision-makers with the best science and evidence on emerging diseases.

**Mutually agreed Goals:** Countries should set mutually-agreed goals or targets within the framework of an international accord or agreement – with clear benefits for people, animals and the environment.

**One Health approach:** Institutionalizing the 'One Health' approach in national governments to build pandemic preparedness, enhance pandemic prevention programs and to investigate and control outbreaks across sectors.

**Changes in Consumption:** Enable changes to reduce the types of consumption, globalized agricultural expansion and trade that have led to pandemics.

Reducing zoonotic disease risks in the international wildlife trade through intergovernmental partnerships.

Valuing Indigenous Peoples and local communities' engagement and knowledge in pandemic prevention programs.

**IPBES:** It is an intergovernmental organization established in 2012 to improve the interface between science and policy on issues of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Headquarters: Bonn, Germany.

