

## **15<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> March Weekly Compilation**

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

### **❖ Energy Efficiency Enterprise(E3) Certifications Program (PIB)**

**Why in News:** Minister for Power launches the “Energy Efficiency Enterprise (E3) Certifications Program” for the Brick manufacturing Sector.

#### **Energy Efficiency Enterprise (E3) Certification Program**

**Energy Efficiency Enterprise (E3) is a certification scheme. It aims to recognize burnt clay brick manufacturers for adopting energy-efficient manufacturing.** Furthermore, it encourages customers to source bricks from such E3 certified manufacturing units.

#### **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) will provide certification.**

Brick Manufacturing Enterprises need to meet the minimum Specific Energy Consumption performance criteria. The criteria can be met by Brick Manufacturing Enterprises by adopting a combination of measures, such as:

- Improving energy efficiency in manufacturing
- Producing bricks having lower (bulk) densities e.g. porous, perforated and hollow bricks.

#### **Significance of this program**

The program will help the brick industry shift towards more efficient technologies. Such energy-efficient bricks will be useful in complying with the requirements of Energy Conservation Buildings Code (ECBC). It was launched in 2007 by the Ministry of Power; it sets minimum energy standards for new commercial buildings.

The adoption of the E3 certification program may save energy of about 7 Million Tons of oil equivalent (MTOE) per year. The savings will be about 25 Million Ton by 2030.

### **❖ Committee on Saraswati River (Source: The Hindu)**

**Why in News:** The Central Government reconstitutes an advisory committee for studying the mythical Saraswati River for the next two years. The earlier panel’s term ended in 2019.

## Advisory Committee on Saraswati River

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had first set up the Advisory Committee for the Study of the **River Saraswati in 2017 for two years. The committee has now been reconstituted.**

**Its aim** is to study the mythical Saraswati River and draw up a plan to identify its basin and define its path. **The committee is chaired by the Culture Minister.** It includes officials from:

- The Ministry of Culture, Tourism, Water Resources, Environment and Forest, Housing and Urban Affairs;
- Representatives of ISRO;
- Governments officials of Gujarat, Haryana, and Rajasthan and
- An ASI official.

## Saraswati River

Saraswati River is a mystical river mentioned in the Rig Veda and later Vedic and post-Vedic texts. The river played an important role in the Vedic religion appearing in all but the fourth book of the Rig-Veda.

### Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

ASI is the premier organization for the archaeological research, scientific analysis, and excavation of archaeological sites, conservation, and preservation of protected monuments. **It is an attached office under the Department of Culture, Ministry of Culture.**

It was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham. He was the first Director-General of ASI.

### ❖ SIPRI REPORT on ARMS

**(Source: The Hindu)**

**Why in News:** Swedish think tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) releases a report titled “Trends in International Arms Transfers Report”. The report presents global trends in arms exports and arms imports.

### Report on India

- **Second Largest Arms Importer:** India remains the second largest arms importer after Saudi Arabia.
- **Decrease in Arms Imports:** However, India’s arms imports have decreased by 33 % between 2011-15 and 2016-20.

The decrease in arms imports is mainly due to complex and lengthy procurement processes. Also, India is attempting to reduce its dependence on Russian arms by diversifying its network of arms suppliers.

**India's Arms Imports:** India's top three arms suppliers during 2016-20 were Russia (accounting for 49% of India's imports), France (18%), and Israel (13%). The US was the 4th largest arms supplier to India. Its imports to India reduced by 46% between 2016-20

**India's Arms Exports:** India accounted for 0.2% of the share of global arms exports during 2016-20. It makes the country the world's 24th largest exporter of major arms. Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius are the top recipients of Indian military hardware.

### Key Findings Globally

- The volume of international transfers of major arms in 2016–20 was 0.5% lower than in 2011–15 and 12% higher than in 2006–10.
- **The five largest arms exporters in 2016–20 were the United States, Russia, France, Germany, and China.**
- **The five largest arms importers were Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia, and China.**

### ❖ PROJECT REHAB

(Source: PIB)

**Why in News:** Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has launched a unique project called Project REHAB (Reducing Elephant – Human Attacks using Bees).

### Project REHAB

Under this Project, bee boxes will be used as a fence to prevent the attack of elephants. **The project aims to create “bee-fences” to mitigate Human– elephant conflicts in the country. It will reduce the loss of lives of both, humans and elephants.**

It was launched as a pilot project at four places located on the periphery of Nagarhole National Park in Karnataka. **The project has been launched as a sub-mission of KVIC's National Honey Mission.**

### National Honey Mission

Launched by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC):

- To provide sustainable employment and income to rural and urban unemployed youth.
- To conserve the honeybee habitat and tapping untapped natural resources.

- To promote beekeeping for increasing crop productivity and pollination services avenue for beekeepers and farmers.

## ❖ **'Mera Ration' mobile app**

**(Source: PIB)**

**Why in News:** The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution launches the 'Mera Ration' mobile app

### **Mera Ration Mobile app**

Mera Ration Mobile app will facilitate the 'One Nation-One Ration Card' system. It aims to help those ration cardholders who move to new areas for livelihoods. **It's been developed by Government of India in association with National Informatics Center (NIC).** The application allows beneficiaries to:

- Find out the nearest fair price shop available according to the location.
- Users can check details of a) Recent transactions b) Status of the Aadhaar seeding and c) entitlement of the amount of rations available to them.
- Migrant beneficiaries can also register their migration details through the application. There is also an option for beneficiaries to enter suggestions/feedback.

Presently users get English and Hindi as preferred languages for operating the app. However, the government plans to make the app available to users in 14 different languages.

### **One Nation-One Ration Card (ONORC) System**

**Nodal Ministry:** Department of Food & Public Distribution under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs.

The system envisages inter-state portability of ration cards under National Food Security Act, 2013(NFSA). Under this, NFSA beneficiary's particularly migrant beneficiaries can claim food grains from any Fair Price Shop (FPS) in the country through existing ration cards with biometric/Aadhaar authentication in a seamless manner.

The system also allows their family members back home to claim the balance of food grains on the same ration card.

## ❖ **World Air Quality Report 2020**

**(Source: Express)**

**Why in News:** IQ Air, a Swiss air quality technology company released a report titled "World Air Quality Report, 2020".

## World Air Quality Report

World Air Quality is an annual report. The report is based on PM2.5 data. It is from 106 countries based on data from ground-based monitoring stations. The report is handled by government agencies mostly.

### Key Findings Related to India

- **India is home to 35 of the world's 50 most polluted cities in the World.**
- Delhi has gotten listed as the 10th most polluted city and the top polluted capital city in the world in 2020. However, Delhi's air quality improved by approximately 15% from 2019 to 2020.
- **India ranked as the world's 3rd most polluted country in 2020 after Bangladesh and Pakistan.** However, India has improved its average annual PM2.5 (particulate matter) levels in 2020 than in 2019.
- Further, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020 was particularly severe for stubble burning in India. Farm fires in Punjab have increased by 46.5% over 2019.

### Key Global Findings

The topmost polluted city in the world is Xinjiang in China, followed by Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh. In 2020, 84% of all monitored countries observed air quality improvements. However, of the 106 monitored countries, only 24 met the World Health Organization annual guidelines for PM 2.5.

### ❖ Development Finance Institution

(Source: The Hindu)

**Why in News:** The Union Cabinet approved a bill to set up a Development Finance Institution (DFI). It will be called National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID).

### National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID)

Initially, the Government of India will own it with a 100% stake. They will gradually bring it down to 26% in a few years.

It will provide finance for social and economic infrastructure projects identified under the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP).

The capital infusion by the Government will be Rs 20,000 crore with an initial grant of Rs 5,000 crore. It is later expected to raise around Rs 3 lakh crore in the next few years by Market funds.

The government will provide a 10-year tax exemption to funds invested in the DFI. It will attract long-term players such as insurance and pension funds.

## **Development Finance Institution (DFI)**

DFI is an agency that finances infrastructure projects of national importance. In most cases, these agencies are government-owned. Their borrowings enjoy the government guarantees which help bring down the cost of funding.

The first DFI in India was the Industrial Financial Corporation of India (IFC). It got launched in 1948. The IDBI, UTI, NABARD, EXIM Bank, SIDBI, NHB were the other major DFIs. Most later converted into banks.

## **❖ Genome Mapping in Indian Ocean**

**(Source: Express)**

**Why in News:** National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) has launched its first-of-its-kind project of Genome Mapping in the Indian Ocean.

## **Genome Mapping in the Indian Ocean Project**

### **Objectives of the Project**

- To reveal the internal working of the body of the ocean at a cellular level.
- To understand the biochemistry and the response of the ocean to climate change, nutrient stress and increasing pollution.

The project will take three years to complete.

**The NIO research team onboard its research vessel Sindhu Sadhana will travel from India's east coast, all the way to Australia, then onward towards Port Louis in Mauritius and up to the border of Pakistan.**

During this journey, they **will gather samples for genome mapping of microorganisms at an average depth of 5 km. They will then map the DNA and RNA of these microorganisms just like gene mapping on human blood samples.**

### **Significance**

The genome mapping will enable scientists to identify the factors controlling the changes in RNA, DNA in the oceans and various stressors impacting them. Next, the project will also help in identifying which part of the ocean has a greater concentration of which mineral or element. Scientists will then use these as tracers to tackle the causative factors for excess or lack of a

certain mineral or element and suggest possible solutions for their mitigation. Further, the genome mapping of oceans will enable commercial biotechnology applications from anticancer treatments and industrial enzymes to antiviral molecules.

## **Genome Mapping**

Genome refers to an organism's complete set of DNA that includes all its genes. And mapping these genes simply means finding out the location of these genes in a chromosome.

Therefore, Genome mapping essentially means figuring out the location of a specific gene on a particular region of the chromosome. It also means to determine the location of and relative distances between other genes on that chromosome.

## **National Institute of Oceanography (NIO)**

NIO is an autonomous research organization established in 1966. It is one of the 37 constituent laboratories of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), New Delhi. The principal focus of research has been on observing and understanding special oceanographic characteristics of the Indian Ocean.

## **❖ Sea Buckthorn Plantation**

**( Source: PIB)**

**Why in News:** The Himachal Pradesh government has decided to start Sea Buckthorn Plantation in the cold desert areas.

Sea buckthorn

It is a shrub that produces an orange-yellow coloured edible berry. In India, one can find it above the tree line in the Himalayan region. It is generally in dry areas such as the cold deserts of Ladakh and Spiti.

In Himachal Pradesh, it is locally called Himalayan chharma and grows in the wild in Lahaul and Spiti and parts of Kinnaur.

**Sea-buckthorn Plantation:**

### **Medicinal Benefits**

It is used as a medicine for treating stomach, heart, and skin problems. It is rich in vitamins, and omega fatty acids. Moreover, it can help troops in acclimatizing to high-altitude.

### **Ecological Benefits**

It is an important source of fuel wood and fodder. It is a soil-binding plant that prevents soil erosion. Furthermore, it checks siltation in rivers and helps preserve floral biodiversity.

In the Lahaul valley, Seabuckthorn is a good alternative for protecting the local ecology. Willow trees are dying there in large numbers due to pest attacks.

### **Commercial Benefits**

It is used in making juices, jams, and nutritional capsules among others things. It gets used in the manufacturing of cosmetics and anti-ageing products.

### ➤ **Stop TB Partnership** **(Source: PIB)**

**Why in News:** Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare appointed as the Chairman of the Stop TB Partnership Board. The Minister will serve a 3-year term commencing July 2021.

### **Stop TB Partnership**

Stop TB Partnership was established in the Year 2000. **Its aim** is to eliminate tuberculosis as a public health problem. It is a unique international body as it aligns countries all over the world in the fight against TB.

**Amsterdam Declaration: In 2000, Stop TB Partnership gave a call for collaborative action from ministerial delegations of 20 countries with the highest burden of TB.**

It has 1500 partner organizations. It includes international, non-governmental, and governmental organizations and patient groups.

### **India's Initiatives against Tuberculosis**

- India has committed to eliminating TB in the country by 2025, five years ahead of the global deadline of 2030.
- National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination (2017-2025): It is a framework to provide guidance for the activities of various stakeholders to reduce the burden of TB mortality and morbidity. It aims to work towards the elimination of TB in India by 2025.
- TB Harega Desh Jeetega' Campaign: The campaign aims to improve and expand the reach of Tuberculosis care services across the country by 2022.

### ➤ **SERB launched "SERB-PRISM Portal"** **(PIB)**

**Why in news:** The Science and Engineering Board (SERB) launched a portal called "SERB – Project Information System & Management(SERB-PRISM Portal)".



## **SERB-PRISM Portal**

- The portal aims to provide information regarding all projects sanctioned by SERB from 2011 onwards. The information includes funding details, status, research summary, and project output details such as publications and patents.
- Further, The SERB-PRISM Portal also has search facilities to enable retrieval of information about projects.
- The portal is expected to work as a comprehensive tool to help produce stronger scientist-scientist and science-society connections.
- Apart from that, the SERB-PRISM Portal will also help researchers to look at various important things. It includes research trends, learning about cutting-edge science, locating critical equipment in their vicinity, and helping seek collaborations across disciplines.

## **Science and Engineering Board (SERB)**

- SERB is a statutory body established in 2009. It functions under the Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology.
- It is chaired by the Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Science and Technology. Further, it has other senior government officials and eminent scientists as members.
- It was set up for promoting basic research in science and engineering. The SERB also provides financial assistance to scientists, academic institutions, Research and Development laboratories, industrial concerns, and other agencies for such research. Implementation of “National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project(NCRMP)”

## ➤ **Vehicle scrapping policy**

**(Express)**

**Why in News:** Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Minister announces the Voluntary vehicle fleet modernisation program. The program is also known as the Vehicle scrapping policy.

## **Objective of the Policy**

- The policy is aimed at creating an ecosystem to phase out unfit and polluting vehicles. It will reduce pollution, improve fuel efficiency and increase the government’s revenue collection from the sale of new vehicles.
- The policy will kick-in for government vehicles from April 1, 2022. The Mandatory fitness testing for heavy commercial vehicles will start from April 1, 2023 and For all other categories of vehicles including personal vehicles will start in phases from June 1, 2024.

## **Key Features of the Policy**

- A vehicle has to undergo fitness tests after the completion of 20 years in the case of privately owned vehicles and 15 years in the case of commercial vehicles.
- Any vehicle that fails the fitness test or fails to renew its registration certificate may be declared as an End of Life Vehicle. These vehicle owners will be encouraged to scrap the vehicles.
- Vehicle re-registration fees will be increased to discourage people from running old vehicles.
- Automated fitness centers will be established throughout the country to ease vehicle scrapping.
- All government vehicles and those owned by PSUs will be de-registered after 15 years.
- Vintage cars will be exempted from this policy and separate guidelines will be formulated to regulate them.
- **Incentives for Scrapping:** In order to lure owners into vehicles scrapping policy their vehicles, the Government has suggested the following ways:
  - A vehicles scrap value of the ex-showroom price of the vehicle ranging from 4-6% will be given to the owner if they choose to vehicle scrap policy
  - A rebate of up to 25% will be given in Road Tax
  - Vehicle manufacturers will be advised to give a 5% discount on new vehicles against a scrapping certificate. So in total benefits of up to 10-15% can be availed on the older vehicles, who have reached the end of their lifecycle.

## ➤ **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) Initiative (Express)**

**Why in News:** The 27-member European Union joins the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) initiative.

### **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) Initiative**

- Prime Minister of India launched it in 2019 at the UN Climate Change Summit. It is a multi-stakeholder global partnership of national governments, UN agencies, multilateral development banks, private sector, and academic and knowledge institutions.
- It aims to promote the resilience of new and existing infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks. It also supports sustainable development.
- The Governing Council is the highest policy-making body of the CDRI. It is co-chaired by India and a representative of another nation, nominated by rotation every two years.