

IQRA IAS



Weekly Updates
(25th September – 30th September)

❖ **Asian Palm Oil Alliance**

(Source: Express)

Why in News: Edible oil trade associations from five palm oil importing countries in South Asia: India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal announced the setting up of Asian Palm Oil Alliance (APOA).

Asian Palm Oil Alliance (APOA)

Aim:

- To safeguard the economic and business interests of the palm oil consuming countries and will work towards increasing the consumption of palm oil in member countries.
- To work towards ensuring that palm oil is recognized as a high-quality, economical, and healthy vegetable oil and to change the negative image of palm oil.

Members: India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal

Meeting: APOA held its first general body meeting on the sidelines of the Globoil Summit being held at Agra, India and the next meeting is expected to be held in Indonesia early next year 2023.

Significance of this alliance

- Asia accounts for around 40% of the global palm oil consumption while Europe accounts for 12% of the palm oil trade. Indonesia and Malaysia are the biggest palm oil exporters in the world.
- India is the largest importer of palm oil in Asia, accounting for 15% of global imports, followed by China (9%), Pakistan (4%) and Bangladesh (2%).
- India's annual imports of edible oil are around 13-14 million tonnes (MT). Around 8 MT of palm oil is imported from Indonesia and Malaysia while other oils, such as soya and sunflower, come from Argentina, Brazil, Ukraine and Russia.
- India and CARICOM nations have agreed to work together on global issues such as food and energy security and combating climate change.

❖ **Caribbean Community Nations (CARICOM)**

About:

- **It came into being on 4 July 1973 with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas**
- **It is a grouping of twenty countries:** fifteen Member States and five Associate Members.
- Stretching from The Bahamas in the north to Suriname and Guyana in South America, CARICOM comprises states that are considered developing countries, and except for

Belize, in Central America and Guyana and Suriname in South America, all Members and Associate Members are island states.

- It is home to approximately sixteen million citizens, 60% of whom are under the age of 30, and from the main ethnic groups of Indigenous Peoples, Africans, Indians, Europeans, Chinese, Portuguese and Javanese.

Pillars of Integration:



- It promotes and supports a unified Caribbean Community that is inclusive, resilient, and competitive; sharing in economic, social and cultural prosperity.

❖ India-Brazil-South Africa Trilateral Cooperative Forum (IBSA) (Source: IE)

- India hosted the 10th Ministerial Commission of Foreign Ministers of the India-Brazil-South Africa Trilateral Cooperative Forum (IBSA).

About

- It is a unique Forum which brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, three large democracies and major economies from three different continents, facing similar challenges.
- All three countries are developing, pluralistic, multicultural, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious nations.

- The grouping was formalized and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the Foreign Ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia on 6 June 2003 and issued the Brasilia Declaration.
- IBSA exemplifies the spirit of South-South cooperation and The IBSA Fund is a special feature of IBSA collaboration.

Cooperation in IBSA

- As a forum for consultation and coordination on global and regional political issues, such as, the reform of the global institutions of political and economic governance, WTO/Doha Development Agenda, climate change, terrorism etc.;
- Trilateral collaboration on concrete areas/projects, through fourteen working groups and six People-to-People Forums, for the common benefit of three countries;
- Third, assisting other developing countries by taking up projects in the latter through IBSA Fund.

❖ Trachoma

(Source: The Hindu)

Why in News: Recently, Malawi became the first country in southern Africa to eliminate Trachoma.

This makes Malawi the fourth country in WHO's Africa region to achieve this milestone after:

- Ghana (June 2018),
- Gambia (April 2021) and
- Togo (May 2022)

About

- It is the world's leading infectious cause of blindness and is one of the conditions known as neglected tropical diseases.
- It is a public health problem in 44 countries and is responsible for the blindness or visual impairment of about 1.9 million people.

Origin and symptoms

- Trachoma starts off as a bacterial infection and can be easily treated.
- Overtime, it causes the eyelashes to be pushed inwards into the eye. So with every blink, they brush against the eyeball.
- This advanced form of trachoma is called trichiasis. Over time, if it's not treated
- The disease thrives where there are water shortages, poor sanitation and infestations of flies, which are considered physical vectors of the disease.
- **Path to elimination - Global Trachoma Mapping Project**
- **About:** It was launched to map 25 districts suspected of being trachoma-endemic.

- The mapping survey aimed to: Determine the prevalence of active trachoma (TF) in 1-9-year-old children, and the prevalence of trachomatous trichiasis (TT) in adults aged 15 years and above.

❖ SWACHH TOYCATHON

(Source: PIB)

Why in News: Recently, MoHUA launched 'Swachh Toycathon', a unique competition to make toys from 'Waste'.

National Action Plan for Toys (NAPT) 2020

- **About:** It was introduced to promote the Indian toy industry including traditional handicrafts and handmade toys with the objective of establishing India as a global Toy hub.
- **Implementation:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) along with 14 ministries of the Central Government is currently implementing various aspects of the NAPT.

Increasing demand of toys:

- Besides being the second largest populated country in the world, India also has a growing young population with half of the total population under 25 years of age.
- The demand for toys is also increasing due to strong economic growth, rising disposable incomes, and several innovations for the junior population.

Waste increasing: With ever-changing consumption patterns and rapid rise of e-commerce, the per capita waste generation has steadily increased over the last decade, making waste management in cities a challenge for Urban Local Bodies.

Swachh Toycathon

- The growing demand for toys on one hand and impacts of solid waste on the other, Swachh Toycathon is a convergence between the NAPT and SBM 2.0.
- It seeks to explore solutions for use of waste in creation or manufacturing of toys.
- The competition will be open to individuals and groups to bring forth innovation in toy designs using dry waste.
- It will focus on efficient designs that can be replicated at a larger scale, toys that comply with minimum safety standards, as well as aesthetics of the toys.
- This competition is being launched under the 'Swachh Amrit Mahotsav', a fortnight of activities to galvanize action around Swachhata.
- Host: The competition will be hosted on My Gov's Innovate India portal.

❖ DART MISSION

(Source: Indian Express)

Why in News: Recently, NASA's Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) successfully crashed into Dimorphous.

About

Humanity's first planetary defence test: With the collision, the test has been completed successfully in a mission that went exactly as planned without any hitches.

Reason for test: The impact should have nudged the asteroid slightly and subtly changed its orbit around Didymos, the larger asteroid.

Telescopes on Earth and in space are going to take measurements of this change to see how the change measures up to computer-generated simulations.

Dimorphos

- Didymos is a perfect system for the test mission because it is an eclipsing binary which means it has a moonlet that regularly orbits the asteroid and it can be seen when it passes in front of the main asteroid.
- The Didymos system is not an Earth-crossing asteroid, and there is no possibility that the deflection experiment could create an impact hazard.
- Earth-based telescopes can study this variation in brightness to understand how long it takes Dimorphos to orbit Didymos.

DART Mission: It is a planetary defence-driven test of technologies for preventing an impact on Earth by a hazardous asteroid.

Objectives:

- DART is the first technology demonstration of the kinetic impactor technique that could be used to mitigate the threat of an asteroid hitting Earth.
- The kinetic impactor mitigation technique is the impulsive deflection of the asteroid through the sudden addition of momentum. In simpler terms, DART is being sent to collide with an asteroid to change its orbital period.

❖ Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)

(Source: PIB)

Why in News: The Indian government is pushing smartphone makers to enable support for its NavIC navigation system in new devices to be sold in India from next year.

About

- **Indigenous technology:** NavIC is an independent stand-alone navigation satellite system developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- **Reliable alternative:** It acts as an alternative to the GPS navigation system of the U.S.A.
- **Project Cost:** It was originally approved in 2006 at a cost of \$174 million.
- **Operational timeline:** It became operational in 2018 though missing the completion timeline of late 2011.
- **A constellation of satellites:** NavIC now consists of eight satellites (7 upon launch).

❖ Rohini Sounding Rocket

(Source: Indian Express)

Why in News: The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) hopes to achieve a remarkable feat the 200th successful launch of the Rohini RH-200 sounding rocket in a row.

About

- RH-200 is a two-stage rocket capable of climbing to a height of 70 km bearing scientific payloads.
- It is 3.5-metre-tall and is used by the ISRO for atmospheric studies.
- The Rohini RH-200 has completed 198 consecutive successful flights.
- The 199th launch, from Thumba, will happen on October 7, 2022 during the World Space Week celebrations.
- The '200' in the name denotes the diameter of the rocket in mm.
- The ISRO has launched more than 1,600 RH-200 rockets so far.
- Other operational Rohini variants are RH-300 Mk-II and RH-560 Mk-III.
- Over the years, the rocket has served as a flexible platform for experiments and testing out new technologies.

Sounding Rocket

A sounding rocket is an instrument-carrying rocket designed to take measurements and perform scientific experiments during its sub-orbital flight. The rockets are used to launch instruments from 48 to 145 km above the surface of the Earth.

Rohini (Rocket family)

- Rohini is a series of sounding rockets developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for meteorological and atmospheric study.
- These sounding rockets are capable of carrying payloads of 2 to 200 kilograms between altitudes of 100 to 500 kms.
- The ISRO currently uses RH-200, RH-300, RH-300 Mk-II, RH-560 Mk-II and RH-560 Mk-III rockets, which are launched from the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching (TERLS) in Thumba and the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota.

❖ **National Service Scheme**

(Source: IE)

Why in News: Recently, the President conferred the National Service Scheme NSS Awards for the year 2020-21.

Background

- National Service Scheme (NSS) was launched during 1969, the birth centenary year of Mahatma Gandhi, in 37 universities involving 40000 students.
- NSS is an extension of the higher education system to orient the student youth to community service while they are studying in educational institutions.
- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

Aims and objectives of NSS

- To understand the community in which they work.
- To understand themselves in relation to their community.
- To identify the needs and problems of the community and involve them in the problem solving process.
- To develop among themselves a sense of social and civic responsibility.
- To utilise their knowledge in finding practical solutions to individual and community problems.
- To develop competence required for group-living and sharing of responsibilities:
- To gain skills in mobilising community participation.
- To acquire leadership qualities and democratic attitude.
- To develop capacity to meet emergencies and natural disasters.
- To practice national integration and social harmony.

Enrollment in NSS

- NSS is a voluntary scheme.
- NSS scheme starts from 11th Standard onwards.
- At college level the NSS volunteers will be enrolled from the first and second year degree-class students.
- The students from foreign countries studying in Indian universities can also join NSS so that they may share the experiences of national reconstruction and community work.
- NCC cadets will not be allowed to join NSS.
- Similarly NSS volunteers will not participate in NCC or any other youth organisation as long as they are in NSS.

❖ Madhav National Park

(Source: Hindu)

Why in News: The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has given the green signal to relocate five tigers from three national parks of the state to Madhav National Park (MNP).

Madhav National Park (MNP)

About:

- It is situated near Shivpuri town in Madhya Pradesh and is a part of the upper Vindhyan hills.
- It was the hunting ground of Mughal emperors and Maharaja of Gwalior.
- It got the status of a National Park in 1958.

Biodiversity:

It is gifted with a diverse ecosystem comprising lakes, forests and grasslands. The forest is home to antelopes like Nilgai, Chinkara and Chowsinga and Deer including Chital, Sambar and Barking Deer. Animals like the Leopard, Wolf, Jackal, Fox, Wild Dog, Wild Pig, Porcupine, Python etc are also sighted in the park.

❖ JALDOOT APP

(Source: The Hindu)

Why in News: Recently, the Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayat launched the JALDOOT App.

About

- The App will be used across the country to capture the water level of selected wells in a village.
- It will enable Gram Rojgar Sahayak (GRS) to measure the water level of selected wells twice a year (pre-monsoon and post-monsoon).
- These will be representative of the ground water level in that village.

Why is the measurement of the water table necessary?

- The country has taken many steps for improvement of water management both in the rural and urban areas, through watershed development, afforestation, water body development and renovation, rainwater harvesting and so on.
- However, withdrawal of groundwater, as also utilization of surface water sources has reached critical levels in many parts of the country, resulting in significant depletion of water levels causing distress to the community, including farmers.
- Therefore measurement and observation of the levels of water tables across the country has become necessary.

Significance

- The app will facilitate panchayats with robust data, which can be further used for better planning of works.
- The ground water data could be utilised as part of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and Mahatma Gandhi NREGA planning exercises.
- Further, the data can also be used for different kinds of research and other purposes.

❖ African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) (Source: PIB)

Why in News: Recently, according to the report most of the waterbird populations protected under the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) are now facing serious threats.

The report was released at the Eighth Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA opened in Budapest September 27, 2022.

Major Highlights of the report

Decline in population:

- Some 41 percent of all waterbird populations protected under AEWA are now declining.
- The decline in waterbird populations in the short and long term is 40 percent higher than the increase. This proportion has not changed substantially over the last 15 years.
- Some 29 per cent are stable and 30 per cent are increasing.

Major threats: The species are impacted by the 38 threats including shifting and alteration of habitat, invasive alien species, unsustainable harvest and poaching, dams and water management.

Region based assessment: The proportion of decrease in AEWA waterbird population is higher in central and southwest Asia and eastern and southern Africa.

IUCN Status:

- Some 13 percent of the AEWA species are globally threatened.
- Four are critically endangered.
- Nine are endangered and 20 are vulnerable according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Major challenges faced by the Migratory Waterbirds

- **Changes in range and distribution:** It is well known that temperature is one of the primary determinants of the location of biomes and habitats. It is therefore logical that species ranges also depend on temperature.

- **Changes in breeding range:** The periods of the two BTO Breeding Bird Atlases, bird species (including some waterbird species) extended their breeding ranges northwards by an average of 18.9 km, a trend that they attributed to warming temperatures.
- **Habitat Loss:** One of the main threats facing endangered migratory animals is habitat loss.
- **Turbines:** The Bern Convention (the Council of Europe) commissioned a report from BirdLife International on how wind turbines affect birds and how to minimize the risks.
- **Oil Spills:** Of all man-made disasters, oil spills are among the most common and can, over localized areas, be one of the most destructive to wildlife, killing the animals and poisoning their habitats.
- **Climate Change:** The Earth's temperature and sea levels are rising, rain patterns are altering, and extreme weather is occurring more often.
- **Electrocution:** Birds are threatened due to power poles that have yet to be fitted with the latest safety devices.
- **Unsustainable Hunting and Poaching:** Poaching, illegal trade and unsustainable hunting are among the most serious threats to the survival of wild species (migratory and sedentary) alongside habitat loss and degradation.
- **Wildlife Crime:** Wildlife crime ranks alongside drug smuggling, human trafficking and illegal arms trade as one of the most lucrative activities funding organized crime and terrorism.

Recommendations of the report

- The development of schemes to monitor the breeding of migratory waterbirds in Africa, central and southwest Asia and Russia.
- Recruitment of additional Parties to join the agreement
- Intensifying the assistance to AEWA parties in Africa and central and southwest Asia
- Filling the gaps in implementing the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019 – 2027.

❖ **Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) Missile** (Source: PIB)

Why in News: DRDO conducted two successful test flights of the Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) missile.

About

- It is a Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD) designed and developed indigenously by DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and Indian Industry Partners.

- Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD) are short-range, lightweight and portable surface-to-air missiles that can be fired by individuals or small groups to destroy aircraft or helicopters.
- VSHORADS missile incorporates many novel technologies including miniaturised Reaction Control System (RCS) and integrated avionics, which have been successfully proven during the tests.
- The missile, meant for neutralizing low altitude aerial threats at short ranges is propelled by a dual thrust solid motor.
- The design of the missile including launcher has been highly optimized to ensure easy portability.

Reaction Control System:

- A Reaction Control System (RCS) is responsible for attitude control and steering by the use of thrusters.
- The RCS system is capable of providing small amounts of thrust in any desired direction or combination of directions.

Significance: This new missile equipped with modern technologies will give further technological boost to the Armed Forces.

