DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Time: 45 min **Date: 29-09-2023**

Table of Content

Social Audit

Syllabus: GS2/Governance

Context:

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) Scheme social audit unit in a state of paralysis in several States in India.

About:

- The social audit units flag the cases of misappropriation and the onus is on the State governments to make the recoveries.
- The **social audit units, inbuilt mechanism to combat corruption in MGNREGS,** meant to detect any cases of malpractice which has **not been backed by the effective recovery mechanism.**

Social Audit

- It is a **process of reviewing official records** and determining whether state reported expenditures reflect the actual amount spent on the ground.
- Social audits examine and assess the social impact of specific programmes and policies, and act as a powerful tool for social transformation, community participation and government accountability.
- **It is different from Financial Audit.**

    - Financial audits involve inspecting and assessing documents related to financial transactions in an organisation to provide a true picture of its profits, losses and financial stability.

Section 17 of the MGNREGA:

- The **gram sabha 'shall monitor the execution of works'**, and has mandated Social audit of all Works executed under the MGNREGA.
- **Each State has social audit units** which are supposed to work independent of the implementing authorities.

Key features of Social Audit:

- Fact finding not fault finding;
- Opportunity for awareness building on entitlements and processes;
- Creating the space and platform for dialogue among various levels of stakeholders;
- Timely grievance redressal;
- Strengthening the democratic process and institutions;
- Building people's pressure for better implementation of programmes.

Benefits of Social Audit:

- Informing and educating people about their rights and entitlements;
- Providing a collective platform for people to ask queries, express their needs and grievances;
- Promoting people's participation in all stages of implementation of programmes;
- Transparency and accountability in government schemes;
- Strengthening decentralised governance;

Issues with Social Audit Units:

Malpractice in MGNREGS and Lack of Fund:

- The social audit unit's sole responsibility is to flag cases of malpractice. Recovering the money, and reprimanding the officials responsible, is up to the State governments.
- These units are working **without training or adequate personnel.**
- A dismal recovery rate threatens the credibility of the audit process, since it makes the entire exercise futile.

Poor Monitoring and Recoveries:

- As per the data available with the Union Rural Development Ministry, the **recovery has varied from 13.8% to 20.8% over the last three financial years**.
- Over the last three years, there has been **a consistent trend** of the same States reporting **'zero number of cases' and making 'zero recoveries'**.

Source: The Hindu

M.S. Swaminathan: Father of the Indian Green Revolution

Syllabus: GS3/ Economy, Agriculture, Achievements of Indian in S&T

In News

- Agricultural scientist Mankombu Sambasivan Swaminatha (Dr. M.S. Swaminathan), the man behind India's Green Revolution, passed away.

About M.S. Swaminathan

- He was known as the **"Father of Economic Ecology"** by the **United Nations Environment Programme.**
- He had done groundbreaking work in the **1960s and 1970s revolutionised Indian agriculture**, helping the country to stave off widespread famine and achieve self-sufficiency in food production.
    - India was importing close to three million tonnes of food grains in 1949-50, spending ₹150 crore at current prices.
- Swaminathan's pioneering efforts involved the **development and introduction of high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice**, which significantly increased food grain production across India.
- Swaminathan's key role was in recognising the potential of the new genetic strains or "plant type" responsive to increased fertiliser and water application, and devising a coherent strategy for their introduction and large-scale planting by farmers.
- He was equally right about aiming for an "**Evergreen Revolution"**, which, in his words, was an "improvement of productivity in perpetuity without ecological harm".

Awards Given for his contribution

- In recognition of his monumental contributions, Swaminathan was awarded the **first World Food Prize in 1987**. He used the prize money to establish the **MS Swaminathan Research Foundation** in Chennai, further cementing his commitment to sustainable and inclusive agricultural practices.
- His other notable accolades include the **Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1971 and the Albert Einstein World Science Award in 1986.**
- He was the Padma Vibhushan awardee, and was Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and headed the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines.

Borlaug-Swaminathan Green Revolution strategy

- The strategy basically relied on **breeding varieties** that would produce more grain with more fertilizer, especially nitrogen, and water application.
- **Norman Borlaug (Father of the Green Revolution)** selects strains of high-yielding wheat, along with S.P. Kohli, M.S. Swaminathan and V.S. Mathur, in New Delhi in 1965.
- The Green Revolution was a period that began in the 1960s during which agriculture in India was converted into a modern industrial system by the adoption of technology, such as the use of high-yielding variety (HYV) seeds, mechanised farm tools, irrigation facilities, pesticides and fertilizers.
- The Green Revolution strategy kept famines at bay and partly made up for the absence of land reforms by encouraging direct cultivation by large landholders.

Key Facts

- Swaminathan's team brought over the **Norin-10 wheat varieties of Japanese origin**, under **Borlaug's guidance**, crossed them with Indian wheat varieties and produced the popular short-statured wheat varieties of the

early Green Revolution period: **Kalyan Sona, Sonalika, Safed Lerma, and Chhoti Lerma.**

- In rice, Swaminathan and his team brought over prototypes of the **Chinese dwarf variety Dee-geo-Woo-gen** from the **International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)** in Manila and crossed these with tall indica varieties in India and developed the popular short-stemmed varieties: Jaya and Padma, followed by Hamsa, Krishna, Cauvery, Bala, Ratna, Vijaya CO-34, Jamuna, Sabarmati, Pankaj, Jagannath and so on.

Benefits of Green Revolution

- It has positive effects on the overall food security in India. It led to an increase in agricultural production, especially in Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh.
- The green revolution led to the high productivity of crops through adapted measures, such as
    - Increased area under farming,
    - Double-cropping, which includes planting two crops rather than one, annually,
    - Adoption of HYV of seeds,
    - Highly increased use of inorganic fertilizers and pesticides,
    - Improved irrigation facilities, and
    - Improved farm implements and crop protection measures.

Roadblocks to Green Revolution: Swaminathan's View

- He always cited **"unfinished land reforms"** as a key challenge faced by Indian agriculture.
- Swaminathan also rued the fact that despite achieving self-sufficiency in production, India **failed in the equitable distribution of food** and ending mass hunger and malnourishment.
- Hence, he was a consistent votary of **universal food distribution and the "right to food" of every citizen.**

Criticism & Concerns related to Green Revolution

- **Water-intensive crops:** The crops introduced during the green revolution were water-intensive crops. To take Punjab's example, the state extracts 28 billion cubic metres (bcm) of groundwater annually, while its annual recharge is 19 bcm, which is unsustainable.
- **Imbalanced & unsuitable production:** Punjab, Haryana and west Uttar Pradesh were chosen or led to produce wheat and rice for the nation. These states were relatively suitable for wheat, but not rice. The three northern states were incentivized for growing rice along with wheat because they had good irrigation, unlike the eastern states which were largely rainfed.
- **Air pollution:** Air pollution introduced due to the burning of agricultural waste is a big issue these days. (For example: Issue of Stubble Burning)
- **Extinction of Indigenous Varieties of Crops:** Since the time of the green revolution, there was reduced cultivation of indigenous varieties of rice, millets, lentils, etc. In turn, there was increased harvest of hybrid crops, which would grow faster. Due to the green revolution, India lost almost 1 lakh varieties of indigenous rice.

Suggestions & way ahead

- **Climate-resistant crops:** Addressing the challenges like water & air pollution would require agricultural production focussed on the water-energy nexus, making agriculture more climate resistant and environmentally sustainable.
- **Need of Green Revolution 2.0:** India needs a second green revolution along with the next generation of reforms with a view to make agriculture more climate-resistant and environmentally sustainable.
- Swaminathan's focus on converting the **Green Revolution into an "Evergreen Revolution",** which he defined as "improvement of productivity in perpetuity without ecological harm".

Source: IE

New Infrastructure Projects under PM Gati Shakti Initiative

Syllabus :GS 3/Economy /infrastructure

In News

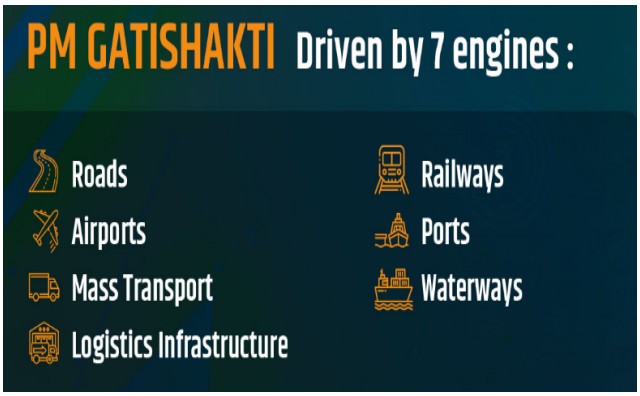
- The 56th Network Planning Group Meeting under PM Gati Shakti assessed six Infrastructure Projects.

About the projects

- The six projects include four projects of the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** and two projects of **Ministry of Railways (MoR)** with the total project cost of about Rs. 52,000 Crore
- **MoRTH presented four road projects** worth about Rs. 45000 Crore to NPG and demonstrated adherence to GatiShakti principles.
    - The **first project proposal** is a **Greenfield Road** located in the State of Gujarat and Maharashtra, that will benefit not only industrial belts but also the agriculture sector in the region.
    - The **second Greenfield Road project** is also located in the state of Gujarat
        - It will connect Amritsar-Jamnagar economic corridor with Ahmedabad and Vadodara and will integrate with other modes of transportation, thereby contributing to the promotion and usage of multi-modality in the region.
    - The **third road project proposed** is located in the **State of Bihar** and involves construction of 4 laning of Patna- Arrah-Sasaram corridor under Bharatmala Pariyojna.
        - This project is expected to bring-in socio-economic development in Left-wing Extremism (LWE) affected districts, including tribal areas.
    - The **fourth road project discussed** during the meeting is located in **Uttar Pradesh** with an objective to improve the interstate connectivity among Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand.
- **Two Railway project proposals** with a total project cost of about Rs. 6700 Crore were also assessed.
    - One **Greenfield railway line projec**t is located in Odisha.
        - It will connect the industrial and mineral clusters of western Odisha with the East Coast port.

        - Additionally, the industrial clusters in eastern Chhattisgarh will also get a shorter Port connectivity with the East Coast.
    - Another railway project proposal is located in the state of **Kerala** and involves doubling of railway lines.
        - It will improve the quality of rail movement in a highly stressed corridor of Southern railway.

About PM GatiShakti



- PM GatiShakti - National Master Plan for Multi-modal Connectivity was launched in October 2021 .
- It is essentially a digital platform to bring 16 Ministries including Railways and Roadways together for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects.
- No separate funds are allocated under Gati Shakti.
    - Funds are allocated projects-wise, as per the requirements, and within the sanctioned project costs.

Features

- PM Gati Shakti will incorporate the infrastructure schemes of various Ministries and State Governments like **Bharatmala, Sagarmala, inland waterways, dry/land ports, UDAN etc.**
- Economic Zones like textile clusters, pharmaceutical clusters, defence corridors, electronic parks, industrial corridors, fishing clusters, agri zones will be covered to improve connectivity & make Indian businesses more competitive.
- It will also leverage technology extensively including spatial planning tools with ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) imagery developed by BISAG-N (Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics)

Purpose and need

- Infrastructure has always been important in the sustainable development of any country.
- The Master Plan will rejuvenate India's multimodal infrastructure. The results of the PM Gati Shakti Master Plan are becoming visible.
- It will provide integrated and seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods and services from one mode of transport to another.

Source:PIB

Internet Cookies

Syllabus: GS3/Science and Technology

Context:

- In the digital realm, cookies help in personalisation and user convenience that play a pivotal role in shaping any online experience.

About Internet Cookies:

- These are text files with small pieces of data — like a username and password — that are used **to identify your computer with a network.**

- Specific cookies are used to identify specific users and improve their web browsing experience.
- **The Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP)** cookies are built specifically for web browsers to track, personalise and save information about each user's **session (amount of time spent on a site)** which is created to identify you when you visit a new website.

<u>Types of cookies:</u>

Session cookies:

- These are temporary cookies like post-it notes for websites, and are stored in the computer's memory only during your browsing session.
    - Once you close your browser, they vanish.
    - Session cookies help websites remember your actions as you navigate.

Persistent cookies:

- These are the digital equivalent of bookmarks, and stay in the computer's memory after your browsing session ends.
- They remember login information, language preferences, and ads etc. These are handy for a more personalised web experience.

Secure cookies:

- These are only sent over encrypted connections, making them safer from prying eyes, and are often used for sensitive data like login credentials.

Usage of Cookies:

- **As Digital ID Cards:** Data stored in a cookie is created by the server upon your connection, which is labelled with an ID unique to you and your computer.
- **Personalisation**: Cookies foster a sense of personalisation by recalling user's preferences such as language choice or website theme.
- Cookies function as the **digital equivalent of a persistent shopping cart**, ensuring items that have been added online remain there at the time of return.
- Cookies facilitate website owners **in gathering invaluable analytics data** about user interactions, enabling them to make enhancements and customise content.
- Cookies play a pivotal role **in targeted advertising,** as advertisers use them to display ads that align with your interests and browsing history.

Functions:

- Cookies remember your login information on websites and grants them seamless access.
    - It doesn't need to enter the user's credentials repeatedly every time.
    - Platforms like Facebook and Google use cookies to track online behaviour, ensuring the ads align with the user preferences.

Challenges:

- **Privacy:** Cookies could track user's online behaviour and can encroach upon your digital privacy.
    - **Third-party cookies** have prompted many web browsers to curb their usage to safeguard user privacy.
- **Security risks:** Cookies are inadequately secured, opening doors for cybercriminals to pilfer your personal information.
- Data deluge generated by the multitude of cookies can potentially clog your browser, leading to a sluggish web experience.

- **User Consent:** Privacy regulations like the **General Data Protection Regulation and the California Consumer Privacy Act**, necessitating websites to seek user's approval before deploying certain cookie types, resulting in those somewhat irksome pop-ups and prompts.

In India:

- The Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023, enacted by India, necessitates websites **to acquire explicit consent from users** prior to collecting or processing their personal data via cookies.

Conclusion:

- The digital world of cookies plays a significant role in any online experience. In the digital realm, cookies help in personalisation and user convenience. These unassuming bits of code, stored on a device when one visits websites, play a pivotal role in shaping any online experience.

Source: The Hindu

Global Innovation Index 2023

Syllabus: GS2/ Government Policies & Interventions

News:

- India retains **40th rank out of 132** economies in the **Global Innovation Index 2023** rankings published by the **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).**
    - The **Global Innovation Index (GII) project** was launched by **Soumitra Dutta** in 2007.
    - **WIPO's association with the GII** started in 2011 and it began co-publishing the GII in 2012.

About

- The index tracks the innovation ecosystem performance of 132 global economies and the most **recent global innovation trends.**
- The ranking was **topped by Switzerland, followed by Sweden and the USA.**
- The GII has recognized India's growing innovation ecosystem, including knowledge capital, a vibrant startup community, and the collaborative efforts of public and private research organizations.

India's Performance

- India has been on a **rising trajectory**, over the past several years in the Global Innovation Index (GII), from a rank of **81 in 2015 to 40 in 2023.**
- In the report, WIPO noted that, apart from **India, only four other middle-income economies are among the top 40**, namely, China (12th), Malaysia (36th), Bulgaria (38th), and Türkiye (39th).
- The GII listed India as among the 21 economies that outperformed for a 13th consecutive year on innovation relative to level of development.
- Apart from infrastructure, India was the top performer in all other criteria within the Central and South Asian region.

Driving factors

- The consistent improvement in the GII ranking is owing to the
    - **immense knowledge capital**,
    - the **vibrant start-up ecosystem**, and

    - the work done by the public and private **research organizations.**
- All Departments of the Government, including Department of Science and Technology; the Department of Biotechnology; the Department of Space; and the Department of Atomic Energy **have played a pivotal role in enriching the National Innovation Ecosystem.**
- Most importantly, **the Atal Innovation Mission** has played a major role in expanding the Innovation ecosystem.
- Further, **NITI Aayog** has been working tirelessly to ensure the **optimization of the national efforts for bringing policy-led innovation** in different areas such as electric vehicles, biotechnology, nanotechnology, space, alternative energy sources, etc.
    - It has also played a role in **expanding the innovation ecosystem in states and districts**.

Significance of GII

- The GII is a **reliable tool for governments across the world to assess the innovation-led social and economic changes** in their respective countries.
- Over the years, the GII has established itself as a **policy tool for various governments** and helped them to **reflect upon the existing status quo.**
- The report pointed out that m**arket share of electric vehicle sales across the globe surged from four per cent** in 2012 to 14 per cent in 2022.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

- The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is the global forum for intellectual property policy, services, information and cooperation.
- In 1974, WIPO joined the United Nations (UN) family of organizations, becoming a specialized agency of the UN.
- HQ: Geneva

Source: PIB

UNCTAD's Review of Maritime Transport 2023

Syllabus: GS-3/Economy, Environment pollution & degradation

Context

- The **UNCTAD's Review of Maritime Transport 2023 Report** was launched to highlight the need for cleaner fuels, digital solutions and an equitable transition to combat carbon emissions in the shipping industry.
    - It was launched ahead of **World Maritime Day**.

Highlights of the Report:

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG):** The International Maritime Organization set a target to achieve **net-zero GHG emissions by around 2050.**
- **A push for cleaner fuels:** It advocates for a shift towards cleaner fuels in shipping, emphasising the need for an environmentally effective, fair, socially just, technologically inclusive and globally equitable transition strategy.
    - Nearly **99% of the global fleet** rely on conventional fuels, the report cites promising developments, including **21% of vessels** designed for alternative fuels.

- **Decarbonization:** It calls for a universal regulatory framework applicable to all ships to decarbonise, ensuring economic growth,balancing environmental sustainability, regulatory compliance and economic demands
    - **Full decarbonization by 2050** will require massive investments and could lead to higher maritime logistics costs.
- **Global Shipping fleet:** The report expresses concern over the ageing global shipping fleet.
    - More than half of the world's fleet is over **15 years old.**
    - The ship owners face the challenge of renewing the fleet without **clarity regarding alternative fuels, green technology and regulatory regimes.**
    - The **Renewable Ammonia and Methanol Fuels** are more suitable for the newer ships that have **dual-fuel engines.**
- **Digitalization for decarbonization**
    - The investment in digitalization will improve predictability and reliability of shipping, and applying technologies such as **Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, blockchain and the internet of things.**
- **Shifting global trade**
    - It highlights the resilience of the shipping industry while acknowledging the challenges of balancing supply and demand.
    - It seeks to collaborate across sectors to increase demand for low-carbon fuels and technologies, encouraging investments.
- **Resilient Shipping Industry:**
    - With **2.4% growth in 2023**, the shipping industry is expected to expand by 1.2% in 2023 and more than 3% by 2024-28.
    - The Investors and financial institutions will boost funds for the research and development of clean fuel shipping technologies and infrastructure.

World Maritime Day

- This year it is celebrated on Thursday, **September 28, 2023.**
- It highlights the importance of **maritime safety, security and the marine environment.**
- The theme for 2023 is **"MARPOL at 50 – Our commitment goes on".**
    - MARPOL is the most significant treaty regulating pollution from ships; and it is a key pillar of IMO's efforts to promote green shipping. The MARPOL Convention was adopted on 2 November 1973 at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

- **Mandate:** UNCTAD is the UN's leading body dealing with trade and development. It aims to promote trade, investment, and development in developing countries.
- **Parent Bodies:** As part of the United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD reports to the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.
- **Membership:** 195 Member States.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Background:** It was established in 1964 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

- **Conferences:** The highest policy-making body of UNCTAD is the Conference, which meets once every four years. There have been 15 quadrennial conferences since 1964. The second UNCTAD Conference was held in 1968 in India (New Delhi).
- **Bridgetown Covenant:** The fifteenth (UNCTAD15) was held in Bridgetown, Barbados in 2021 where the Bridgetown Covenant was adopted to promote economic recovery in developing countries.
- **Flagship reports Published:**
    - Trade and Development Report
    - World Investment Report
    - The Least Developed Countries Report
    - Economic Development in Africa Report
    - Information Economy Report
    - Digital Economy Report
    - Technology and Innovation Report
    - Review of Maritime Transport

Source: UNCTAD

Facts In News

Toto

Syllabus: GS1/Culture

Context:

- Toto Shabda Sangraha, a dictionary to save a language from extinction.

About:

- Toto is a Sino-Tibetan language spoken by the tribal Toto people and is written in the Bengali script.
    - Toto is a small tribal community having a population of only 1,632 people living in Toto Para in Alipurduar district, on the edge of north Bengal near the India-Bhutan border, and speaking the eponymous language.

Toto Shabda Sangraha:

- The dictionary, Toto Shabda Sangraha is a step in the direction of **preserving the language** that has been **compiled by Bhakta Toto**, a bank employee-cum-poet, and **published jointly by the trust and Bhasha Samsad.**
    - The trust will soon publish Uttal Torsa, another Bengali novel written by Dhaniram Toto.
- **Dhaniram Toto**, who is like **a cultural father of the Totos,** got a **Padma Shri in 2023.**
- Toto words, to be translated into Bengali and English, will be **composed in the Bengali script**, considering that the **Toto script** is still in a nascent stage and members of the tribe are more familiar with the Bengali script.

Source: TH

'Five Eyes' Intelligence Alliance

Syllabus: GS 2/International Relations ,Regional Groupings

In News

- The recent allegations by the Canadian Prime Minister linking the killing of a Khalistani leader on Canadian soil to the Indian government have put the spotlight on the intelligence-sharing alliance '**Five Eyes'.**

About 'Five Eyes'

- **Overview :** The 'Five Eyes' is a **multilateral intelligence-sharing network** of five countries, **Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K. and the U.S**.
    - It is both surveillance-based and tracks signals intelligence (SIGINT).
    - Intelligence documents shared between the member countries are classified as 'Secret—AUS/CAN/NZ/UK/US Eyes Only,' which gave the group its title '**Five Eyes**.'
- **Evolution :** The alliance between the U.S. and the U.K. evolved around the Second World War to counter the Cold War Soviet threat.
    - The two countries forged a collaboration to share intelligence related to signals such as radio, satellite and internet communications.
        - In **1946, the alliance was formalised** through an agreement for cooperation in signals intelligence.
        - The treaty was called the British-U.S. Communication Intelligence Agreement, or BRUSA (now known as the UKUSA Agreement).
    - The arrangement was later extended to 'second party' countries —**Canada joined in 1948,** while **Australia and New Zealand became part of the alliance in 1956.**
- **Scope :** The Five Eyes have become involved in ocean and maritime surveillance, scientific and defence intelligence analysis, medical intelligence, geospatial intelligence, counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and the continuous sharing of intelligence products via a secret collective database known as **'Stone Ghost'.**
- **Concerns**
    - There have been several concerns regarding the privacy, security and methods of working of the intelligence alliance, which remained shrouded in mystery for long.

Source:TH

Dengue

Syllabus: GS-2/Health

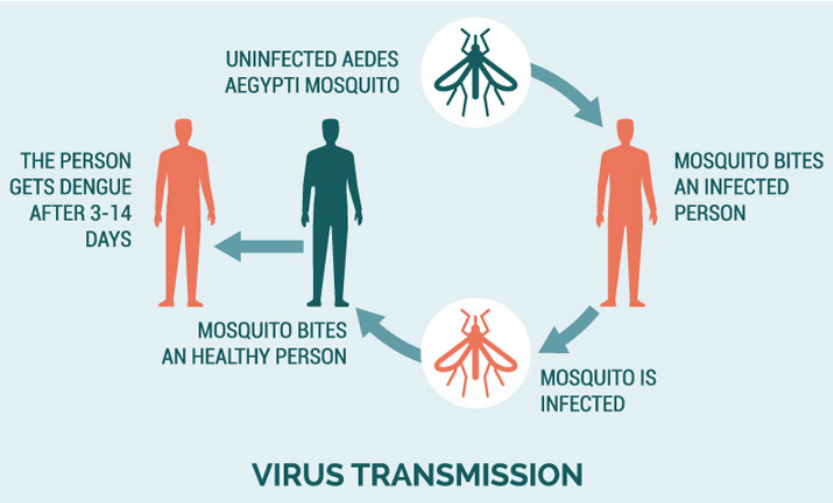
In News

- India has recorded over 3000 cases of Dengue in the past six months.
    - As per **National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control,** the country has reported 94,198 cases of dengue and 91 deaths, till date.
    - The states which have the highest number of cases are-**Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra.**

About Dengue

- It is commonly known as **break-bone fever** is a flu-like illness caused by the **Dengue virus.**
- It is caused when an **Aedes mosquito** carrying the virus bites a healthy person.
- The disease is mainly found in the **tropical and subtropical regions of the world.**

- There is **no specific treatment for dengue**. Early detection of disease progression associated with severe dengue, and access to proper medical care lowers fatality rates of severe dengue to below 1%.
- **Causes:** Dengue is caused due to four viruses, namely – **DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3, and DENV-4.**
  Spread: The virus enters a mosquito when it bites an already infected person. And the illness is spread when it bites a healthy person, and the virus spreads through the person's bloodstream.
  Immunity: Once a person recovers, he is immune to the specific virus and not the other three types.
  Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever: The probability of developing severe Dengue fever, also known as Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever, increases if you're infected a second, third or fourth time.



- **Symptoms:** It usually begin four to six days after infection and last for up to 10 days, may include:
  - Sudden, high fever (104 degree)
  - Severe headaches
  - Pain behind the eyes
  - Severe joint and muscle pain
  - Fatigue

Prevention

- Prevention of mosquito breeding by environmental management and modification.
- Personal protection from mosquito bites
- Community engagement: Educating the community.
- Reactive vector control
- Active mosquito and virus surveillance

Government Initiatives to Control Dengue in India

- The **National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases** has developed a protocol for monitoring and evaluation of **Dengue control programmes** which will be adopted by all institutions involved in such activities.

- The establishment of **Sentinel Surveillance Hospitals with laboratory support** for augmentation of diagnostic facilities for Dengue, which has been increased to **783 in 2022.**
- **"10 Hafte-10 Baje-10 Minute" campaign** of Delhi government.

Efforts by World Health Organization (WHO)

- **Global Vector Control Response (2017–2030).**

Source: TH

CRIIIO 4 GOOD

Syllabus: GS2/Government Policies and Interventions

News

- The Union Minister for Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship recently launched **'CRIIIO 4 GOOD'**, a new online, life skills learning module, **to promote gender equality among girls and boys.**

About:

- The programme was launched in association with the **International Cricket Council, UNICEF, and the Board of Control for Cricket in India** at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad.
- Through CRIIIO 4 GOOD, **the power of sports and the popularity of cricket can be used as a medium to empower the girl child** and spread awareness about gender equity.

CRIIIO 4 GOOD Module:

- The modules are **highly engaging,** and they use the power of cricket to talk about essential life skills and gender equity, among girls and boys in a funny and interactive way.
- 'CRIIIO 4 GOOD' is a **series of 8 cricket-based animation films** to promote gender parity, equip girls with life skills and encourage their participation in sports.
- The programme **can be accessed free of cost** on criiio.com/criiio4good in three languages: **English, Hindi and Gujarati.**
- The themes of the eight modules are: **leadership, problem-solving, confidence, decision-making, negotiation, empathy, teamwork and goal setting.**
- They **are visualized through state-of-the-art animation** using cricketing examples. In-depth research into local nuances has made these films real and relatable.

Source: PIB

Jewar Airport gets 'DXN' code

Syllabus: GS3/ Infrastructure

In News

- The **upcoming Noida International Airport (NIA) in Jewar** was awarded its own unique international three-letter code, 'DXN', by the **International Air Transport Association (IATA).**
    - Phase 1 of the airport is proposed to be operational **by the end of 2024.**

About

- **Airport coding** first began in the 1930s, in the very early days of commercial aviation. At the time, airlines and pilots typically chose their own two letter codes to identify destinations.
- However, by the 1940s, as the number of airports grew exponentially, a system of three letter codes was devised (allowing for a far higher number of combinations) and eventually standardised in the **1960s by the IATA.**

What are airport codes?

- Airport codes are **unique identifiers given to each airport** in order to avoid confusion and enable smooth running of operations.
- Each airport actually has two unique codes, one is **assigned by IATA, a Montreal-based international aviation trade association** and the other one is assigned by **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), an arm of the United Nations.**
- Both are used to accurately identify airports, but in different contexts. The three-digit IATA codes are used for **passenger facing operations — on tickets, boarding passes, signages, etc.**
    - The **four-digit codes assigned by the ICAO**, on the other hand, are used by industry professionals such as pilots, air traffic controllers, planners, etc.
    - For instance, for the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, the IATA code is DEL whereas the ICAO code is VIDP.

How does IATA assign airport codes?

- The three letter codes are often based on the first three letters of the city the airport is located in. For example, the Delhi airport has the IATA code of DEL.

Code's significance

- The code, DXN, symbolises the airport's proximity to Noida, Delhi and western Uttar Pradesh.
- The code helps in standardised communication between aviation stakeholders, thereby enabling smooth operations and reduced errors.

Source: HT

Conocarpus plants

Syllabus: Prelims/Current Events of national importance

News

- The Gujarat government has banned the planting of **ornamental Conocarpus trees** "in forest or non-forest areas", citing their "adverse impacts on environment and human health".

About

- Conocarpus, a **fast-growing exotic mangrove species,** had been a popular choice for increasing the green cover in Gujarat in recent years. Earlier, **Telangana** too had banned the plant species.

Problems with Conocarpus

- Research reports have highlighted **adverse impacts of this species** on environment and human health.
- Trees of this species **flower in winte**r and spread pollen in nearby areas. It is learnt that **this is causing diseases** like cold, cough, asthma, allergy etc.

- Roots of this species go deep inside the soil and develop extensively, **damaging telecommunication lines**, drainage lines and freshwater systems.
- Also, the leaves of Conocarpus are **unpalatable to plant-eating animals.**

Similar cases:

Vilayati Kikar:

- In 2018, the Delhi government **cleared the capital's green lungs,** the Central Ridge, of the **Vilayati Kikar** after years of appeals and court cases by activists.
- The **Vilayati Kikar (Prosopis juliflora)** is not native to Delhi, and was brought to the city in the 1930s by the British.
- As the tree grows fast even in arid conditions, **it can quickly increase the green cover of an area,** and be used as firewood. However, **it also kills off competition.**
    - Within a decade, it had taken over the Ridge, **killing the native trees** like acacia, dhak, kadamb, amaltas, flame-of-the-forest, etc.
    - Along with the trees disappeared the fauna — birds, butterflies, leopards, porcupines and jackals.
- The tree **also depletes the water table of the area** it is planted in.

Eucalyptus:

- In Kerala's case too, it was the **British who introduced the Eucalyptus tree to Munnar,** so its wood could be used as fuel in tea plantation boilers.
- The state forest department stopped the cultivation of acacia and eucalyptus in forest tracts in 2018.
- A study by The Wildlife Institute of India-Dehradun on man-animal conflict had found that **foreign invasive plants had reduced the availability of fodder in forests,** forcing animals to **foray into settlements and farmlands.**
- **The quality of forest habitats had been lost** due to the cultivation of alien plants such as acacia, mangium and eucalyptus in forest tracts for commercial purposes.

Source: IE