

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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URBANISATION AND RELATED CHALLENGES

Context

- October 31 is observed every year as **World Cities Day**.

About

- The world's urban population has reached an estimated 4.7 billion, or **57.5% of the world's total population**, with projections to **double by 2050**.
- The theme for this year's World Cities Day is **'Youth Climate Changemakers: Catalysing Local Action for Urban Sustainability'**.

Urbanisation in India

- **In Western countries**, urbanisation followed industrialisation, which created jobs that absorbed rural labour.
 - ♦ Their urbanisation was sustained also because of massive economic transfers from colonies.
- In contrast, **India's urbanisation is largely driven by economic distress**, resulting in poverty-driven urbanisation, with both rural-to-urban and urban-to-urban migration.
 - ♦ During the COVID-19 pandemic, the **strain on urban planning became apparent**, as reverse migration trends highlighted gaps in infrastructure.
- According to the **2011 Census**, India's urban population increased from **27.7% in 2001 to 31.1% in 2011**, at a rate of **2.76% per year**.
- World Bank estimates suggest around **40% of India's population** live in urban areas, in around 9,000 statutory and census towns.
 - ♦ How well India manages this urban transformation will play a critical role in realizing its **ambition of becoming a developed country by 2047**, the 100th year of independence.

Urban challenges in India:

- **Outdated Plans:** Spatial and temporal plans are often outdated and fail to accommodate population growth.
- **Overcrowded Unplanned Areas:** Since the 1980s, deindustrialisation has led to job losses in cities like Ahmedabad, Delhi, Surat, and Mumbai.
 - ♦ Many workers displaced by this trend moved to peri-urban areas, where they live in overcrowded conditions.
 - ♦ Currently, 40% of India's urban population resides in slums.

- **Climate Change:** Climate change severely impacts Indian cities.
 - ♦ Cities face severe pollution and are increasingly subject to urban flooding and heat island effects.
- **Inequality in Development:** Inequality is widening, with exclusive developments catering to the wealthy while millions lack basic housing.
- **Waste Management:** Rapid urbanization has led to increased waste generation, and many cities struggle with effective waste collection and disposal, resulting in environmental degradation.
- **Transportation and Traffic Congestion:** Inadequate public transport systems, coupled with a rise in private vehicle ownership, contribute to severe traffic congestion and pollution.

Steps Taken by Government of India to Tackle Urbanisation Challenges

- As per the 12th Schedule of the Constitution of India, **urban planning is a State subject**.
 - ♦ Government of India provides financial and technical support to the States.
 - ♦ State Town Planning Departments and Urban Development Authorities act as city and state level urban anchors.
- **Smart Cities Mission:** Launched in 2015, this initiative aims to promote sustainable and inclusive cities by using smart technology for better infrastructure, transportation, and services.
- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT):** This mission focuses on ensuring basic services like water supply, sewerage, and urban transport to improve the quality of life in cities, particularly for the urban poor.
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY):** This housing scheme aims to provide affordable housing to the urban poor.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban):** Launched in 2014, this initiative focuses on promoting cleanliness and sanitation in urban areas.
- **NITI Ayog:** The Managing Urbanisation (MU) Division provides data-based policy inputs for making India's urbanisation manageable, economically productive, environmentally appropriate, and equitable.
 - ♦ It offers advice and policy guidance to key stakeholders involved in urban planning, development, and management.
- **PM SVANidhi scheme** is a special micro-credit facility launched by ministry for providing affordable loans to street vendors.

Source: PIB

NEW SCHEME TO FOSTER NOVEL IDEAS TO DEVELOP HEALTH SECTOR

In News

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) launched the “First in the World Challenge” to encourage Indian scientists to propose innovative solutions to complex health issues.

About scheme

- The scheme seeks bold, novel ideas for global-impact innovations in biomedical fields, including new vaccines, drugs, diagnostics, and other health technologies.
- **Criteria:** Only proposals for unique, groundbreaking research and technologies will be funded.
 - ♦ Proposals aimed at incremental improvements or minor process innovations are ineligible.
- **High-Risk, High-Reward:** The initiative embraces a high-risk, high-reward approach, aiming for pioneering breakthroughs even if some projects may not succeed.
- **Eligibility:** Proposals can be submitted by individuals or teams from single or multiple institutions.
- **Selection Committee:** A selection panel comprising renowned experts, innovators, policymakers, and biomedical scientists will review proposals.

National Medical Register (NMR) Issues

- The NMR, maintained by the National Medical Commission (NMC) and set up by the Union Health Ministry, is a centralized, dynamic database of all licensed allopathic doctors in India.
- **Current Problem:** Doctors face issues registering due to Aadhaar and state medical board detail mismatches, such as name spelling discrepancies.
- **Authentication and Delay:** The NMR uses Aadhaar for verification, requiring doctors to file affidavits to verify identity, leading to delays.

Healthcare system in india

- **India's healthcare industry** includes hospitals, medical devices, clinical trials, outsourcing, telemedicine, medical tourism, health insurance, and medical equipment.
- **Growth Drivers:** The sector is growing rapidly due to expanded coverage, improved services, and increased investment by both public and private entities.

- ♦ Rising lifestyle diseases, need for affordable healthcare, technological advances, telemedicine, health insurance penetration, government initiatives, tax benefits, and incentives are boosting the market.
- **Immunization Program:** The Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) targets 26.7 million newborns and 29 million pregnant women annually, providing vaccines for 12 preventable diseases at no cost.
- **Hospital Sector Growth:** Expected to reach INR 18,348.78 billion by FY 2027, with a CAGR of 18.24%.
- **Telemedicine Market:** Expected to grow at a 31% CAGR, reaching \$5.4 billion by 2025.
- **National Digital Health Blueprint:** Could generate over \$200 billion in economic value over the next 10 years.
- **Ayushman Bharat Scheme:** India has the world's largest government-supported health insurance scheme.
- **Medical Education Investment:** INR 17,691.08 crore invested in 157 new medical colleges since 2014.
- **FDI Policy:** 100% FDI allowed under the automatic route for greenfield projects.
- **Medical Value Travel (MVT):** India is a top destination for MVT, attracting global patients under the “Heal in India” initiative

Source : TH

INDIA'S UPDATED NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (NBSAP)

Context

- India launched the updated **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2024-2030**, at the **COP 16** to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Major Highlights of NBSAP

- India has updated the NBSAP to align with the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF)** establishing the **National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs)**.
- It outlines **23 National Biodiversity Targets** focused on **reducing threats** to biodiversity, ensuring sustainable use of resources, and enhancing tools for implementation.
 - ♦ Each target is linked to specific strategies aimed at promoting ecosystem resilience, species recovery, and sustainable management practices.

- **Implementation:** The MoEFCC serves as the central agency responsible for coordinating biodiversity conservation efforts across India.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- **The CBD is a part of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), came into being in 1993.**
 - ♦ **It has three major objectives**—conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of the components of biological diversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

- GBF was adopted by the **COP15** to the **Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022.**
- It has been promoted as a “**Paris Agreement for Nature**”.
- The GBF contains **4 global goals and 23 targets.**
 - ♦ **Among the twenty-three targets** to be achieved by **2030** include halving the introduction of invasive species, and \$500 billion/year reduction in harmful subsidies.
 - ♦ “**Target 3**” is especially referred to as the “**30X30**” target.
- ‘**30X30**’ target
 - ♦ Under it, delegates committed to protecting **30% of land and 30% of coastal and marine areas by 2030**, fulfilling the deal’s highest-profile goal, known as 30-by-30.
 - ♦ The deal also aspires to **restore 30% of degraded lands and waters** throughout the decade, up from an earlier aim of **20%**.
 - ♦ Also, the world will strive to prevent destroying intact landscapes and areas with a lot of species, bringing those losses “**close to zero by 2030**”.

Major Outcomes of Cop 16

- **Cali Fund:** It is a multilateral mechanism, including a global fund, to share the benefits from uses of **digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources more fairly and equitably.**
 - ♦ It will be **non-binding** (voluntary) where firms are expected to contribute 1% of their profit or 0.1% of their revenue.
- **Indigenous People and Local Communities:** A new Programme that sets out specific tasks to ensure the meaningful contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities towards the three objectives of the Convention was adopted.

- **Synthetic biology:** An expert group will guide identification of synthetic biology’s potential benefits and review the potential impacts of recent technological developments.
- **Invasive Alien Species:** It proposes guidelines for managing invasive alien species, touching on issues such as e-commerce, multicriteria analysis methodologies and others.
- **Biodiversity and Health:** A Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health designed to help curb the emergence of zoonotic diseases, and prevent non-communicable diseases, it embraces a holistic “One Health” approach.
- **Risk Assessment:** Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety welcomed new, voluntary guidance on assessing the risks posed by living modified organisms (LMOs) containing engineered gene drives.
 - ♦ They are voluntary in nature, individual countries can tailor them to national contexts, considering ecological variables unique to their environments.

Source: PIB

NEWS IN SHORT

BALFOUR DECLARATION

Context

- The Balfour Declaration was made **107 years ago** on November 2, 1917.

The Balfour Declaration

- It was a letter that Balfour, then British foreign secretary, wrote to Lionel Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild of Tring, a prominent member of the Anglo-Jewish community.
- It expressed support for the **establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.**
- The declaration is seen as a significant moment in the lead-up to the **1948 creation of Israel.**

Factors Leading to Balfour Declaration

- **Zionist Movement:** The Zionists believed that the Jewish community, facing increasing persecution in Europe, would not be safe till they had a country, a homeland, to call their own.
 - ♦ Thus, Zionists began approaching various leaders to secure support for this goal.
- **Strategic Interest of the Allies:** It reflected British strategic interests during World War I, including garnering support from Jews in the United States and Russia.

- The implications of the Balfour Declaration contributed to tensions in the region and played a crucial role in the **subsequent history of Israel and Palestine**.

Source: IE

NINGOL CHAKKOUBA

Context

- **Ningol Chakkouba**, one of **Manipur's most significant festivals**, was celebrated with great enthusiasm.

About

- The festival is traditionally held on the **second lunar day** of the Manipuri calendar's **Hiyangei month** and its history dates back to the time when **King Nongda Lairen Pakhangba** ruled in Manipur.
- **Ningol** means 'married woman' and **Chakouba** means 'invitation for feast'; so the festival is the one where the married women are invited to their parents' home for a feast.
- The invitation comes from the son(s) of the parental family of the ningols, generally a week in advance; it **strengthens the bond** of affections among the brothers and sisters, daughters and parents of a family.
- Earlier, the festival was mainly **celebrated by the Meiteis** but nowadays many other communities also have started to celebrate it.

Source: AIR

DIGITAL INDIA COMMON SERVICE CENTRE (DICSC) PROJECT

In News

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has announced the launch of the Digital India Common Service Centre (DICSC) project.

About

- Project aims to bridge the digital divide in rural India by providing citizens with accessible e-governance, financial, and commercial services.
- Each centre will serve as a one-stop solution for essential services, including Aadhaar registration, banking, and tele-law, equipped with high-speed broadband connectivity and modern infrastructure.
- The implementation is managed by Common Services Centres e-Governance Services India Limited.

Source: FE

INDIA'S PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS

Context

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi highlighted the **nation's achievements in reducing TB incidence**.

About

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognised India's progress, with a **17.7% decline in TB incidence from 2015 to 2023**, a rate more than double the global decline of **8.3%**.
- The government has expanded and strengthened the **National TB Elimination Programme** by taking key initiatives such as:
 - ♦ The **Ni-Kshay Poshan Yojana** to provide essential nutritional support to TB patients and the introduction of the **BPALM regimen**, a novel treatment for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis.
- India's goal is to **eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025**, five years ahead of the **global target of 2030**.

Source: PIB

IRON BEAM

In News

- Israel's Ministry of Defense has announced that the **"Iron Beam,"** a high-powered laser interception system, is expected to become operational within a year.

About

- **Purpose:** Designed to neutralize projectiles, including drones and rockets, using high-powered lasers.
- **Functionality:** The Iron Beam can intercept a range of threats from hundreds of meters to several kilometers away, engaging at the speed of light. It operates with minimal cost per interception and low collateral damage.
- **Development:** Created by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, it will complement **Israel's existing Iron Dome system** and will be integrated into a broader, multilayer defense strategy.
- **Capabilities and Limitations:** The Iron Beam is especially effective against small, fast-moving drones, although its efficiency decreases in poor weather conditions like fog or rain.

Source: TOI

LAIKA: FIRST LIVING CREATURE TO ORBIT THE EARTH

Context

- November 3 marks 67 years since the Soviet Union sent **Laika to orbit the Earth on its Sputnik 2 mission.**

About: Laika

- Laika (Barker) was a Soviet space dog who became the **first living creature** to orbit the earth.
- The dog was promoted to **cosmonaut** (a term referring to an astronaut in the Soviet or Russian space program) based on her 'small' size and 'calm' demeanour.
- As the technology to re-enter the atmosphere had not yet been developed, Laika's survival was never expected. It is likely that she died of **hyperthermia** a few hours after reaching orbit.
- Laika ended up providing scientists with the first data on the behaviour of a living organism orbiting in the space environment. Four years later, **Yuri Gagarin** became the first human to orbit earth.

Sputnik 2 mission

- Sputnik 2 was launched on a Sapwood SS-6 8K71PS launch vehicle on November 3, 1957.
- It was the **second spacecraft** launched into Earth orbit and was the **first** such biological spacecraft. Sputnik 2 remained in orbit for five months.

Source: IE

BOTSWANA

In News

- Mr. Duma Boko elected as the new President of Botswana.

About Botswana

- It is a land-locked country dominated in geographical terms by the Kalahari Desert.
- It is situated in the Southern African region and about two-thirds of Botswana lies within the Tropics; it is bisected by the Tropic of Capricorn.
- It is bordered by Zambia and Zimbabwe to the northeast, Namibia to the north and west, and South Africa to the south and southeast.
- Capital City: Gaborone



- Botswana's climate is semi-arid though it is hot and dry for much of the year.
- Botswana's highest point is Tsodilo Hills
- Major Rivers** : Significant rivers include the Limpopo, Okavango, and Shashe with the Molopo River creating a geographical border between South Africa and Botswana.



- It is home of the world's largest elephant population

Source : PIB

BIBEK DEBROY

Context

- Economist and chairman of Prime Minister's **economic advisory council Bibek Debroy has passed away.**

About

- He was a full-time Member of **NITI Aayog** from its constitution in 2015 until June 2019.
- He was also a **Sanskrit scholar** who had translated the Bhagavad Gita, the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata into English.
- Bibek Debroy Committee:** Chaired by Debroy from 2014 to 2015, this committee was tasked with restructuring the Railway Ministry and Railway Board, and mobilizing resources for major railway projects.
- He was the **Chairman of the Finance Ministry's 'Expert Committee for Infrastructure Classification** and Financing Framework for Amrit Kaal.
- Debroy was awarded a **Padma Shri in 2015** and the **Lifetime Achievement Award** by the US-India Business Summit in 2016.

Source: IE