REMOTE ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINE

The Election Commission of India (ECI) recently said that it was ready to pilot remote voting for domestic migrants through newly devised remote electronic voting machines (RVMs).

About:

What is Remote Electronic Voting Machine?

- The new RVM prototype will **enable a voter, who is listed in constituencies, to exercise voting rights from a single machine.**
- The **multi-constituency remote EVM**, developed by a public sector undertaking, can **handle up to 72 constituencies** from a single remote polling booth.
- **Migrant voters would not need to travel** to their home districts to exercise their franchise if the remote electronic voting machine is implemented properly.
- The remote e-voting machine will be a **standalone device which doesn't need connectivity to operate.**
- **The Representation of the People Act,** The Conduct of Election Rules and The Registration of Electors Rules will **need to be amended to introduce remote voting.**

How does it work?

- The RVMs will have the same security system and voting experience as the EVM, with the **modification of an electronic ballot display with candidates and symbols instead of a fixed ballot paper sheet.**
- When the **voter scans his/her constituency card** in the presence of the Presiding Officer at the station, their respective constituency and candidate list will appear on the RVM display.
- As for counting the votes, the electronic system will **also count and store the votes for each candidate in a constituency.**

Need:

- As per the 2011 census, 45.36 crore Indians **(37% of the population) were internal migrants,** settled in a place different from that of their registered residence.
- While 67.4% of the eligible 91.2 crore Indians voted in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, about **one-third or close to 30 crore voters did not cast their vote.**
- Inability to vote due to internal migration (domestic migrants) is one of the prominent reasons to be addressed to improve voter turnout and ensure participative elections.

VIBRANT VILLAGE PROGRAMME

Union Home Minister recently asked Border Security Force (BSF) to strengthen Vibrant Village Programme and ensure welfare programmes are implemented.

About:

- Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) has been **announced in the Finance Minister's Budget Speech 2022.**
- **VVP is aiming at enhancing infrastructure** in villages along India's border with China, in states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Activities under the VVP include **building infrastructure such as housing, tourist centres, road connectivity,** providing decentralised renewable energy, direct-to-home access for Doordarshan and educational channels, and support for livelihood generation.
- The programme envisages coverage of border villages on Northern border having **sparse population, limited connectivity and infrastructure**, which often get left out from the development gains.
- Convergence of existing schemes is proposed under VVP. The villages on the Northern border to be covered under VVP are being finalised.

SATYENDRA NATH BOSE

The 129th birth anniversary of Satyendra Nath Bose has been celebrated recently

About:

- Satyendra Nath Bose was a Mathematician and physicist from India. **Born on January 1, 1894,** Bose collaborated with Einstein to develop what we now know as the Bose-Einstein statistics.
- He was appointed to the position of **Reader in Physics at the University of Dhaka**. It was here that he made his most significant contributions to physics.
- Bose designed **equipment for setting up an X-ray crystallography laboratory** at the university, and wrote several papers on a range of subjects, such as 'D2 Statistics', and 'Total Reflection of Electromagnetic Waves in the Ionosphere'.
- In 1945, he left Dhaka to return to his alma mater, the University of Calcutta, as the Khaira Professor of Physics. He retired from the University of Calcutta in 1956 and spent a year as the **Vice Chancellor at the Viswa-Bharati University.**
- **Bose was awarded Padma Vibhushan,** one of the highest civilian awards in the country, by the Indian government in 1954.
- **He served as president of many scientific institutions**, which include the Indian Physical Society, National Institute of Science, Indian Science Congress, and the Indian Statistical Institute.
- He also acted as an **advisor to the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, and later became a Fellow of the Royal Society.**

NILGIRI TAHR CONSERVATION PROJECT

Recently, the Tamil Nadu government launched an initiative for the conservation of the Nilgiri Tahr at Rs 25 crore.

About:

- Under The Nilgiri Tahr project, the Tamil Nadu government plans to
- Develop a better understanding of the Nilgiri Tahr population through

surveys and radio telemetry studies

- Reintroduce the Tahrs to their historical habitat
- Address proximate threats
- Increase public awareness of the species
- The project is to be implemented for 5 year period from 2022 to 2027.

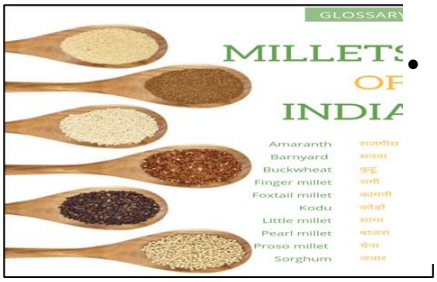
What is Nilgiri Tahr?

- Nilgiri Tahr is the **only Caprinae species** found in the **tropical mountains of southern**
- **Habitat:** They are **endemic to the Western Ghats** and used to inhabit a large part of the Western Ghats between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- **Conservation Status**
- IUCN - **Endangered**
- Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972 - **Schedule I**

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLETS: HOW INDIA'S GOVT CAN PROMOTE THE CEREALS IN 2023

Why in News?

- Recently, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYM), a proposal sponsored by the Government of India to promote these "nutri-cereals."



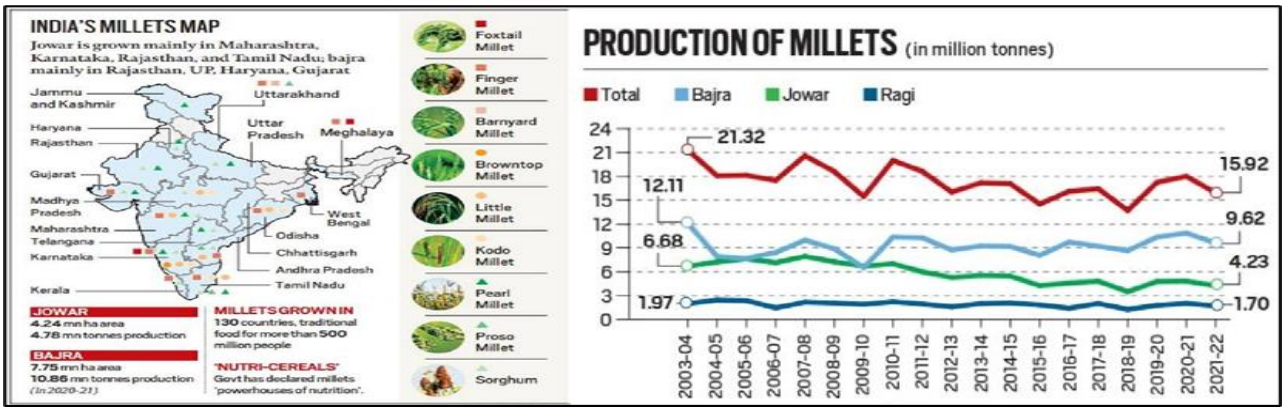
- The declaration will be helpful to the Government of India in articulating its goal of making IYM 2023 a "People's Movement" as well as presenting India as the "Global Hub for Millets," as India produces one-fifth of the world's millets.

What are Millets?

- Millets are a highly varied group of **small-seeded grasses**, widely grown around the world as cereal crops or grains for **fodder and human food**.

- They are important crops in the **semiarid tropics of Asia and Africa** (especially in India, Mali, Nigeria, and Niger), with 97% of millet production in developing countries.
- This crop is favoured due to its **productivity and short growing season under dry, high-temperature conditions (**hardy and drought-resistant crops**).**
- **Millets are a powerhouse of nutrients**, which score over rice and wheat in terms of minerals, vitamins, and dietary fibre content, as well as amino acid profile.
- Though rich in both iron and zinc, wheat's protein content comprises **glutens**, known to trigger gastrointestinal and autoimmune disorders in many people.
- **Bajra (pearl millet)**, on the other hand, has iron, zinc, and protein levels comparable to that of wheat, but it's **gluten-free** and has more fibre and which significantly addresses the problem of "**hidden hunger.**"

Status of millets in India:



- They were among the first crops to be domesticated in India with several evidence of its consumption during the **Indus valley civilization**.
- In India, millets are primarily a **kharif** crop, **requiring less water and agricultural inputs** than other similar staples.
- The main millet-growing states in India are **Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka**, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh

Where do millets lag?

- **Rice and wheat no longer remain aspirational foods**. Thanks to the Green Revolution and the National Food Security Act of 2013.

- **Millets are not the first choice either of consumers or of farmers.**
  - For farmers, **low per-hectare yields** (1 tonne for jowar, 1.5 for bajra and 1.7 for ragi, as against 3.5 tonnes for wheat and 4 tonnes for paddy) are a disincentive.
  - Also, **access to assured irrigation**, made farmers switch to rice, wheat, sugarcane, or cotton.
  - For consumers, the gluten proteins make the **wheat dough more cohesive and elastic** and the resultant breads come out light and fluffy, which isn't the case with bajra or jowar.

Steps taken in India to promote millets:

- **Pusa-1201:** A hybrid bajra that gives an average grain yield of over 2.8 tonnes and potential of 4.5 tonnes per hectare.
  - It matures in 78-80 days and is resistant to downy mildew and blast, both deadly fungal diseases.
- Recognising the enormous potential of Millets, which also aligns with several UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Government of India (in 2018),
  - Rebranded Millets as "**Nutri Cereals**"
  - Declared 2018 as the National Year of Millets, aiming at larger promotion and demand generation

Way ahead for India:

- **Millets could be made a staple part of children's diets:**
  - Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman and Saksham Anganwadi and **Poshan 2.0** can be better leveraged by making them more millet-focused.
  - **Besides midday meals**, millets could be served in the form of ready-to-eat foods such as cookies, laddu, etc.
- **Minimum support price (MSP) procurement of millets** should be part of a decentralised nutritional programme specifically targeting tomorrow's citizens.
- The push to distribute coarse grains under the **public distribution system (PDS)** has to gain momentum.
- **Best practice: Odisha** already has a **dedicated millet mission** that undertook procurement of 32,302 tonnes worth Rs 109.08 crore, mainly of ragi, in 2021-22.

Conclusion:

- A combination of government finance and decentralised procurement connected to nutrition goals, specifically the eradication of hidden hunger among school-age children, has the potential to do for millets what the Food Corporation of India has done for rice and wheat.

PRAJJWALA CHALLENGE

Recently, the Ministry of Rural Development under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) has launched the Prajjwala Challenge

About:

- **Aim:** To invite ideas, solutions and actions that can **transform the rural economy**. This Mission is looking for ideas which are broadly categorised into
- Focus on Women and the Marginalized section of the community
- Localised Models
- Sustainability
- Cost Effective solutions
- Multi-sectoral ideas and solutions
- Shortlisted ideas will be acknowledged by the Mission and will be provided mentorship support from an expert panel and incubation support to scale up. The **top 5 ideas will be rewarded with Rs. 2 Lakh each.**

What is DAY-NRLM?

- It is one of the **flagship poverty alleviation programs** which aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms for the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Universal Social Mobilisation:** At least one woman member from each identified rural poor household, is to be brought under the Self Help Group (SHG) network in a time bound manner.

- **Participatory Identification of Poor (PIP):** All households identified as poor through the PIP process is the NRLM Target Group and is eligible for all the benefits under the programme.
- **Community Funds as Resources in Perpetuity**: NRLM provides Revolving Fund (RF) and Community Investment Fund (CIF) as resources in perpetuity to the institutions of the poor, to strengthen their institutional and financial management capacity.

KING PENGUIN

A recent study in the Antarctic reveals that king penguins are threatened by climate change.

About:

- They are the **2nd largest penguin species.**
- **Habitat**: They live on Antarctic and sub-Antarctic islands. Major colonies are found on Crozet, Prince Edward Island, Kerguelen Island, Heard Island, South Georgia and Macquarie Island.
- King penguins **don't make a nest** and they carry their egg around with them at all times on top of their feet by taking turns.
- **Conservation Status**: According to IUCN it is under the category of **Least Concern.**
- **Threats**: Climate change, habitat shifting and southward shifting of the Antarctic Polar Front.
