

## Current Affairs:09.11.2021

### Srinagar chosen as creative city by UNESCO

**Context** [The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) has picked Srinagar among 49 cities as part of the creative city network under the Crafts and Folk Arts category.

#### Key takeaways

- The inclusion is likely to pave way for the city to represent its handicrafts on the global stage through UNESCO.
- The UCC network involves folk art, media, film, literature, design, gastronomy and media arts.
- Only Jaipur (Crafts and Folk Arts) in 2015, Varanasi and Chennai (Creative city of Music) in 2015 and 2017 respectively have so far been recognised as members of the UCCN for creative cities.

#### About UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.
- The 246 cities which currently make up this network work together towards a **common objective**: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.

### Zika virus

**Context** With a rise in the number of [Zika virus](#) cases in Uttar Pradesh, doctors have advised that people should avoid all non-essential travel to areas reporting cases. Delhi also has been placed on alert.

#### Key takeaways

- The Union Health Ministry has also advised people to control/prevent mosquito breeding.
- Based on the available information of previous outbreaks, severe forms of disease requiring hospitalisation are uncommon and fatalities are rare.
- The [National Centre for Disease Control \(NCDC\)](#) had said earlier that non-essential travel to the affected areas and countries should be deferred/cancelled
- Also, Persons with comorbid conditions (diabetes, hypertension, chronic respiratory illness, immune disorders etc) should seek advice from the nearest health facility, prior to travel to an affected country.

#### What is Zika virus?

- Zika virus is a mosquito-borne flavivirus that was first identified in Uganda in 1947 in monkeys.
- It was later identified in humans in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- ZVD is caused by a virus transmitted primarily by Aedes mosquitoes (AM), mainly Aedes aegypti.
  - This is the same mosquito that transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.
- **Transmission:** From mother to fetus during pregnancy, through sexual contact, transfusion of blood and blood products, and organ transplantation.
- **Symptoms:** Fever, rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise or headache.
- According to [WHO](#), a majority of those infected with Zika virus disease either remain asymptomatic (up to 80%) or show mild symptoms
- Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause infants to be born with microcephaly (smaller than normal head size) and other congenital malformations, known as congenital Zika syndrome.
- **Treatment:** There is no vaccine or medicine for Zika.
- The focus is on relieving symptoms and includes rest, rehydration and acetaminophen for fever and pain.

## Extinction Risk for leopards in North India

**Context** An international study was conducted that quantifies the threat posed by roads to the survival of animal populations around the world.

### **Key findings related to India**

- The [leopard](#) faces an 83% increased risk of extinction in North India due to roadkill.
- The leopard population of North India is at highest risk among four animal populations identified as being the most vulnerable to extinction in the next 50 years if observed roadkill levels persist.
- Leopard is followed by the maned wolf and the little spotted cat, both of Brazil, and the brown hyena of southern Africa.
- At an 83% increased risk, the study estimates the time to the North Indian leopard population's extinction at 33 years.

### **About Leopard**

- Scientific Name- Panthera pardus.
- Listed in **Schedule I** of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Included in **Appendix I** of CITES.
- Listed as **vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List.
- Nine subspecies of the leopard have been recognized, and they are distributed across Africa and Asia.

## Adi Shankaracharya

**Context** A 12-foot statue of Adi Shankaracharya has been unveiled at Kedarnath, where the acharya is believed to have attained samadhi at the age of 32 in the ninth century.

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## About Adi Shankaracharya



- Born in Kaladi village on the bank of the Periyar, the largest river in Kerala
- He was a disciple of the scholar Govindacharya.
- He was constantly on the move — bearing the flag of Advaita Vedanta, challenging prevailing philosophical traditions including Buddhism and Jainism.
- He is believed to have established the ritual practices at the Badri and Kedar dhams.
- Adi Shankara is generally identified as the author of 116 works — among them the celebrated commentaries (bhashyas) on 10 Upanishads, the Brahmasutra and the Gita, and poetic works including Vivekachudamani, Maneesha Panchakam, and Saundaryalahiri.
- He also composed texts like Shankarasmrithi, which seeks to establish the social supremacy of Nambuthiri Brahmins.

## What is Advaita Vedanta?

- Advaita Vedanta articulates a philosophical position of radical nondualism, a revisionary worldview which it derives from the ancient Upanishadic texts.
- According to Advaita Vedantins, the Upanishads reveal a fundamental principle of nonduality termed ‘brahman’, which is the reality of all things.

## Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules 2011

**In News:** To safeguard interest of consumers, the Department of Consumer Affairs under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has omitted the Rule 5 of the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities), Rules 2011 defining the **Schedule II prescribing the pack sizes of various types of commodities.**

- A new provision has been introduced to **indicate the unit sale price on pre packed commodities**, which will allow **easier comparison** of the prices of the commodities at the time of purchase.
- Amendment to ensure that **consumers are able to make an informed choice**
- For **reducing compliance burden** and removing the ambiguity of declaration of date on pre packed commodities for consumers, the declaration has now been required to the month and year in which the commodity is manufactured for the pre packed commodities.

## India & Eurasia Policy

**Context:** India’s intense Indo-Pacific diplomacy is about Delhi’s new maritime geopolitics and now it is time to devote similar energy to the development of a “Eurasian” policy that helps in recalibration of India’s continental strategy.

## History of India’s Eurasian Foreign Policy

- There are references to India's ancient civilisational links with Eurasia.
- The collaboration between the Sangha and the Shreni in the Buddhist era produced lasting interaction between the two regions.
- India's inward orientation after the decline of Buddhism did not stop the flow of Central Asian forces into the subcontinent.
- The Colonial times saw the outward projection of India's influence into Central Asia. British rivalry with Russia during the Great Game in the 19th and early 20th centuries put Eurasian geopolitics at the top of undivided India's security agenda.
- Before independence, many Indian nationalists turned to Europe to secure the nation's liberation from British colonialism. After independence, India's drift towards an alliance with Russia saw India neglect Europe's strategic significance.
- The Partition of the subcontinent and India's physical disconnection from inner Asia, however, cut India off from Eurasian geopolitics.

## Challenges in Eurasia

### 1. Persistent problem with Pakistan

- National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has invited his counterparts from Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, Russia, and China to join the consultations in Delhi on the crisis in Afghanistan. Pakistan has decline to join while China is not clear on joining.
- Pakistan's reluctance to engage with India on Afghanistan reveals Delhi's challenges & the urgency in shaping a new Eurasian strategy.

### 2. Meaning of Eurasia

- There is no shared international understanding of what constitutes the Eurasia region.
- In geographical terms, Eurasia is the name of a tectonic plate that lies under much of what we know as Europe and Asia.
- In Russia's definition, Eurasia covers the former territories of the Soviet Union, which collapsed in 1991. In other words, it is about Russia's political claim to a sphere of influence in its "near abroad".
- Given the deep connection between Muslim Central Asia and West Asia, some prefer the term "Greater Middle East" to describe parts of this region.
- For India, it makes sense to use the broadest possible definition of Eurasia in reimagining the region.

### 3. Rise of China

- The most important development in Eurasia today is the dramatic rise of China and its growing strategic assertiveness, expanding economic power and rising political influence
- **Beijing's muscular approach** to the long and disputed border with Bhutan and India, its pursuit for a **security presence in Tajikistan**, the active search for a larger role in Afghanistan are examples of China's assertiveness.
- Physical proximity multiplies China's economic impact on the inner Asian regions.

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- China's **Belt and Road initiative** and Europe's growing economic interdependence with China have added to Beijing's powerful leverages in Eurasia

#### 4. **US rethink of its strategic commitments to Eurasia.**

- The US withdrawal from Afghanistan is just the beginning of a long-overdue redefinition of US global strategic priorities.
- US and EU are now trying to rebalance the trans-Atlantic responsibilities for Europe's collective defence.
- As a result of US resizing its presence in Eurasia region, regional powers are going to reshape Eurasia.

#### **Way Ahead for India to evolve Eurasian Policy**

- India has certainly dealt with Eurasia's constituent spaces separately over the decades. What Delhi now needs is an integrated approach to Eurasia.
- Overcoming the geographic limitation — represented by the Pakistan barrier— will be central to an expanded Indian role in Eurasian geopolitics.
- A dedicated military office in the Indian mission to Brussels, where both EU and NATO are headquartered, will be a crucial step towards a sustained security dialogue with Europe.
- Indian needs to intensify the dialogue on Eurasian security with Russia. While Indo-Russian differences on the Indo-Pacific, the Quad, China, and the Taliban are real, Delhi and Moscow have good reasons to narrow their differences on Eurasia.
- There is a need for substantive Indian collaboration with both Persia (for strategic location) and Arabia (for religious influence). These partnership are needed in overcoming Turkey's alliance with Pakistan that is hostile to Delhi.
- India will surely encounter many contradictions in each of the three areas — between and among America, Europe, Russia, China, Iran, and the Arab Gulf. As in the Indo-Pacific, so in Eurasia, Delhi should not let these contradictions hold India back.

#### **The long road to net zero**

**Context:** With the announcement of a net zero emissions target for 2070 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the UNFCCC in Glasgow, India has joined a high-profile group of countries.

- Others with net zero goals include major emitters such as the United States, the UK and EU with a 2050 target, and China aiming for 2060.
- A dozen countries besides the EU have a legal enactment towards the goal.

#### **How can net zero be achieved?**

- Net zero, which means balancing out man-made national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by removing an equal amount from the atmosphere, can be achieved only

through a structured programme that relies on sharp emissions reduction, wide support for clean energy innovation and adoption of green technologies.

## India and Net Zero

- India's well-founded argument against committing itself to strict emissions goals is that it has historically been one of the lowest emitters of GHGs, and the impetus has to come from the developed economies.
- The country represents about 7% of today's global emissions, and has committed itself to a net zero deadline 49 years away.
- According to the World Bank, in 2018, India had per capita emissions of 1.8 tonnes, which is markedly lower than 15.2 for the U.S., 5.4 for the U.K. and even the middle-income countries' average of 3.7 tonnes.
- A projected per capita emissions figure in 2030 for India is 2.4 tonnes under the Paris Agreement.
- India's absolute emissions volume stands third, after China and the U.S.

## What is the outlook for India's emissions?

- Analysis of India's growth path points to rising GDP per capita, with a rise in carbon emissions in the short term, primarily from energy.
- There is pressure from absolute increase in population and consumption, but population growth is slowing.
- A greater share for services in GDP is positive for emissions cuts, but there is no indication of when India's emissions, **heavily influenced by coal** and other fossil fuel use, will peak.
- In terms of sectoral GHG emissions, data from 2016 show that
  - electricity and heat account for the highest share (1.11 billion tonnes), followed by
  - agriculture (704.16 million tonnes),
  - manufacturing and construction (533.8 million tonnes),
  - transport (265.3 million tonnes)
  - industry (130.61 million tonnes)
  - Land use change and forestry (126.43 million tonnes)
  - other fuel use (119.04 million tonnes)
  - buildings (109.2 million tonnes)
  - waste (80.98 million tonnes),
  - Fugitive emissions (54.95 million tonnes)
  - Aviation and shipping (20.4 million tonnes).

## What are the immediate interventions that can be made?

- India needs to create a **legal mandate for climate impact assessment** of all activities. This can facilitate investment by dedicated green funds.
- The 500 GW renewables target needs a major boost, such as channelling more national and international **climate funding into decentralised solar power**.

- Rooftop solar, estimated at 7,701 megawatt (MW) installed capacity as of June 2021, could be scaled up by modernising unattractive State-level regulation.
- The problem with expansion of rooftop solar, which registered 53% year-on-year growth in 12 months, is resistance from State electricity utilities, although costs are reducing.
- Another emerging sector is **green hydrogen production** because of its potential as a clean fuel. India has a National Hydrogen Mission now in place.
  - The fuel can cover major sectors such as power and steel production (shifting from coal) and automotive (fuel cell vehicles), while green ammonia, with potential uses in energy storage, shipping, and as a base for hydrogen production, are promising areas. This can steadily decarbonise big sources of emissions as industry leaders explained at COP 26.
- India's **urban solid waste management** will need to modernise to curb methane emissions from unscientific landfills.
- These plans need a political consensus and support from State governments.
- Net zero will involve industrial renewal using green innovation, green economy support and supply chains yielding new jobs.
- It also needs **low carbon technologies**, zero emission vehicles, and renewed cities promoting walking and cycling.
- Industry will need to make highly energy-efficient goods that last longer, and consumers should be given a legal **right to repair** goods they buy.
- Preventing the release of stored carbon in the environment, such as trees and soil, has to be a net zero priority.

## Juvenile Justice Amendment, 2021

**Context:** The amendment seeks to strengthen protection of children — including the ones who require protection under the law as well as those who are in conflict with the law and also streamline the process of adoption in the country.

### Key Features of 2021 Amendment Bill

#### 1. Re-defines Serious offences

“Serious offences” includes the offences for which the punishment under the Indian Penal Code or any other law for the time being in force, is,

- minimum imprisonment for a term more than three years and not exceeding seven years; or
- maximum imprisonment for a term more than seven years but no minimum imprisonment or minimum imprisonment of less than seven years is provided

Under the 2015 Act offences committed by juveniles are categorised as heinous offences, serious offences, and petty offences

- There was ambiguity over definition of “Serious Crime” hence the amendment tries to define it.
- Heinous Crimes are those where maximum sentence of seven years or more, but also a minimum sentence of seven years.

## 2. Classification of offences

- Offences punishable with imprisonment of more than 7 years shall be cognizable and non-bailable.
  - cognizable – where arrest is allowed without warrant
- Offences punishable with imprisonment between 3-7 years shall be non-cognizable and non-bailable. Earlier, such offences are cognizable and non-bailable.
- Offences punishable with imprisonment less than 3 years shall be non-cognizable and bailable

## 3. Designated Court

- The Bill also proposes that notwithstanding anything contained in CrPC or the POCSO Act, or the Child Rights Act, offences under the JJ Act shall be triable by the Children’s Court.
- Presently, only such offences that are punishable with imprisonment for more than 7 years are triable by the Children’s Court. Other offences (punishable with imprisonment less than 7 years) are triable by Judicial Magistrate.

## 4. Adoption

- Currently, adoption procedure involves a seal of approval by the Civil Court, which passes the final adoption order.
- The Bill provides that instead of the court, the District Magistrate (including Additional District Magistrate) will issue such adoption orders, both for intra-country and inter-country adoptions.

## 5. Appeals

- The bill provides that any person aggrieved by an adoption order passed by the District Magistrate may file an appeal before the Divisional Commissioner within a period of 30 days.
- Endeavour shall be made to dispose of such appeals within 4 weeks

## 6. Additional Functions of District Magistrate (DM)

- DM including Addition DM will monitor the functions of various agencies under JJ Act.
- This includes the Child Welfare Committees, the Juvenile Justice Boards, the District Child Protection Units and the Special juvenile Protection Units.
- No new children’s home can be opened without the sanction of the DM.



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- DM is also responsible now for ensuring that child Care institutions falling in their district are following all norms and procedures (earlier the process was relaxed and lacked effective oversight)

## 7. Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)

- The Bill seeks to strengthen the CWCs by incorporating provisions relating to educational qualifications for its members and stipulating eligibility conditions for selection of the Committee

### The bill provides that a person will not eligible to be a member of the CWC if he/she

- has any record of violation of human rights or child rights,
- has been convicted of an offence involving moral turpitude,
- has been removed or dismissed from service of the central government, or any state government, or a government undertaking,
- Is part of the management of a child care institution in a district

**Removal of Members:** The appointment of any member of the committee shall be terminated by the state government after an inquiry if they fail to attend the proceedings of the CWCs consecutively for three months without any valid reason or if they fail to attend less than three-fourths of the sittings in a year

### Critical Analysis of Amendment Bill:

- The Bill puts entire onus of children's welfare on District Magistrates, ignoring the fact that the **DMs are over-burdened authorities**, with the charge of entire district and other multifarious duties.
- **Centralizing all powers** with respect to children rehabilitation in one authority (DMs) may lead to delays, and may have wider repercussions on child welfare.
- The Grievance redressal powers under the Act have been taken away from the judiciary and have been given to the executive. It seeks to **take away the role of judges** who are specialized authorities in dealing with the nuances of law. This has serious implications on the doctrine of separation of powers.