

WHO WAS BIRSA MUNDA?

The Prime Minister recently announced he will go to the native village of tribal icon Birsa Munda on his birth anniversary and launch a welfare scheme for the community.



About Birsa Munda:

- He was a folk hero and a tribal freedom fighter hailing from the Munda tribe.
- He spearheaded an Indian tribal mass movement that arose in the Bihar and Jharkhand belts in the early 19th century under British colonisation.
- Munda rallied the tribals to fight against the forceful land grabbing carried out by the British government, which would turn the tribals into bonded labourers and force them to abject poverty.
- He influenced his people to realise the importance of owning their land and asserting their rights over it.
- As a reaction to the introduction of the Zamindari system, or Permanent settlement in tribal areas, Birsa Munda in 1894 declared “Ulgulan”, or revolt, against the British and the Dikus – the outsiders.
- He created a faith called ‘Birsait’.
- Known as 'Dharti Abba' or the Earth Father, Birsa Munda stressed the need for the tribals to study their own religion and not forget their cultural roots.
- Birsa Munda propagated the principles of Hindu religion.
- He died on June 9, 1900, at age 25.
- His struggle against exploitation and discrimination against tribals led to a big hit against the British government in the form of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act being passed in 1908. The act restricted the passing on of land from the tribal people to non-tribals.
- In recognition of his impact on the national movement, the state of Jharkhand was created on his birth anniversary in 2000.
- November 15, the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, was declared ‘Janjatiya Gaurav Divas’ by the Central Government in 2021.

WHAT IS ARROW-3 MISSILE DEFENCE SYSTEM

Israel recently confirmed that it used its sophisticated Arrow 3 missile interceptor against Iran-backed Houthi rebels.



About Arrow-3 Missile Defence System:

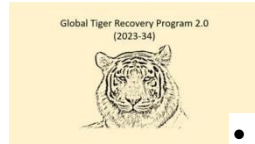
- It is an **exo-atmospheric anti-ballistic missile defence system** for long-range threat engagement.
- The missile was **jointly developed by Israel Aerospace Industries and the Missile Defence Agency in the US.**
- Initially deployed in 2017, Arrow-3 is the **top layer of Israel's sophisticated air-defense network.**
- It is **designed to take out ballistic missiles while they are still outside of the atmosphere.**
- **Features:**
- It uses **two-stage solid-fueled interceptors** to engage short- and medium-range ballistic missiles and **consists of a launcher, radar, and battle management system.**
- It provides a **range of 2,400km** and can **intercept threats at an altitude of 100km.**
- It has **early warning and fire control radar.** It **provides extended-range acquisition** as well as **multi-target acquisition and tracking capabilities.**

How does it work?

- It uses **hit-to-kill technology to destroy incoming missiles.**
- The **missile is launched vertically**, and then the **direction is changed towards the estimated interception point.**
- The **high-resolution electro-optical sensor acquires the target for the kill vehicle to hit the target and destroy the warhead.**

GLOBAL TIGER RECOVERY PROGRAM (GTRP)

As per the report submitted under the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) 2.0 overall tiger population increased 60%.



About Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP):

- It was launched in 2010 under the **Global Tiger Initiative (GTI)** by the World Bank to save wild tigers.
- This initiative set up the ambitious target of **reversing the rapid decline** of wild tigers across their range and doubling their population numbers by 2022.
- Alongside these top-level targets, the GTRP set out **urgent thematic actions** at a national level to strengthen wild tiger conservation in sync with this global goal.
- The first GTRP helped to pull focus to wild tiger conservation and secure a collective commitment from TRCs.
- It was endorsed in the **St Petersburg Declaration** in 2010 which saw **13 tiger range countries** committing to reverse the decline of the species population.
- The 13 tiger range countries are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, **India**, Indonesia, Lao PDR Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, **Russia**, Thailand, and Vietnam.

What is GTRP 2.0?

- It has been firmed up by tiger range countries through the intergovernmental platform of the Global Tiger Forum along with collaborators like the WWF.
- It emphasizes on **strengthening tiger governance, enhancing resources and protection**, while addressing contemporary challenges like Human-Wildlife Conflict.
- It aims to pave the way for tiger **conservation from 2023-2034**.

RED SANDERS

Recently, the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change informed that



India has been removed from Review of Significant Trade (RST) for Red Sanders, under Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

About Red Sanders:

- It is a flora species that are endemic to a distinct tract of forests **in the Eastern Ghats region of Andhra Pradesh.**
- **Climatic condition required:** It usually grows in rocky, degraded and fallow lands with Red Soil and a hot and dry climate.
- **Protection Status:**
- **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
- **CITES:** Appendix II
- **The Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972:**Schedule IV

What is CITES?

- It is an **international agreement** to which States and regional economic integration organizations adhere voluntarily.
- It was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of IUCN (The World Conservation Union). It entered into force in July 1975.
- **Aim:** To **ensure that** international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not **threaten the survival of the species.**
- Although CITES is legally binding on the Parties – in other words they have to implement the Convention – it does not take the place of national laws.
- The CITES Secretariat is administered by **UNEP and is located in Geneva, Switzerland.**
- The Conference of the Parties to CITES is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention and comprises all its parties.
- **India** has been a party to CITES since **1976.**

[EXPLORING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSGENDERS IN ARMED FORCES](#)

Why in News?

- The Indian Armed Forces are looking at possible employment opportunities for transgenders and the roles they could perform, while examining the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019 and its implications.
- A joint study group constituted by the Principal Personnel Officers Committee (PPOC) was tasked with suggesting a way forward for the implementation of the Act in the defence forces.

LGBT Rights in India:

- There are approximately **480,000** transgender people in India as per Census 2011.
- The Constitution of India under **Article 15** (prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth) guarantees fundamental rights and **prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.**
- Though Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in India have been **evolving rapidly** in recent years, they **still face social and legal difficulties** not experienced by non-LGBT persons.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019:

- **Background:**
 - In 2014, the SC in **NALSA v. Union of India** held that all persons have the constitutional right to self-identify their gender.
 - Further, it directed Union and State Governments to allow transgender persons **to access reservations in public education and employment.**
 - Following the judgement and the recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice, the **2019 Act** was enacted and came into force.
 - The Act is under the overall supervision of the **Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment,** Government of India.
- **Objectives of the Act:**
 - It protects the rights of transgenders and prevents their marginalisation and discrimination in healthcare, education, employment, public services and benefits, among others.
 - Thus, the Act is an equal opportunity provider to the transgender community.

- **Salient provision of the 2019 Act:**
 - **Definition of a transgender person:** A transgender person as one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth.
 - **Prohibition against discrimination:** The act prohibits the discrimination, including denial of service or unfair treatment in relation to - education, employment, healthcare, etc.
 - **Certificate of identity for a transgender person:** A transgender person may make an application to the **District Magistrate** for a certificate of identity, **indicating the gender as 'transgender'**.
 - **Welfare measures by the government:** The act states that the relevant government will take measures (rescue and rehabilitation, vocational training and self-employment, etc) to ensure the full inclusion and participation of transgender persons in society.
 - **Offences and penalties:** The act recognise the following offences against transgender persons - forced or bonded labour, denial of use of public places, removal from household and village, etc.
 - **National Council for Transgender persons (NCT):** The NCT will consist of the Union Minister for Social Justice as Chairperson, and will -
 - Advise the central government on the impact of policies, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons.
 - Redress the grievances of transgender persons.

THE SMALL GRID – ENERGY SECURITY, WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THE SUN

Context

- **The private sector is leading a revolution to address the energy poverty for 500 million people which relies on the establishment of clean energy mini-grids in rural areas across continents and Small Island Developing States.**
- These mini grids not only address the energy needs of numerous small businesses and households but also **contribute to lifting people out of energy poverty.**

The Concept of Clean Energy Solar Mini Grids

- A mini-grid is a **decentralised electricity generation system** with capacities **exceeding 10 kW.**

- Mini-grid is **designed to meet diverse needs** including homes, businesses, institutions, and small industries.
- Mini-grid serves a **limited number of consumers via a distribution grid** that can operate in isolation from national electricity transmission networks.

Private Sector Solar Mini-Grids in India

- In India, about **700 solar mini-grids** are owned and operated by a handful of private companies.
- Unlike state-run mini-grids, these mini-grids are unsubsidised and commercially viable **purely based on customer payment**.
- These grids are largely in the **states of UP, Bihar and Jharkhand**, which have seen significant progress on several sustainable development goals based on the success of these mini-grids.
- **UP and Bihar have introduced regulations** to enable private-sector entrepreneurs to set up mini-grids and to provide a mechanism for private-sector investors to look at this application favourably.

Importance/Benefits of Private Sector Owned and Operated Mini Grids

- **To Address the Global Energy Challenges by Offering Cost Effective Alternatives**
 - The World Bank has set a target to fund a thousand mini-grids in Nigeria to address the lack of electricity access for over 90 million people.
 - **Private sector-owned and operated solar mini-grids are considered the most cost-effective and sustainable** solution to provide electricity.
- **To Provide Immediate Economic and Environmental Benefits**
 - **Solar mini-grids displace expensive and polluting diesel generation** in rural communities.
 - Solar mini-grids offer a **more cost-efficient and environmentally friendly alternative**, contributing to immediate environmental benefits in addition to providing reliable power.
- **Act as Rural Development Accelerators**
 - Beyond delivering electricity, **mini-grid companies are described as rural development accelerators**.

- They **provide various services** such as mobile telephony, irrigation, agro-processing, and e-mobility.
- Additionally, **these companies offer sales and financing** of appliances, contributing to rural prosperity by **facilitating economic activities and improving overall living standards.**
- **Multi-Sectoral Impact**
 - The access to clean energy, facilitated by mini-grids, **not only provides high-quality energy services but also enables other livelihood activities.**
 - It **provides opportunities in healthcare and agriculture sectors**, which highlights the multi-sectoral impact of decentralised energy systems.
- **Adaptable and Resilient to Climate Shocks**
 - Mini-grids are **described as essential components of adaptation and resilience strategies**, particularly in regions like rural Africa and Asia, which are vulnerable to climate shocks such as drought, heat stress, and flooding.
 - The decentralised nature of mini-grids is seen as **critical for enhancing resilience in farming-dependent communities.**
- **Play a Complementary Role to Centralised Grid Infrastructure**
 - If centralised grid infrastructure reaches these communities, mini-grids can still play a crucial role.
 - Today, more than 250 formerly isolated mini-grids are part of the national grid, helping serve more than 1 million consumers.

Way Forward

- **Increase Investment in Solar Energy**
 - Solar energy **presents a financially viable path to energy independence**, bolstering security and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
 - Moreover, the cost of solar PV energy is now highly competitive, standing at \$24/MWh, lower than both coal and natural gas.
 - The substantial drop in solar module costs over the past decade **underscores the holistic benefits of investing in solar energy.**

- **Need for a Diverse Energy Mix**
 - **Creating a diverse energy mix**, with adequate centralised and distributed renewable generation, **is the future of energy.**
 - Moreover, **energy mix is suitable especially in underserved markets** where the cost of grid extension to rural, off-grid areas is prohibitive.
- **Establishment of Well Planned and Well Run Solar Mini-Grids**
 - Efficiently planned and well-run solar mini-grids **rapidly provide strong and dependable grid-level electricity, surpassing the reliability and cost-effectiveness** of alternative electrification methods.
 - **India's successful initiative to offer electricity through both large centralised grids and decentralised renewable energy** sources is serving as an exemplar for clean energy adoption.
 - **It also demonstrates how collaboration between private and public sectors can drive innovation**, enabling developing economies to achieve a trajectory of robust energy supply with minimal carbon emissions.

Conclusion

- Private mini-grids can provide a solution that can simultaneously address two pressing global challenges: **providing urgent energy access to those who lack it and contributing to climate action.**
- To utilise the full potential and to encourage their adoption and expansion, **there is need for policy support, financial backing, and other forms of assistance.**