ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE (ESZ): SC MODIFIES ORDER ON ESZS AROUND NATIONAL PARKS, SANCTUARIES

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court modified its 2022 order, which mandated a minimum 1-km eco-sensitive zone around national parks or wildlife sanctuaries.

What are Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs)?

Meaning:

- Also known as Ecologically Fragile Areas (EFAs), these are areas in India notified and regulated by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

- **The purpose of declaring ESZs is:**

o To create some kind of **shock absorbers** to the protected areas by regulating and managing the activities around such areas.

o To act as a **transition zone** from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection.

Criteria for declaring ESZ:

- The MoEFCC approves a comprehensive set of guidelines laying forth s**tandards and criteria for declaring ESZs on a regular basis**. These include -

o Species Based (Endemism, Rarity etc)

o Ecosystem Based (sacred groves, frontier forests etc)

o Geo-morphologic feature based (uninhabited islands, origins of rivers etc)

Extent of ESZ:

- According to the Wildlife Conservation Strategy of 2002, an ESZ could extend **up to 10 km** around a protected area.

- Furthermore, sensitive corridors, connectivity and biologically important patches that are critical for landscape linkage should be included in the Eco-Sensitive Zones if their width exceeds 10 km.

- However, even within a Protected Area, the distribution of an ESZ and the extent of control **may not be consistent throughout the Protected Area**, and it may be of varying breadth and extent.

News Summary Regarding Recent SC Order:

- MoEFCC provides financial assistance to the States under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme- **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats**, which includes assistance for eco-development activities.

o These activities often involve **construction of small structures** which are permanent in nature in areas including ESZs.

WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2023

Recently, World Bank released the World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies

Key Highlights of the Reports:

- About 2.3 per cent of the world's population—184 million people, including 37 million refugees—live outside their country of nationality.

- It found that low-skilled Indians who migrated to the United States tended to see a significant gain in their income of around 500%.

- The gains for **highly-skilled workers** such as engineers or doctors are much higher, however, low-skilled workers are also finding themselves having a multi-fold jump in their income.

- It categorised the **migrants into four types** – Refugees with skills in demand, economic migrants with skills that match with demand, **distressed migrants** and

- **India-US, India-Bangladesh and India- Gulf Cooperation Council** have been considered among the **top migrant corridors**.

Key Facts about World Bank

- It is an international financial institution that **provides loans and grants**to the governments of low and middle-income/developing countries to pursue capital projects.

- It was established along with the IMF at the **1944 Bretton Woods Conference.**

- The WB Group Includes

o **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)**: It provides loans, credits and grants.

o **International Development Association (IDA)**: It provides low or no-interest loans to low-income countries.

o **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**: It provides investment, advice and asset management to private companies and governments.

o **Multilateral Guarantee Agency (MIGA)**: It ensures lenders and investors against political risks such as war.

o **International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes** (ICSID): It settles investment disputes between investors and countries.

- India is **not a member** of ICSID.

LESSER FLAMINGO

Recently, after a six-year absence, the lesser flamingos have finally found their way back to Pulicat Lake.

About Lesser Flamingo:

- It is the **smallest of all flamingos** but has the largest population.
- It possesses the **"hallux" or hind toe** that some other flamingos do not have.
- Males are a little taller than females.
- **Habitat:** It inhabits coastal and inland wetlands.
- **Geographical distribution:** Africa, Asia continents and in that especially Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, North Africa
- They mostly eat blue-green algae but occasionally will take crustaceans and small insects.
- It is serially monogamous, meaning they form pairs that remain together while they are raising the young
- **Conservation status**

- o **IUCN: Near Threatened**

    Key Facts about the Pulicat Lake

- It is the **second-largest brackish water** lake in the country.
- It lies at the border of the states of **Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu**. (Majorly lies in Andhra Pradesh)
- The long and narrow **Sriharikota Island**, which separates Pulicat Lake from the Bay of Bengal,
- It is popular as a **flamingo-watching site** and for water activities.
- Both the **South West and North-East monsoons provide rain** to the area where Pulicat Lake is located.

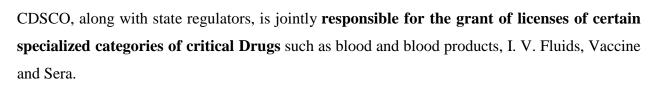**CENTRAL DRUGS STANDARD CONTROL ORGANIZATION (CDSCO)**

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) recently flagged 48 commonly used medicines as they failed the latest drug safety alert issued by the drug regulator.

About Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO):

- It is the **National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India for the medical devices industr**y under the **provisions of the Drugs & Cosmetics Rules.**
- It works under the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.**
- **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) is the head** of the CDSCO.
- **Headquarters: New Delhi.**
- Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, **CDSCO is responsible for,**
- o **Approval of New Drugs;**
- o **Conduct of Clinical Trials**;
- o **L**a**ying down the standards** for Drugs;
- o **Control over the quality of imported Drugs** in the country;
- o **Coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations;**

- CDSCO, along with state regulators, is jointly **responsible for the grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs** such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

KONARK SUN TEMPLE

A petition has been filed in the Orissa High Court challenging the minimum eligibility criteria of matriculation adopted by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for issuing licences to photographers to operate inside Sun Temple at Konark.

About Konark Sun Temple:
- **Location**: It is located on the coastline of **Odisha in Puri district.**
- It was **built by King Narasimha Deva I** of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty **in 1244.**
- It was given the status of a **World Heritage Site in 1984 by UNESCO.**
- **Features**:
  o Also called the **Surya Devalaya,** the temple is **dedicated to the Hindu god Surya.**
  o It is a **classic example of the Odisha style of Architecture** or **Kalinga Architecture.**
  o The temple complex has the appearance of a 1**00-foot high solar chariot,** with **24 wheels and pulled by six horses, all carved from stone.**
  o It is **oriented towards the east** so that the **first rays of the sunrise strike the main entrance.**
  o The **wheels of the temple are sundials**, which can be used to calculate time accurately to a minute.
  o Around the **base of the temple, there are images** of animals, foliage, warriors on horses and other interesting structures.
  o **On the walls and roof** of the temple, **beautiful sensual figures are carve**
  o The temple, **built from Khondalite rocks,** is also **known as 'BLACK PAGODA'** due to its dark colour.
  o The temple r**emains a site of contemporary worship for Hindus**, during the **annual Chandrabhaga Festival**, around the month of February.

KEY FACTS ABOUT SANCHI

Sanchi, a world heritage site located in Madhya Pradesh, is all set to become India's first solar city.

About Sanchi:

- **Location**:
  - It is located in the Raisen district of **Madhya Pradesh**.
  - It lies in an **upland plateau** region just **west of the Betwa River.**
- **Importance**:
  - Sanchi is a **religious place** with historical and Archaeological significance.
  - It **has India's best-preserved group of Buddhist monuments**, collectively **designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1989.**
- **Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi?**
  - The site of Sanchi comprises a **group of Buddhist monuments** (monolithic pillars, palaces, temples and monasteries), all in different states of conservation, **most of which date back to the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.**
  - It is the **oldest Buddhist sanctuary in existence** and was a **major Buddhist centre in India until the 12th century A.**D.
  - **The most prominent** stupa found here **is the Sanchi Stupa**, also known as the Great Stupa.
  - Other remains at the site include **several smaller stupas**, an **assembly hall (chaitya), an Ashokan pillar** with inscriptions, and s**everal monasteries** (4th–11th century CE).

  Key Facts about Sanchi Stupa:
- It was **built by** the Mauryan emperor **Ashoka in the third century BC.**
- It **enshrines religious relics** or remains **of the Buddha and his most revered disciples.**
- **Structure**:
  - It is **enclosed by a massive stone railing pierced by four gateways,** which are adorned **with elaborate carvings** (known as Sanchi sculpture).

o The stupa itself **consists of a base bearing a hemispherical dome** (anda), symbolizing the dome of heaven enclosing the earth.

o It is **surmounted by a squared rail unit (harmika)** representing the world mountain, from which rises a mast (yashti), symbolizing the cosmic axis.

o The **mast bears umbrellas (chatras)** that represent the various heavens (devaloka).

NATIONAL MEDICAL DEVICES POLICY 2023

Why in News?

• The Union Cabinet approved the National Medical Devices Policy, 2023.

• The policy is expected to facilitate an orderly growth of the medical device sector to meet the public health objectives of access, affordability, quality, and innovation.

Background on Medical Device Sector:

• The medical devices sector in India is an essential and integral constituent of the Indian healthcare sector, particularly for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of medical conditions, diseases, illnesses, and disabilities.

• The medical device is a multi-product sector, with the following broad classifications:

o Electronics Equipment

o Implants

o Consumables and Disposables

o IVD reagents

o Surgical Instruments

• The medical devices sector in India is a sunrise sector which is growing at a fast pace.

• The current **market size of the medical devices sector in India is estimated to be $11 bn and its share in the global medical device market is estimated to be 1.5%**.

Salient Features of National Medical Devices Policy, 2023:

• **Vision –**

o Accelerated growth path with a patient-centric approach;

- o To emerge as the global leader in the manufacturing and innovation of medical devices by achieving 10-12% share in the expanding global market over the next 25 years;

- **Regulatory Streamlining –**
- o In order to enhance ease of doing research and business and further to balance patient safety with product innovation measures.

- **Enabling Infrastructure –**
- o The establishment and strengthening of large medical device parks, clusters equipped with world class common infrastructure facilities in proximity to economic zones with requisite logistics connectivity.

- **Facilitating R&D and Innovation –**
- o It also aims at establishing Centres of Excellence in academic and research institutions, innovation hubs, 'plug and play' infrastructures and support to start-ups.

- **Attracting Investments –**
- o Along with resent schemes and interventions like Make in India, Ayushman Bharat program, Heal-in-India, Start-up mission, the policy encourages private investments, series of funding from Venture Capitalists, and also Public-Private Partnership(PPP).

- **Human Resources Development –**
- o For skilling, reskilling and upskilling of professionals in the medical device sector, we can leverage the available resources in Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- o The policy will support dedicated multidisciplinary courses for medical devices in existing institutions.
- o To develop partnerships with foreign academic/industry organizations to develop medical technologies in order to be in equal pace with the world market.

- **Brand Positioning & Awareness Creation –**
- o Initiate studies and projects for learning from best global practices of manufacturing and skilling system so as to explore the feasibility of adapting such successful models in India.
- o Promote more forums to bring together various stakeholders for sharing knowledge and build strong networks across the sector.

The policy is **expected to provide the required support and directions to strengthen the medical devices industry into a competitive, self-reliant, resilient and innovative industry** that caters to the healthcare needs of not only India but also of the world.

DIGITAL SERVICES ACT (DSA)

- The European Union (EU) has confirmed the names of 19 platforms that will be subject to its landmark online content rules.
- Five subsidiaries of Google's parent Alphabet, two Meta units, two Microsoft businesses, Apple's AppStore, Twitter, and Alibaba's AliExpress are among the entities that the EU has identified.
- The rules notified under the **Digital Services Act (DSA)**, aim at overhauling the EU's social media and e-commerce rules.

What is Digital Services Act (DSA)?
- It is an EU regulation which came into force in EU law in November 2022 and will be directly applicable across the EU.
- The act aims to address several issues related to digital services, including online safety, content moderation, and the responsibilities of online platforms.
- The legislation includes new rules for large online platforms, such as social media networks and online marketplaces, to ensure greater accountability and transparency in their operations.
- **Goals**
- To create a safer digital space in which the fundamental rights of all users of digital services are protected;
- To establish a level playing field to foster innovation, growth, and competitiveness, both in the European Single Market and globally.

What are the key features of the Digital Services Act?
- **Faster removals and provisions to challenge**

- o Social media companies will have to add new procedures for faster removal of content deemed illegal or harmful.
- o They will also have to explain to users how their content takedown policy works.
- o The DSA also allows for users to challenge takedown decisions taken by platforms and seek out-of-court settlements.

- **Bigger platforms have greater responsibility**
- o Very Large Online Platforms and Very Large Online Search Engines, those having more than 45 million users in the EU, will have more stringent requirements.
- o Hence, the law avoids a one-size fits all approach and places increased accountability on the Big Tech companies.

- **Direct supervision by European Commission**
- o These requirements and their enforcement will be centrally supervised by the European Commission itself.
- o This is to ensure that companies do not sidestep the legislation at the member-state level.

- **More transparency on how algorithms work**
- o Very Large Online Platforms and Very Large Online Search Engines will face transparency measures and scrutiny of how their algorithms work.
- o They will be required to conduct systemic risk analysis and reduction to drive accountability about the society impacts of their products.

- **Clearer identifiers for ads and who's paying for them**
- o Online platforms must ensure that users can easily identify advertisements and understand who presents or pays for the advertisement.
- o They must not display personalised advertising directed towards minors or based on sensitive personal data.