PEOPLE'S BIODIVERSITY REGISTER (PBR)

Recently a national campaign for updation and verification of People's Biodiversity Register was launched in Goa , marking a significant step towards the documentation and preservation of India's rich biological diversity.

What is People's biodiversity register?

- PBR serves as a **comprehensive record of various aspects of biodiversity**, including the conservation of **habitats, preservation of land races, domesticated stocks and breeds of animals, micro-organisms**, and the accumulation of knowledge related to the area's biological diversity.

- So far, 2,67,608 PBRs have been prepared by **Biodiversity Management Committees** in different states.

- There is a plan to set up PBR in every village across the country under **Mission LiFE (lifestyle for environment)** which is conceived to conserve the planet earth through mindful utilisation of natural resources and various other actions at individual and community levels in the country.

Biodiversity Management Committees

- As per the **Biological Diversity Act 2002**, BMCs are created for "promoting conservation, sustainable use and documentation of biological diversity" by local bodies across the country.

- BMCs have been **constituted by the local bodies in the States and Union Territories** and are entrusted with preparation of the PBRs in consultation with local communities.

Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)

- Led by India, mission LiFE is a global plan of action that aims to save the planet from the disastrous consequences of climate change.

- **Vision**: This mission envisions replacing the prevalent 'use-and-dispose' economy with a circular economy.

- **Objective**: To promote an environmentally conscious lifestyle that focuses on 'mindful and deliberate utilisation' instead of 'mindless and wasteful consumption'.

AIRAWAT

Recently, India's AI Supercomputer 'AIRAWAT' has been ranked at No. 75 in the world at the International Supercomputing Conference (ISC 2023) in Germany.

About Supercomputer 'AIRAWAT':

- The supercomputer has been named in the 61st edition of the Top 500 Global Supercomputing List released recently.

- The AI supercomputer AIRAWAT' is **installed at C-DAC, Pune.** The system is installed under National Program on AI by the Government of India.
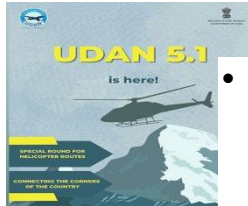
- AIRAWAT's manufacturer is **Netweb Technologies**.

- Airawat PSAI, stands as **India's largest and fastest AI supercomputing** system, with a remarkable **speed of 13,170 teraflops.**

- **Benefits:**

  o It will empower the Academia, Research Labs, Scientific Community, Industry and Start-Ups to develop indigenous AI-enabled products/solutions especially for solving India-specific grand challenges and complex real-life problems.

  o It has the potential to revolutionize various sectors, including **weather forecasting, drug discovery, climate modelling, and artificial intelligence** research.

  About Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC):

- It is a prominent **R&D organization** under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.

- It focuses on **research and development** in various domains, **including information technology, electronics, and supercomputing.**

- It was **established** in the year **1988**.

- It was **set up to build Supercomputers** in context of denial of import of Supercomputers by USA.

- C-DAC build **India's first indigenously built** supercomputer **Param 8000** in 1991.

UDAN 5.1 SCHEME

Recently, Ministry of Civil Aviation launched UDAN 5.1, specifically designed for helicopter routes.

About UDAN 5.1 Scheme:

- After 4 successful rounds of the **Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)**, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched UDAN 5.1 to further **enhance the connectivity to remote areas** of the country and achieve last mile **connectivity through helicopters**.

- The **main features include:**

  o An **increase in the scope of operations for operators** wherein the scheme will now allow routes where one of the origin or destination locations is in a priority area. Earlier both points had to be in priority areas.

  o **Airfare caps** have been **reduced by as much as 25%** to make flying in helicopters more affordable for passengers.

  o **Viability Gap Funding (VGF) caps** for the operators have been **increased** substantially for **both single and twin-engine helicopters** to enhance financial viability for operating the awarded routes.

- Previous rounds of the scheme have **already operationalised 46 helicopter routes**, benefiting **hilly and North-East states**. The current round aims to cover an even larger number of routes, expanding the reach of air connectivity.

  About UDAN Scheme:

- UDAN- **Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik** is an innovative scheme to develop the regional aviation market.

- The scheme was initiated **in October 2016** with the **objective** of fulfilling the aspirations of the common citizen, with an enhanced aviation infrastructure and air connectivity in **tier II and tier III cities.**

- The scheme UDAN envisages p**roviding connectivity to un-served and under-served airports** of the country through **revival of existing air-strips and airports.**

- **Nodal Ministry-** Ministry of Civil Aviation.

FAME SCHEME: WILL THE LATEST GOVERNMENT MOVE KILL INDIA'S NASCENT ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EVS) BOOM?

Why in News?

- The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme was launched under the National Electric Mobility Mission, **to encourage electric and hybrid vehicle purchase by providing subsidies.**

- **The government is slashing subsidies** for the electric 2-wheelers segment - a regressive step which will drag India's EV revolution.

National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMPP):

- The **Ministry of Heavy Industry** launched the NEMMP 2020 in **2013**.
- **Targets:**
  o Deploying 5 to 7 million EVs in the country by 2020.
  o Deploying 400,000 passenger battery electric cars (BEVs) by 2020 in order to avoid 120 million barrels of oil imports and 4 million tons of CO2 emissions.
  o Lowering of vehicular emissions by 1.3 to 1.5% by 2020.
  o Total investment required - INR 20,000 - 23,000 cr (approx 3 billion USD).

The FAME India Scheme:

- A part of NEMPP, the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric and Hybrid Vehicles in India (FAME India) scheme, has been administered by the **Ministry of Heavy Industry** since 1st April **2015**.

- Under the scheme, **subsidies** are being given to promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology and to ensure **sustainable growth** of the same.

- **Subsidies are meant to bring a price parity** between vehicles that have electric motors and fossil fuel-run engines, thereby **nudging buyers** to go for the cleaner option.

- Its first phase - **FAME I**, ran for four years until 2019.

- Under the **FAME II** (which ends this financial year - March 2024), companies can offer **a discount of up to 40% on the cost of locally manufactured vehicles** and claim it as a subsidy from the government.
- Under this scheme, the subsidies could range from **₹15,000-60,000** for a two-wheeler.

How and why the Government is Reducing Subsidies?

- Under the FAME-II scheme, the government is increasing the outlay for 2-wheelers but **cutting the subsidy per vehicle**.
- **The budgetary allocation** for electric 2-wheelers has been **enhanced** to around Rs 3,500 crore from Rs 2,000 crore, **but the subsidy per unit is being reduced to 15%** of the ex-factory price from 40% at present.
- Earlier, the government had announced that since it was **about to achieve the target** of 1 million sales in four years, **the subsidies may not continue**.

Possible Impacts on the EV revolution in India:

- The sudden reduction of subsidies could lead to **a rise in per-unit cost for consumers**.
- Rise in per-unit cost for consumers **may lead to a major decline in EV adoption**, impacting the entire industry.

ASSAM, MEGHALAYA RESUME BORDER TALKS

Why in news?

- Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Meghalaya counterpart Conrad K Sangma resumed talks to resolve remaining border disputes in six boundary areas between both the states.
- In March 2022, the two northeastern states had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to resolve 6 of the 12 points of dispute along their border.
- The six sectors where disputes remain are Langpih, Borduar, Nongwah-Mawtamur, DeshDoomreah, Block 1 & Block II, and Psiar-Khanduli.

Assam-Meghalaya border dispute:

- **Creation of Meghalaya as a separate state**

- During British rule, undivided Assam included present-day Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram.
- Meghalaya, carved out of Assam as an autonomous State in 1970, became a full-fledged State in 1972.
- The creation of the new State was based on the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969, which the Meghalaya government refused to accept.

Efforts to resolve the border dispute

- **Joint official committee formed in 1983**
- The panel recommended that the Survey of India should re-delineate the border, teaming up with both the states. But there was no follow up.
- **Independent panel of 1985**
- An independent panel, spearheaded by Justice YV Chandrachud, was set up in 1985. Meghalaya rubbished the report as it was pro Assam.
- **Border demarcation with the help of Survey of India**
- In 1991, about 100 km of the border was demarcated with the help of the Survey of India. However, Meghalaya did not accept it.
- **In 2011, Centre comes into picture**
- In 2011, the Meghalaya Assembly passed a resolution for intervention of the Centre and the establishment of a boundary commission.
- The Centre asked the two governments to appoint nodal officers to discuss the dispute.
- **Three regional committees constituted in 2021**
- The two States had in June 2021 adopted a give-and-take policy to start the process of resolving the boundary dispute.
- For this, they constituted three regional committees each.
- The draft resolution, released in January 2022, was prepared on the basis of the recommendations of these regional panels.
- In March 2022, a historic MoU was signed between the two states resolving the dispute in 6 of 12 sectors.

HOW TO MEET A DISASTER

Context

- The G20 countries, with a population of 4.7 billion, have large exposure, risk from asset concentration, and vulnerability to natural disasters.

- In the current World Risk Index, **four out of the top 10 vulnerable countries are G20 nations.**

Importance of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Mechanisms

- **To Prevent Huge Losses:** The combined estimated annual **average loss in the G20 countries alone is $218 billion**, equivalent to 9% of the average annual investment in infrastructure made by them. **DRR** measures can play an important role in **preventing such losses.**

- **To Realise Economic Ambitions:** Disasters can set back development gains. Hence, risk reduction is an important strategy if a country's economic ambitions are to be realised.

- **India's Efforts Towards Reducing Risk Under its G20 Presidency**

- India has highlighted the **importance of DRR by initiating a new workstream in G20**.

- **Five priorities** have been outlined in the first meeting of the working group.

  - Coverage of early warning systems to all,

  - Focus on disaster and climate-resilient infrastructure,

  - Improving financing frameworks for national DRR,

  - Improving systems and capabilities for response to disasters and,

  - Application of ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk.

- India has endorsed a new working group on DRR- **Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group (DRRWG)** that has recognised the importance of **prioritising disaster risk financing.**

What should be G20's Future Programme in Risk Reduction Management?

- **Re-imagining financing DRR**

  - **The financing requirements** flowing through government budgets are

- o **Innovative financing tools** including creating reserve funds, dedicated lines of credit and tapping resources globally should be explored.

- o **Infrastructure**, such as roads, rails, airports, and electricity lines created through public revenues need to be resilient to disasters and may require more funds incrementally.

- o There is a need to finance this additionality using options that are **reflective of the social benefits of such disaster-resilient infrastructure.**

- **Targeted approaches to reducing losses from extensive risk events**

- o A large portion of the **losses occur due to extensive events** such as heatwaves, lightning, local floods, and landslides.

- o Implementing targeted approaches to reducing losses from extensive risk events, can have an impact in the short to medium-term horizon.

- **Convergence of DRR and climate change adaptation efforts**

- o **The development of analytical and implementation capacities** for DRR will **help climate change adaptation efforts as well.**

- o For example, building flood-management structures under DRR strategies will have synergies with adaptation efforts.

- o Similarly, the effectiveness of adaptation measures should be measured against their DRR potential.

- **Access to early warning systems**

- o It should be treated as **global public goods**, with all **populations irrespective of their economic strength**, having reliable access to systems **such as cyclone early warning.**

- o The UN Secretary General's initiative on 'Early warning for all' should be the guiding principle.

- o The G20 can show the way by **setting up a suitable mechanism to ensure that the call for a universal early warning system** is implemented in practice.

- **Treat DRR as a multi-tiered, multi-sectoral effort**

- o **If efforts are integrated** vertically from local to sub-national to national to global, and horizontally across sectors, **the level of readiness to manage unknown risks may be high.**

- o The world is interlinked and interdependent, and the G20 can help develop such strategy.

GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, 2023

The President recently promulgated the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 to make a fresh claim of power over the services in the capital.

Why in News?

- The **Supreme Court recently ruled that the Delhi Govt will have legislative** and **executive control over administrative services** in the **National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD)** except with regard to public order, police and land.

- Now, the **Centre has brought the ordinance which nullifies the SC order**.

  About Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023:

- The ordinance **seeks to establish** for the first time the **National Capital Civil Service Authority (NCCSA).**

- **NCCSA Composition**: It will be **headed by the Chief Minister of Delhi**, with the Chief Secretary and Principal Home Secretary of Delhi being the other two members.

- **Functions of NCCSA**:

o It will **make recommendations to the Lieutenant Governor (LG) regarding transfer, posting, vigilance and other incidental matters of all Group 'A' officers** and **officers of DANICS** serving in the Government of **NCTD.**

o All matters required to be decided by the NCCSA shall be **decided by majority of votes of the members** present and voting.

o This means, that in effect, the **decision of the elected chief minister** of Delhi **can be overruled by the two senior bureaucrats.**

- **Role of LG:**

o The ordinance stated that the **LG will pass orders to give effect to the recommendations passed by the NCCSA.**

- However, **LG can ask for the relevant material with regard to officers** belonging to All India Services and DANICS serving the Delhi government.
- **In case the LG differs with the recommendation** made, **he/she may return the recommendation to the Authority for reconsideration** by the Authority. For this, **reasons will have to be recorded in writing**.
- However, as per the ordinance, **in case of difference of opinion, the decision of the LG shall be final.**
- There is **no specific provision in the ordinance regarding the transfer posting, discipline etc of Group B and Group C officers**, which seems to indicate that the elected government of Delhi would continue to have control over these officers.