

1. Ken Betwa Interlink Project

Why in News?

- Central government has put pressure on Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh to make progress on the Ken Betwa interlinking project.

About:

- It is the River interlinking project that aims to transfer surplus water from Ken river in MP to Betwa in UP to irrigate the drought prone Bundelkhand region.
- It is one of the 30 rivers inter linking projects conceived across the country.
- Both the river originates in MP and are the tributaries of Yamuna.
- Rajghat, Paricha and Matatila dams are over Betwa river.
- Ken river passes through Panna tiger reserve.
- The Interlinking project solves twin problems of drought and flood by maintain a water balance between the water deficit and surplus areas.

Disadvantages:

- Construction of Daudhan dam will result into submergence of 10% of critical tiger habitat of MP's Panna Tiger Reserve.
- Ken Gharial Sanctuary will adversely affect the sustainability of the sanctuary due to the construction of one of the barrages in it
- Because of submergence by Daudhan and Makodia reservoirs will result into displacement of 20,00 people.

2. Sangai Festival 2019

Why in News?

- The Manipur Sangai Festival, 2019, kicked off in the capital city of Manipur, Imphal. Ambassadors of SE Asian countries attended the festival.

Sangai Festival:

- Every year the Government of Manipur organizes the Manipur Sangai Festival from 21st to 30th of November.
- It showcases- art and culture, handloom, handicrafts & fine arts, indigenous sports, cuisines & music, eco & adventure sports as well as the scenic natural beauty of Manipur.



- The Festival has assumed great significance in recent years as every edition celebrates ethnic diversity of Manipur Society.
- Participation of various Indian States, foreign traders and cultural troupes in the Festival has made it grandeur in scale and style.

3. Dallol Geothermal Field

Why in News?

- Researchers have found an Aquatic Environment on the Earth with complete absence of any form of life. Dallol geothermal field in Ethiopia, is devoid of any form of microbial life.

Significance:

- There is no microbial life in the salty, hot and hyperacid pools or in the adjacent magnesium-rich brine lakes of Dallol.
- The study may help in understanding the limits of habitability, as it presents evidence that there are places even on Earth's surface which are sterile though they contain liquid water.



4. The 50th Conference of Governors

Why in News?

- The 50th Conference of Governors was held in Rashtrapati Bhavan, which laid emphasis on tribal welfare and issues related to water, agriculture, higher education and ease of living.

Conference of Governors:

- The first conference of governors was held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in 1949, which was presided over by C. Rajagopalachari, the then governor general of India.
- Governors and Lt governors of all states and union territories participate in the conference, exchange their views and learn from each other's experiences.
- They also discuss about the international best practices best suited to each state and union territory based on their distinct and diverse needs and Requirements.

5. 71st Raising Day of NCC

Why in News?

- The National Cadet Corps (NCC), the world's largest uniformed youth organization, is celebrated its 71st Raising Day.

National Cadet Corps (NCC):

- The NCC in India was formed with the National Cadet Corps Act of 1948.
- It is the successor of the University Officers Training Corps (UOTC) which was established by the British in 1942.
- A committee headed by Pandit H.N. Kunzru recommended a cadet organization to be established in schools and colleges at a national level, which led to the formation of NCC.
- During the 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan, NCC cadets were the second line of defence, organised camps to assist the ordinance factories, supplying arms and ammunition to the front.
- The NCC aims at developing character, comradeship, discipline, a secular outlook, the spirit of adventure and ideals of selfless service amongst young citizens.
- It aims at creating a pool of organized, trained and motivated youth with leadership qualities in all walks of life, who will serve the Nation regardless of which career they choose.



6. UN Security Council Reaffirms its Opposition to Chemical Weapons

Why in News?

- The United Nations Security Council, unanimously passed a declaration proposed by Britain expressing support for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons.

Chemical Weapons Convention:

- The full name of the treaty is the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.
- It is administered by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), an intergovernmental organization based in The Hague.

- The Convention prohibits the large-scale use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of chemical weapons.
- The convention was opened for signature in 1993 and came into force in 1997.
- North Korea, Egypt and South Sudan have not signed it, while Israel has signed but not ratified the pact.
- Problems in CWC- Some chemicals which have been used extensively in warfare have not been listed under it. For example, Chlorine gas is highly toxic, but being a pure element and extremely widely used for peaceful purposes, is not officially listed as a chemical weapon.

7. Living Root Bridges

Why in News?

- The living root bridges (found in Meghalaya) can be considered as a reference point for future botanical architecture projects in urban contexts says Scientific Reports journal.

About:

- Living root bridges (also known as Jing Kieng Jri) are the aerial bridges that are built by weaving and manipulating the roots of the Indian rubber tree.
- A root bridge uses traditional tribal knowledge to train the roots of the Indian rubber tree (found in abundance in the area) to grow laterally across a stream bed resulting in a living bridge of roots.
- It spans between 15 and 250 feet and is built over centuries.
- They have been serving as connectors for generations in the Indian state of **Meghalaya**.
- The bridges are primarily a means to cross streams and rivers. They have also become world-famous tourist attractions. The two most popular tourist spots are- **Riwai Root Bridge and Umshiang Double Decker Bridge**.
- They have three main properties of the Living Roots are, they are elastic, the roots easily combine, and the plants grow in rough and rocky soils

8. Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)

Why in News?

- Launched in September 2018, the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) scheme remains one of India's most ambitious health schemes ever.

Highlights:

- It was launched as recommended by the National Health Policy 2017, to achieve the vision of Universal Health Coverage.
- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme having central sector component under Ayushman Bharat Mission anchored in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- It is an umbrella of two major health initiatives, namely Health and wellness Centres and National Health Protection Scheme. 5 lakh existing sub-centers will bring health care system closer to the homes of people in the form of Health and wellness centres. These centres will provide comprehensive health care, including for non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health services.
- The government aims to provide a health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh to 500 million Indians free of cost. This includes families from lower-income groups that fall under the socio-economic caste census (SECC) data of 2011.
- States can implement PMJAY either through the insurance route or the trust route or both.
- The states implementing the scheme through the insurance mode select the insurance companies through an open tender process.
- The states implementing the scheme through the trust mode may engage Third-Party Administrators (TPAs) and Implement Support Agencies (ISAs) through an open tender process for implementing the scheme.

9. Global Bio-India Summit, 2019

Why in News?

- India's first largest biotechnology stakeholders' conglomerate, – the Global Bio-India (GBI) Summit, 2019 concluded.

Significance:

- Biotech is identified as one of the key sectors in Make in India 2.0.
- The event is planned to bring in stakeholders of 30 countries together.
- It will include 200 exhibitors and 250 startups. The Central and state regulatory bodies also participated in the summit.
- Biotechnology is recognized as the sunrise sector- a key driver for contributing to India's USD 5 Trillion economy target by 2025.

Summit Highlights:

- To identify funding and collaboration opportunities for research and Development
- To attract major projects from international companies
- To discuss policy interventions and key trends across the sub sectors like bio-agriculture, bio-energy, bio-industrial, bio-manufacturing, bio-services, etc.
- To facilitate interactions of research institutions with industry
- The Summit provided an opportunity to showcase the potential of India's biotech sector to the international community, identify, create opportunities and deliberate on the key challenges in the areas of Bio-pharma, Bio-Agri, Bio-Industrial, Bio-Energy and Bio-Services and allied sectors.

10. NSS report on Persons with Disabilities in India

Why in News?

- The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has conducted a Survey of Persons with Disabilities during July 2018 to December 2018.

Objective of Survey:

- The main objective of the Survey of Persons with Disabilities conducted by NSO was to estimate indicators of:
 - ✓ Incidence and prevalence of disability,
 - ✓ Cause of disability,
 - ✓ Age at onset of disability,
 - ✓ Facilities available to the persons with disability,
 - ✓ Difficulties faced by persons with disability in accessing/using public building/public transport,
 - ✓ Arrangement of regular care giver,
 - ✓ Out of pocket expenses relating to disability, etc.

Highlights:

- In India prevalence of disability (percentage of persons with disability in the population) was 2.2% with 2.3% in rural and 2.0% in urban areas.
- Prevalence of disability was higher among males than females. Among males, prevalence of disability was 2.4% while it was 1.9% among females.

- Incidence of disability in the population, that is the number of persons with onset of disability (by birth or otherwise) during 365 days preceding the date of survey was 86 per 1,00,000 persons.

11. MK 45 Gun System

Why in News?

- The US State Department has approved the sale of naval guns and other equipment worth \$1 billion to India for use against warships, anti-aircraft and shore bombardment.
- The sale includes 13 MK 45 5 inch/62 caliber (MOD 4) naval guns and some other equipment that will be manufactured by BAE Systems Land and Armaments.

MK 45 Gun System:

- The MK 45 is a fully automatic naval gun system that is installed on ships and provides a Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS) range of more than 20 nautical miles (36 km) along with improved propelling charge. This system of guns is currently in use by the US Navy on their fleet of Ticonderoga class cruisers and Arleigh Burke class destroyers.
- MK 45 is an upgraded version with a 62 caliber barrel, strengthened gun and mount subsystems, advanced control system enhancements, greater range and firepower, a reduced signature and low maintenance gun shield.

MK 45 MOD 4 gun:

- It is a light-weight version of the MK 42 5 inch/54 caliber gun mount meant to support expeditionary operations and engage surface and air targets.
- The MOD 4 configuration gun mount is believed to boost the firing range by over 50 per cent, increasing the speed and range of munitions. The principal contractor of the guns for this deal is Minneapolis-based BAE Systems Land and Armaments with a gun manufacturing unit in Louisville, Kentucky. It is meant for both naval gunfire support and to destroy any hostile anti-ship weapons and air defence systems. Other countries that have been sold the MOD 4 naval guns are Japan, Australia and South Korea.

Significance:

- The MK 45 Gun System will provide the capability to conduct anti-surface warfare and anti-air defence missions while enhancing interoperability with US and other allied forces.
- India will use the enhanced capability as a deterrent to regional threats and to strengthen its homeland defence.