

1. SHARJAH-IAU

Why in News?

- Recently, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) has named the newly discovered stars as "Sharjah"

About:

- The Sharjah is one of the emirates of the United Arab Emirates.
- The star HIP 79431 is named as "Sharjah".
- The planet affiliated with this star is named as "Barjeel".

About International Astronomical Union (IAU):

- It is a collection of professional astronomers.
- Its Headquarters is located in Paris, France.
- It aims to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects through international cooperation.
- It is an internationally recognized authority for assigning designations to celestial bodies (Stars, Planets, Asteroids, etc.) and any surface features on them.

2. Houbara bustard

Why in News?

- Pakistan has issued special permits to the Emir of Qatar and nine other members of the royal family to hunt the houbara bustard, an internationally protected Bird Species.

Houbara Bustard:

- **IUCN Conservation status: Vulnerable**
- Bustards are large, terrestrial birds that belong to several species, including some of the largest flying birds.
- The houbara bustard, which lives in arid climates, comes in two distinct species as recognised by the IUCN, one residing in North Africa (*Chlamydotis undulata*) and the other in Asia (*Chlamydotis macqueenii*).
- The population of the Asian houbara bustards extends from northeast Asia, across central Asia, the Middle East, and the Arabian Peninsula to reach the Sinai desert.
- Roughly 33,000 Asian houbara bustards and over 22,000 of the North African houbara bustards remain today.

- After breeding in the spring, the Asian bustards migrate south to spend the winter in Pakistan, the Arabian Peninsula and nearby Southwest Asia.

Threats:

- The main reasons for the houbara's decline are poaching, unregulated hunting, along with degradation of its natural habitat.
- The Pakistanis are not allowed to hunt the bird, the government invites Arab royals to hunt it every year.
- These people are granted permission to hunt for a sum of upto \$100,000.

3. Jalasathi' programme

Why in News?

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched the 'Jalasathi' programme with the aim to ensure supply of safe drinking water to all households in the state.

Highlights:

- The JalSathi initiative aims to ensure the supply of clean drinking water to consumers through piped water connections.
- The Odisha government has roped in women volunteers to serve the people as 'Jalasathis'. This is a significant step, as it will help boost the economic empowerment of the women in the state.
- Under the 'Jalasathi' programme, over 5,000 women will be engaged in Odisha to supply safe drinking water.
- The programme will be initially implemented in eight wards of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation under the 5T initiative of the Housing and Urban Development.
- It will be implemented in the remaining wards of the city as well as other urban areas of the state in the next phases. The initiative is expected to benefit around 70 lakh people in urban areas.
- The Jalasathis will serve as the links between consumers and the Public Health Engineering Organisation (PHEO) or WATCO.
- The Jalasathis will be responsible for testing of water quality, facilitating new water connections and regularising connections, reassessing of demands, reading of meter, bill generation and delivery, collection of water charges and facilitating complaints redressal.

4. India-Bangladesh Joint River Commission (JRC)

Why in News?

- Bangladesh has not sent a delegation for the Joint River Commission (JRC) meeting with India that was scheduled to be held. This deferral is seen as a dissent to the ongoing CAA debate.

Joint River Commission:

- An Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) is functioning since 1972.
- It was established with a view to maintaining liaison in order to ensure the most effective joint effort in maximizing the benefits from common river systems.
- The JRC is headed by Water Resources Ministers of both the countries.
- Discussions have been continuing with Bangladesh for sharing of waters of Teesta & Feni rivers besides other six common rivers namely; Manu, Muhri, Khowai, Gumti, Jaldhaka and Torsa.
- India and Bangladesh share 54 rivers. Such technical level meetings are to be held regularly.
- But this deviance has cast a shadow over the agreement to share the waters of the Feni river that was taken up during the visit of PM Sheikh Hasina.

5. Exercise 'Apharan'

Why in News?

- The Indian Navy, in collaboration with Indian Coast Guard conducted a large scale Anti Hijacking Exercise off the Port of Kochi.

Exercise 'Apharan':

- The Exercise code named "Apharan" saw participation of multiple agencies, including more than 12 ships and helicopters of the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and Cochin Port Trust.
- This was the first time that such a large scale exercise involving all stake holders has been conducted in Kerala. It was aimed at streamlining the response mechanism/ preparedness to thwart any attempt to hijack a merchant vessel or attempt forced entry of a rogue/commandeered merchant vessel into Indian harbour.

6. Asia's Biggest Surge Pool

Why in News?

- Stage is all set for the filling of the Asia's biggest surge pool (open to sky) with the waters of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project.

Surge Pool:

- Surge pool or tank is a water storage device used as pressure neutralizer in hydropower water conveyance system to resist excess pressure rise and pressure drop conditions.
- It is a standpipe or storage reservoir at the downstream end of a closed aqueduct, feeder, dam, barrage pipe to absorb sudden rises of pressure, as well as to quickly provide extra water during a brief drop in pressure.

Kaleshwaram Surge Pool:

- Constructed on the hillocks on the outskirts of Thippapur village in Illanthakunta mandal, the surge pool measures 92 meters deep and 56 meters diameter and would store one tmc feet of water. Water would be lifted by using four motors to the Ananthagiri Reservoir.
- The water would reach the surge pool from Mid Manair Dam — Sri Raja Rajeshwara reservoir — by travelling 3.4 km through gravity canal and 7.6 km through tunnel.
- Incidentally, the open-to-sky Surge pool was constructed in a record time of 13 months at a cost of ₹ 2,700 crore.
- The four motors in this pool would use 106 MWs of power and accordingly a 440 KVA sub-station was constructed at the vicinity of the pool.

Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project:

- Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) claimed as the world's largest multi-stage and multi-purpose lift irrigation scheme.
- The Kaleshwaram project is an off-shoot of the original Pranahitha-Chevella Lift Irrigation Scheme taken up by the government in 2007 when Andhra Pradesh was not divided.
- It is aimed to make Telangana drought proof by harnessing the flood waters of the Godavari. Waters of the Godavari will be tapped by reverse pumping and storage, thereby facilitating agriculture on over 38 lakh acres.
- It would help rejuvenate thousands of tanks, providing water for industries, and supplying drinking water to Hyderabad and Secunderabad by creating a series of storage tanks and a network of pipelines.

7. Special Economic Zone (SEZ)

Why in News?

- Tripura gets its first SEZ, at Paschim Jalefa, Sabroom, South Tripura District.
- Sarbroom SEZ will be an agro-based food processing sector specified economic zone which is about 130 km away from Agartala.

Sabroom SEZ Project:

- As per the government notification, the entire investment project will cost around 1550 crore.
- Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC) Ltd will be the developer of the SEZ in the area.
- According to the government's estimate, this SEZ will generate 12,000 skilled jobs and employment.
- There will be several industries participate in the SEZ including agri-food processing, textile and apparel industries, rubber-based industries and bamboo industry.

Significance:

- The government believes that Sabroom SEZ will open up new avenues to attract private firms to invest in the region. Since the area is close to the Chittagong Port and Feni River in South Tripura, it will provide more overseas business opportunities to the native people.
- The government will provide 100 percent income tax relief on export.
- This exemption will be given for the first five years under Section 10AA of the Income Tax Act (ITA). Not only this, there will be a 50 per cent exemption to be provided for the next five years and fifty per cent of ploughed back export profit for the next five years.

SEZs:

- A Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is a specifically delineated duty-free enclave and shall be deemed to be foreign territory for the purposes of trade operations and duties and tariffs in India. It is an area within a country where there are different trade and business laws from the remaining regions of the country.
- SEZs are created to attract more investment, generate employment and also to better administer these areas.
- With a view to overcome the shortcomings experienced on account of the multiplicity of controls and clearances; absence of world-class infrastructure, and an unstable fiscal

regime and with a view to attract larger foreign investments in India, the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Policy was announced in April 2000.

- The Special Economic Zones Act, 2005, was passed by Parliament in 2005.
- After extensive consultations, the SEZ Act, 2005, supported by SEZ Rules, came into effect in 2006.

The main objectives of the SEZ Act are:

- ✓ Generation of Additional Economic Activity
- ✓ Promotion of exports of Goods and Services
- ✓ Promotion of investment from domestic and Foreign Sources
- ✓ Creation of Employment Opportunities
- ✓ Development of Infrastructure Facilities

Facilities and incentives for SEZs:

- Duty-free import/domestic procurement of goods for development, operation and maintenance of SEZ units.
- 100% Income tax exemption on export income for SEZ units under the Income Tax Act for first 5 years, 50% for next 5 years thereafter and 50% of the ploughed back export profit for next 5 years. (Sunset Clause for Units will become effective from 2020).
- Exemption from Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT).
- Exemption from Central Sales Tax, Exemption from Service Tax and Exemption from State sales tax. These have now subsumed into GST and supplies to SEZs are zero-rated under the IGST Act, 2017.
- Single window clearance for Central and State level approvals.
- SEZ developers also receive many such Incentives and Benefits.
- Currently, there are more than 200 operational SEZs in India.

8. MoU between CSIR and the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), France

Why in News?

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), India and the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), France to establish a framework for cooperation between the two towards promotion and support of scientific and Technological Research.

Highlights:

- In view of the potentially beneficial and synergistic cooperation possibilities for translating science into technology CSIR and CNRS may explore strengthening their cooperation to foster joint innovation and transfer of technologies applicable to India or/and France and to other nations.
- This cooperation could include sharing good practices, promoting technology transfer and enhancing industry-academia cooperation.
- The broad research areas of mutual interest include biotechnology including plant and marine biotechnology; health research; environment and climate change studies; engineering science and technology; material science and technology; energy science and technology and water research.

CSIR:

- Set up in 1942 as an autonomous body, CSIR is now the largest publically funded multi-disciplinary industrial R&D organisation in India under the administrative supervision of the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- It conducts research in a wide spectrum of science and technology domains ranging from aerospace, instrumentation, environmental engineering, mining, minerals & materials, housing and structures to oceanography, chemicals, drugs, and Biotechnology.
- CSIR provides technological intervention in many areas with regard to societal efforts including environment, health, drinking water, food, housing, energy, and farm and non-farm sectors.
- CSIR India caters to the technological needs of Indian as well as foreign industries based in India and abroad.

CNRS:

- Founded in 1939, CNRS is the largest fundamental research organisation in Europe.
- CNRS is an interdisciplinary public research organisation under the administrative supervision of the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research.
- CNRS ranks among the leading global research institutions for its excellent research and innovation achievements and has 22 Nobel Laureates and 12 Field medal recipients.

9. National Broadband Mission

Why in News?

- The Union Minister for Communications, Law & Justice and Electronics and Information Technology launched the National Broadband Mission.

National Broadband Mission (NBM):

- The vision of the NBM is to fast-track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion and provide affordable and universal access to broadband for all.
- A key objective of the Mission is to provide broadband to all villages by 2022.
- Facilitate universal and equitable access to broadband services across the country and especially in rural and remote areas.
- Laying of incremental 30 lakhs route km of Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) and increase in tower density from 0.42 to 1.0 tower per thousand of population by 2024.
- Significantly improve quality of services for mobile and internet.
- Develop innovative implementation models for Right of Way (RoW) and to work with States/UTs for having consistent policies pertaining to expansion of digital infrastructure including for RoW approvals required for laying of OFC.
- Develop a Broadband Readiness Index (BRI) to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure and conducive policy ecosystem within a State/UT.
- Creation of a digital fiber map of the digital communications network and infrastructure, including Optical Fiber Cables and towers across the country.
- Investment from stakeholders of USD 100 billion (Rs 7 Lakh Crore) including Rs 70,000 crore from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).
- Address policy and regulatory changes required to accelerate the expansion and creation of digital infrastructure and services.
- Work with all stakeholders including the concerned ministries/departments/agencies and the Ministry of Finance for enabling investments for the Mission.

Internet usage in India:

- The Government has introduced this new broadband mission to meet the ever-growing needs for the internet.
- Right now, in India, an average person is consuming 9.77GB data per month which is up by a staggering 1120% compared to 2014.

-
- Telecom subscribers are also growing at a rapid pace in the country.
 - India had just 251.59 million internet subscribers back in 2014, however, the number saw an increase of 165% and reached 665.31 in 2019.
 - Mobile subscribers were just 907.42 in 2014 and it has been increased to 1173.75 in 2019.

