
1. Artemis Base camp

Why in News?

- Recently, NASA unveils plan for Artemis ‘base camp’ on the moon beyond 2024.

About Artemis Base Camp:

- It is NASA’s next mission to the Moon.
- Its objective is to measure what happens when the Sun’s radiation hits our rocky moon, where there is no magnetic field to protect it.
- It is meant to be a long-term foothold for lunar exploration, perhaps in Shackleton Crater at the moon’s south pole.
- It could host four astronauts at the south pole for visits of perhaps a week.
- It would also require infrastructure for power, waste disposal and communications, as well as radiation shielding and a landing pad.
- It could also be a site for testing new techniques for dealing with pesky lunar dust and the long, cold lunar nights, turning local materials into resources like water, and developing new power and construction technologies.
- **Artemis** is defined as Acceleration, Reconnection, Turbulence and Electrodynamics of Moon’s Interaction with the Sun. It was the twin sister of **Apollo** and goddess of the Moon in Greek Mythology.

2. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

Context:

- Recently, A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court demanding full wages for over 7.6 crore active job card holders under the MGNREGA during the 21-day nationwide lockdown due to Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

About MGNREGA:

- It is the largest work guarantee programme in the world.
- It was enacted in 2005 with the primary objective of guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment per year to rural households.
- It aims at addressing causes of chronic poverty through the ‘works’ (projects) that are undertaken, and thus ensuring sustainable development.

- Its Funding is shared between the centre and the states.
- There are three major items of expenditure – wages (for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour), material and administrative costs.
- The central government bears 100% of the cost of unskilled labour, 75% of the cost of semiskilled and skilled labour, 75% of the cost of materials and 6% of the administrative costs.

3. Starving Herons

Why in News?

- Several blue herons were spotted dead by the personnel of Neendakara Coastal police station, Kerala. The autopsy has revealed the cause of death as starvation.

Hérons:

- The herons are long-legged freshwater and coastal birds in the family Ardeidae, with 64 globally recognised species.
- The herons are medium- to large-sized birds with long legs and necks.
- They exhibit very little Sexual Dimorphism in size.



Indian Pond Heron:

- **The Indian Pond Heron or Paddy bird is a small heron.**
 - ✓ It is of Old-World origins, breeding in southern Iran and east to the Indian subcontinent, Burma, and Sri Lanka.
 - ✓ Pond Heron is the most common species of Heron found in India.
 - ✓ They have adapted themselves well to live alongside humans and can be seen both in the wilderness and in ponds/ lakes within urban areas.
 - ✓ **IUCN Status: Least Concern.**

4. Zoos in India on High Alert

Why in News?

- Zoos in India are on high alert after the United States (USA) Department of Agriculture's National Veterinary Services Laboratories has confirmed SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) in a Tiger housed in the Bronx Zoo, New York.

Highlights:

- Taking cognizance, the Central Zoo Authority under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has advised Zoos in the country
- to remain on highest alertness, watch animals on 24X7 basis, using CCTV for any abnormal behavior/symptoms, keepers/handlers not to be allowed in the vicinity without safety gear preferably PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), Isolate & quarantine sick animals, and have least contact while providing feed to animals.
- The advisory further stated that Mammals like carnivores, especially cats, ferrets and primates to be carefully monitored.
- The fortnightly samples of suspect cases to be sent to the designated animal health institutes to initiate COVID-19 testing while following all bio-containment and safety measures required to handle this high-risk pathogen as per the national / ICMR

Guidelines:

- National Institute of High Security Animal Disease (NIHSAD), Bhopal, MP
- National Research Centre on Equines (NRCE), Hisar, Haryana.
- Centre for Animal Disease Research and Diagnostic (CADRAD), Indian Veterinary Research Institute, (IVRI), Izatnagar, Bareilly, UP.
- Further, zoos are advised to coordinate with designated nodal agencies of the Government responsible for public health response and permit screening, testing and surveillance and diagnostic samples as and when required by the nodal agency.

5. Transmission of COVID-19 from Mother to Child

Why in News?

- It is still unclear whether a pregnant woman runs the risk of transmitting the virus to her baby during pregnancy. While there is no concrete evidence for vertical transmission of SARS-CoV2 from mother to foetus, it is known that pregnancy involves a risk, after birth, of adverse outcomes from many respiratory viral infections.

Highlights:

- A virus may be transmitted after delivery either from mother during breastfeeding or from the hospital environment.
- The World Health Organization notes that there is no evidence yet to show that pregnant women are more vulnerable or are at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 than the general population.
- Experts have flagged this concern as they cite the recent history of vertical maternal-foetal transmission of such emerging viral infections as the Zika virus, Ebola virus, Marburg virus and other agents.
- Maternal management and foetal safety are a significant concern, but the infection is at a low level and there is not sufficient number of patients for studies to assess the vulnerability of pregnant women and whether there was vertical transmission of COVID-19 virus to their babies.
- So far no reliable evidence recommends any specific COVID-19 treatment for pregnant women. Before allowing drugs for pregnant women, clinical trials would be needed to prove the effectiveness of drugs and the effects on the foetus to establish a standardised treatment.

