



**MADE EASY**

India's Best Institute for IES, GATE & PSUs

**MADE EASY  
WEEKLY  
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**WEEK-4**

22<sup>nd</sup> June - 31<sup>st</sup> June, 2021

**TARGETED EXAMINATIONS**

**CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Exams,  
SSC and Banking Exams**

22<sup>nd</sup> JUNE 2021

## ZyCoV-D: World's first DNA-based Vaccine

- Indian pharmaceutical company Zydus Cadila is going to apply to the Central Drugs Regulator (DGCI) for emergency approval of the corona vaccine ZyCoV-D.

### Key Points:

- If approved, it will be the world's first DNA-based vaccine. With this, the number of vaccines available in the country will increase to 4. So far, Serum Institute's Covishield, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin and Russia's Sputnik-V are being used in India.
- ZyCoV-D is a needle free vaccine. This allows the vaccine to be injected into people's skin under high pressure.

### About ZyCoV-D

- ZyCoV-D, a plasmid DNA vaccine, comes under the Vaccine Discovery Programme supported by the Department of Biotechnology under the National Biopharma Mission.
- Plasmids are circular deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) vectors that can be used as vaccines to prevent various types of diseases.
- The antibodies produced by the vaccine were able to neutralize the wild type virus indicating the protective potential of the vaccine candidate. No safety concerns were observed in repeat dose by both intramuscular (directly into muscles) and intradermal (superficial injection into skin) routes of administration.

## Cassava crop for Bioethanol Production

- ICAR-Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) finds cassava (tapioca) as a promising raw material for bioethanol production to meet India's Ethanol Blending Petrol (EBP) programme target of 2025.
- National Policy on Biofuels 2018 ensures the availability of biofuels to meet demand of 20 per cent

ethanol produced from molasses, sugarcane juices & biomass in form of grasses & agricultural residues, sugar-containing materials like sugar beet, & sweet sorghum or starch-containing materials like rotten potatoes, corn, cassava, and damaged food grains.

### Key Points

- As a biofuel crop, cassava has several advantages over sugarcane.
- Cassava has a high starch content and ability to grow under low management conditions. It has been globally recognised as a potential candidate for bioethanol production.
- Its starch has unique physicochemical and functional properties which finds extensive applications in food and industrial sectors. Agricultural residues of cassava like peels, stems and leaves are the potential feedstock for 2G bioethanol production.

### NOTE:

Cassava, also known as Tapioca, production in India is estimated to be 4.98 million tonnes. Tamil Nadu, followed by Kerala accounts for a major amount of production.

## Flex-fuel Engines to get mandatory in India

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has announced that they will make a decision over flex fuel engines.
- This decision was taken days after advancing the cut-off date for mixing 20 per cent ethanol in petrol from 2030 to 2025.
- Flex-fuel engines are already in vogue in countries such as Brazil, Canada and the United States. In these countries, a lot of vehicle owners use ethanol as fuel for their cars.

### About flex-fuel vehicles:

- A 'Flex fuel engine' is an internal combustion engine that can run on more than one fuel and also a mixture. Typically, a blend of petrol and ethanol or methanol

is used, and the engine is capable of automatically adjusting for any percentage of the blend

- Both of the fuels are stored in the same common tank. Modern flex-fuel engines can burn any proportion of the resulting blend in the combustion chamber because fuel injection and spark timing are adjusted automatically in accordance with actual blend detected by fuel composition sensor.

#### ■ NOTE:

They are different than bi-fuel vehicles, where two fuels are stored in separate tanks and engine runs on one fuel at a time.

23<sup>rd</sup> JUNE 2021

## Tax Inspectors Without Borders Initiative

- India and Bhutan have recently launched the “Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB)”.
- Bhutan launched this programme and chose India as Partner Jurisdiction. India provided the Tax Expert for this programme. This programme will run for about 24 months.
- Under the programme, India in collaboration with UNDP and TIWB Secretariat aims to provide aid to Bhutan in order to strengthen its tax administration.

### About Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB):

- TIWB is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- TIWB seeks to provide support to the developing countries to help them strengthen national tax administrations by building audit capacity.
- It complements the efforts of the international community to strengthen cooperation on tax matters & contribute to domestic tax mobilisation efforts.

- TIWB programme aims to strengthen tax administrations among developing countries by transferring technical know-how and skills to their tax auditors and by sharing general audit practices & dissemination of knowledge products with them.

## CEOS COAST: ISRO- NOAA Project

- Recently, the UN body has endorsed a multinational project called “Committee on Earth Observation Satellites Coastal Observations, Applications, Services, and Tools (CEOS COAST)”.
- About CEOS COAST
- The CEOS COAST program is co-led by ISRO and NOAA from America. The program aims to improve the accuracy of coastal data based on satellite and land-based observations.
- Its pilot projects are uniquely capable of using Earth observation technologies to meet many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals specified by the United Nations for the Oceans Decade Initiative.

### About National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is an American scientific agency working under the United States Department of Commerce.
- It focuses on conditions of oceans, major waterways, and atmosphere. It warns about the dangerous weather, charts seas and guides on use & protection of ocean & coastal resources.

## Green High-Speed Rail Rating System

- Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) in association with the National High-Speed Rail Corporation Ltd (NHSRCL) has launched the world's first exclusive Green rating system for High-Speed Rail.

### Key Points:

- This first of its kind green rating system is formulated for the upcoming 508.17 km long Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train corridor which is the country's first high-speed rail project.

- In the first place, it is important to understand more about the Green Railway Stations rating system.
- Green Railway Stations rating system is the first of its kind holistic rating in India to address environmental sustainability in Indian railway stations.
- The objective of the rating is to facilitate the adoption of green concepts, reduce the adverse environmental impacts due to station operation & maintenance, and enhance the overall commuter experience at the station.
- Green Railway Stations rating system is designed primarily for existing Indian railway stations. It will help the station management to understand their present position with respect to the 'green performance' of the station and the measures that need to be taken to enhance the performance on a continual basis.
- ISA is an alliance of over 121 countries initiated by India, most of them being sunshine countries which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.
- Launched at the 21st session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-21) in Paris, France.
- The primary objective of the alliance is to work for efficient consumption of solar energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
- The framework agreement of the International Solar Alliance opened for signatures in Marrakech, Morocco in November 2016, and 200 countries have joined.

#### ■ NOTE:

ISA FA was opened for signatures in Marrakech, Morocco in November 2016. It was joined by 200 countries.

### About Green Building Council (GBC)

- GBC is a national non-profit, non-government organization which is part of a global network recognized by the World Green Building Council. Its goal is to promote the transformation of a sustainable built environment.

24<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

### Denmark signs 'ISA FA'

- Denmark signed the International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement (ISA FA) and Instrument of Ratification with India. Denmark became the first country to ratify International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement (ISA FA) after amendments came into force.
- Recently, Italy has signed the amended Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) with India.

### About International Solar Alliance (ISA):

- This is a treaty-based intergovernmental organization.
- The Headquarters is in India with its Interim Secretariat being set up in Gurugram.

### Andhra's SALT programme

- Andhra Pradesh has started a Supporting Andhra's Learning Transformation (SALT) programme to transform foundational learning in government schools for which the World Bank has approved a loan of 250 million dollars.

### About SALT Programme:

- SALT programme stands for "Supporting Andhra's Learning Transformation" programme.
- The main objectives of the programme are strengthening foundation schools and providing training and skill development to teachers. Andhra Pradesh's public school education system has more than 40 lakh children and nearly 2 lakh teachers.

### About IBRD

- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) is an international financial institution. It was established in 1944.

- It is headquartered in Washington D.C., United States. It is the lending arm of the World Bank Group. It offers loans to middle-income developing countries.
- It is the first of five member institutions that forms the World Bank Group. I
- BRD and International Development Association (IDA), are collectively known as the World Bank because they share the same leadership and staff.

25<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

## India's bank credit-to-GDP ratio grows 56% in 2020

- The bank credit-to-GDP ratio rose to a five-year high of a little over 56 per cent in 2020, according to the latest data from the Bank for International Settlements (BIS).

### Key points

- As per data, bank credit-to-GDP ratio has increased to a five-year high at about 56% in 2020.
- However, this increase is way behind its peers and is half of the G20 average.
- Total outstanding bank credit was at \$1.52 trillion in 2020 at the credit-to-GDP ratio of 56%. However, this was the second lowest among all other Asian countries.
- In case of emerging market peers' credit-to-GDP ratio is 135.5% while it is at 88.7% in advanced economies.

### NOTE:

Credit-GDP ratio of 100% is the ideal, indicating robust demand for credit without fear of bubbles in making. High credit-to-GDP ratio indicates aggressive & active participation of the banking sector in the real economy. Lower credit-to-GDP ratio indicates the need for more formal credit.

## New Dividend Payout norms for NBFCs

- The Reserve Bank of India(RBI) has issued guidelines that spell out the eligibility criteria for non-banking finance companies(NBFCs) to declare dividends.

### Key Highlights:

- Guidelines will be effective for the declaration of dividend from profit for financial year 2021-2022 and onwards.
- Board of directors will consider the proposals for dividend.
- They will take into account the supervisory findings of the Reserve Bank (National Housing Bank for HFCs) on divergence in classification and provisioning of non-performing assets (NPAs).
- Board will also ensure that the total dividend proposed for the financial year does not exceed ceilings as specified in these guidelines.

### About NBFC:

- A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956. It is a company which has principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or in installments by way of contributions or in any other manner
- It engages in business activities of loans and advances, acquisition of shares/stocks/bonds/debentures/securities issued by Government or local authority.

## India's First IAC to be commissioned in 2022

- INS Vikrant, also known as IAC-1, is expected to be commissioned in the Indian Navy by 2022. The Defence Minister reviewed the progress of the construction of India's first indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC-1) INS Vikrant at the Cochin Shipyard, Kochi, Kerala.
- The IAC-1 boasts of nearly 75 per cent indigenous content; this includes the design, the steel used in the construction and key weapons, and sensors."

## About INS Vikrant

- INS Vikrant is also called as Indigenous Aircraft Carrier 1 (IAC-1). This aircraft carrier is being constructed by Cochin Shipyard in Kochi, Kerala for Indian Navy. It will be the first aircraft carrier to be built in India. Motto of the IAC is Jayema Sam Yudhi Sprdhah. It is taken from Rigveda 1.8.3.

### NOTE:

The Defence Minister conducted an aerial survey of several ongoing projects which are being carried out at INS Kadamba under Navy's "Project Seabird".

26<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

## Pinaka Rockets

- The Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) successfully test-fired enhanced range versions of its indigenously developed Pinaka rocket system and 122mm Caliber rocket system.

### Key Points:

- It has been developed jointly by Pune-based DRDO labs Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE), and High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) with manufacturing support from Economic Explosives Limited, Nagpur.
- The enhanced range version can destroy targets at distances up to 45 km. Moreover, these enhanced versions of Pinaka will replace the Pinaka Mk-1 missiles which are currently used by regiments of the Indian Army along India's frontiers with China and Pakistan.

## About Pinaka

- It is an indigenous multi-barrel rocket launch system. It was developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for Indian Army.
- Its weapon system comprises state-of-the-art guidance kit which is bolstered by advanced navigation and control systems.

## Smart City Awards, 2020

- The Central Government declared Smart City awards 2020 wherein Uttar Pradesh emerged on top followed by Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

### Key highlights:

- Surat in Gujarat and Indore in Madhya Pradesh won the Smart City awards for their overall development.
- The awards covered themes: governance, social aspects, culture, sanitation, urban environment, economy, urban mobility, water, and built environment.
- Best union territory award was conferred to Chandigarh.
- These awards were given under the themes of Social Aspects, Governance, Urban Environment, Sanitation, Culture, Economy, Water, Built Environment and Urban Mobility.

## Smart Cities Award by MoHUA

- The awards are given across the themes of Social Aspects, Governance, Culture, Urban Environment, Sanitation, Economy, Built Environment, Water, Urban Mobility
- The ISAC recognizes and rewards cities, projects, and innovative ideas that promote sustainable development in urban areas in India, as well as stimulate inclusive, equitable, safe, healthy, and collaborative cities, thus enhances the quality of life for all

27<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

## FAME Scheme

**Context:** Government of India has decided to extend the adoption of electric vehicles 'Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India Phase II (FAME Phase II)' by 2 years.

### Key Highlights:

- Initially, the FAME scheme was to be implemented for a period of three years from April 1, 2019.
- Now, it will be in force till March 31, 2024.

- Date was extended after the Department of Heavy Industries increased the demand incentive for electric two-wheelers (e2W) from Rs 10,000/KWh to Rs 15,000/KWh.

### About FAME Scheme

- This scheme is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. Scheme was launched to encourage electric vehicles by providing subsidies. This scheme aims to incentivise all vehicle segments.
- It was launched in two phases. Phase 1 was started in 2015 & ended on 31st March, 2019. Phase II was started from April 2019 and will end in 2024 (Earlier to end in 2022).
- Scheme is monitored by the Department of Heavy Industries under the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises.

### About National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP)

- Under the NEMMP, the government targeted to achieve 6-7 million sales of electric and hybrid vehicles across India by 2020. This plan aims to achieve national fuel security by promoting hybrid and electric vehicles.

### Small and Medium companies (SMC)

**Context:** The Ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) has expanded the definition of small and medium sized companies (SMCs).

#### Key Highlights:

- As per expanded definition, Small & Medium Companies is an unlisted company, a bank, an insurance or a financial institution with sales up to Rs 250 crore and borrowings up to Rs 50 crore.
- Earlier limit for sales was Rs 50 crore and for borrowings was Rs 10 crore.
- Now, SMCs are permitted to avail a number of exemptions under Company (Accounting Standards) Rules 2021. It will reduce complexity of regulatory filings for smaller firms.

### Exemptions available to SMCs

- They are completely exempted from filing cash flow statements and providing segmental break up of their financial performance.
- They can avail partial reporting exemptions in areas like reporting on employee benefits obligations. For instance, on pensions.
- They are exempted from providing detailed analysis of benefit obligations to employees.
- They are also exempted from reporting diluted earnings per share in their filings.

### About Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

- SMEs are businesses whose personnel numbers are kept below certain limits. SMEs sometimes outnumber big companies by a wide margin and employ more people.
- SMEs are also responsible for driving innovation and competition across different sectors.

#### ■ NOTE:

- Banks, insurance companies, financial institutions, and listed companies cannot be classified as SMCs.
- Any holding company or subsidiary of a company which is not an SMC cannot be classified as SMC.

### Itat e-dwar

- Union Government recently launched a e-filing portal of Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) called 'itat e-dwar'.

#### Key Highlights

- While launching the portal, power of Digital India was highlighted.
- Digital India aims to empowering ordinary Indian with the power of technology in order to bridge the digital divide between digital haves and digital have nots.

- The data of more than 18 crore cases are available in National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG). There were suggestions to integrate ITAT with NJDG.

### About itat e-dwar

- Itat e-dwar is a larger narrative of transformation that India is undergoing through digital medium.
- It will enable innovation & empowerment and open new avenues for growth. This e-filing portal will enhance accessibility, accountability and transparency in the working of ITAT.
- It will result in economization of use of paper, savings in costs and rationalization of fixation of cases which in turn help in quicker disposal of cases.
- It would help parties to file their Appeals, Miscellaneous Applications, documents, etc electronically.

28<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

### Burmese Grapes

- To harness the export potential of agricultural & processed food products from north-eastern states, fresh Burmese grapes shipment was exported to Dubai from Guwahati.

### Key Highlights

- Burmese grapes are referred to as 'Leteku' in Assamese language.
- Leteku is rich in vitamin C and Iron.
- Grapes were sourced and packed at a collection centre in Darang district of Assam.
- Consignment was exported by APEDA registered Kiega EXIM Pvt Ltd.

### About Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) was established by the Government of India under the Agricultural

and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in December, 1985.

- APEDA has been carrying out promotional activities to register North-Eastern states on agricultural and processed food products export map of India.
- Recently, APEDA has facilitated exports of first consignment of 'red rice' to the USA, which is grown in Brahmaputra valley of Assam. It does not make use of any chemical fertilizer. This rice variety is also called 'Bao-dhaan' and is an integral part of Assamese food.
- APEDA also assisted in exports of Geographical Indications (GI) certified Kaji Nemu (Assam lemon) to London. About 40 metric tonnes of Assam Lemon has been exported so far.
- It has provided financial assistance to the private sector to set up a pack house at Guwahati after fulfilling mandatory requirements or infrastructure for export of fresh fruits and vegetables to Europe.
- It also undertakes market promotion activities for structured marketing strategies for export of food product market intelligence to take informed decisions and for skill development, capacity building & high-quality packaging.

### About Burmese Grape

- It is a slow-growing evergreen tree of the family Phyllanthaceae with a spreading crown and thin bark. It is found in Asia and most commonly cultivated in Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Bangladesh, India and Malaysia. It grows in evergreen forests on a variety of soils. It is eaten as fruit, stewed or made into wine, or is used medicinally to treat skin diseases.

### Stimulus Package for COVID-19

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a Rs 6.28 lakh crore stimulus package on June 28, 2021 with the aim of boosting Covid-affected sectors following the eight measures proposed by the Ministry of Finance.



## Eight key announcements

### 1. Expansion of healthcare infrastructure

- Credit guarantee scheme and an amount of Rs 23,220 crore was earmarked to expand medical infrastructure for one year. Funding aims to increase the number of ICU beds and enhance availability of equipment & liquid medical oxygen (LMO). It will emphasise on preparedness of healthcare infrastructure in terms of child and paediatric care.

### 2. Free visas, loan for travel agencies

- As issuance of visa resumes, the first five lakh tourist visas will be issued free of cost. This visa incentive will cost the government around Rs 100 crore. She also announced a loan guarantee scheme for the tourism sector because it has been one among worst-hit sectors by covid-19 pandemic. Under the scheme, loans will be given with 100 percent guarantee of up to Rs 10 lakh for travel agencies and Rs 1 lakh for regional tourist guides.

### 3. Rs 1.1 lakh crore loan guarantee scheme

- A Rs 1.1 lakh crore loan guarantee scheme was announced for Covid-affected sectors. Out of Rs 1.1 lakh crore, Rs 50,000 crore will be provided to the health sector. It will benefit 25 lakh beneficiaries as they will be able to borrow up to Rs 1.25 lakh through micro-finance institutions (MFIs). Both public and private hospitals can avail a maximum of Rs 100 crore with a guarantee duration of three years.

### 4. ECLGS cap raised by Rs 1.5 lakh crore

- The Cap of Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) was increased from Rs 3 lakh crore to Rs 4.5 lakh crore. ECLGS scheme was announced as part of Aatmanirbhar Bharat package in 2020.

### 5. Rs 33,000 crore for NEIA

- The Ministry of finance announced a corpus that will enable National Export Insurance Account (NEIA) to underwrite an additional Rs

33,000 crore of project exports over five years. NEIA facilitates cover for buyer's credit to project exporters and borrowers having lesser creditworthiness, through EXIM Bank.

### 6. Extension of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana

- Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana was extended from June 30, 2021 till March 31, 2022. This wage subsidy scheme was announced with the aim of incentivizing employers through EPFO to generate fresh employment.

### 7. PPP projects, DISCOMs, BharatNet

- New process is being adopted for speedy clearance of public-private partnership projects. Rs 3.03 lakh crore was allocated to revamp DISCOMs. Additional Rs 19,041 crore was allocated to BharatNet to improve broadband connectivity to villages.

### 8. Fertiliser subsidy, PMGKAY

- Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) for fertilizers was increased to Rs 42,275 crore. Additional Rs 14,775 crore will be given to stakeholders, for DAP (Di-ammonium Phosphate) and NPK-based complex fertilisers.

## Agni P Missile

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight-tested a new generation nuclear-capable ballistic missile Agni P on June 28, 2021.

## Key Highlights

- Missile is also known as 'Agni Prime'.
- It was blasted-off from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam island off Odisha coast.
- Agni-Prime is the advanced version of the Agni-1 missile.
- Flight test was monitored by various telemetry and radar stations which were positioned along the eastern coast.
- It followed textbook trajectory and met the mission objectives with a high level of accuracy.

## About Agni P Missile

- It is a new generation advanced variant of Agni class missiles. It is a canisterised missile having a range of 1,000 and 2,000 kms. Missile can hit targets up to a range of 2000 kms. It is very short and light as compared to other missiles in this class. This new nuclear-capable missile is fully made up of composite material.

## About Agni-I missile

- It is a single stage, solid fuel, road & rail mobile and a Short-range ballistic missile developed by DRDO under Integrated Guided Missile Development Program.
- It is a single-stage missile which was developed after the Kargil War to fill the gap between the 250 km range of the Prithvi-II missile and the 2,500 km range of the Agni-II.
- Missile was first launched from a road mobile launcher at Integrated Test Range (ITR) from Wheeler Island, on 25 January 2002.
- It is a 15-meter-tall Agni-I missile, weighing 12 tonnes and is capable of carrying conventional and nuclear warheads of 1,000 kg.

29<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

## European Union's Green Pass

**Context:** European Medicines Agency (EMA) has excluded Serum Institute of India (SII) manufactured Covishield from the list of approved vaccines for 'Green Pass'. As per EMA, the vaccine was excluded from the list because it does not have marketing authorisation in European Union (EU).

### Key Points

- Covishield does not have a marketing authorisation even though it may use an analogous production technology to Vaxzevria.

- Vaxzevria is the only Covid-19 vaccine from AstraZeneca for which marketing authorisation application was submitted to and evaluated by EMA. It was given authorisation.
- EMA highlights small differences in manufacturing conditions can result in differences among final products because vaccines are biological products.
- EU law requires manufacturing sites and production processes to be assessed, before giving clearance to vaccines.

## About Green Pass

- EU member states have started issuing digital 'vaccine passport' to enable easy travel into and between EU countries for the purpose of work and tourism.
- EU 'Green Pass' is also a kind of digital vaccine passport recognising EMA approved Vaxzevria version of AstraZeneca vaccine which are produced in UK and Europe, even though World Health Organisation (WHO) has endorsed SII's Covishield for emergency use across the globe. Green pass will be launched on July 1, 2021. It will display the bearer's vaccination status.

### NOTE:

EMA, which is responsible for evaluation and supervision of medicinal products, has approved four Covid-19 vaccines namely, Comirnaty, Moderna, Vaxzevria and Janssen, as of now. But Covishield, which is the Indian version of AstraZeneca and University of Oxford's Covid vaccine, is yet to be recognised for European market by EMA.

## Enforcing Contracts Portal

- The Department of Justice has launched an "Enforcing Contracts Portal" on June 29, 2021.

- This portal aims to promote ease of doing business and improving 'Contract Enforcement Regime' across India.
- Portal will also provide easy access to latest information regarding the commercial cases in Dedicated Commercial Courts of Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Bengaluru.
- Dedicated Commercial Courts have been set up for speedy resolution of commercial disputes and boast of dedicated infrastructure & exclusive judicial human power.
- It will also provide access to the repository of commercial laws.
- Portal was launched to act as a comprehensive source of information pertaining to legislative and policy reforms that are being undertaken on Enforcing Contracts parameters.
- legislative and policy reforms undertaken to strengthen the Enforcing Contracts regime for Ease of Doing Business are being monitored by the Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law & Justice.
- Information on commercial court and related services can be easily assessed by portal using several features like:
  - Details or links of Dedicated Commercial Courts in Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Bengaluru
  - Instructive videos related to e-filing
- He is an Indian journalist and author of a book called "Everybody Loves a Good Drought". He has been actively campaigning over farmer's issues and backed the Samyukta Ekta Morcha that leads farmers' agitations in India. He was awarded with the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2007.
- The Fukuoka Prize Committee described P. Sainath as "a very deserving recipient of the Grand Prize of Fukuoka Prize".
- He will be awarded for his work of creating a new form of knowledge through his writings & commentaries on rural India and for promoting civil cooperation.

### About Fukuoka Prize

- It is an award established by the city of Fukuoka and Fukuoka City International Foundation. It is given to honor the work of individuals or organizations in preserving & creating Asian culture. The Fukuoka prize has three prize categories- Grand Prize, Academic Prize and Arts & Culture Prize. Fukuoka has organised Asia-Pacific Exposition with the concept of interaction between Asia-Pacific region in 1989. This prize was inaugurated in 1990 to carry on the spirit of Expo. Prizes are given annually to distinguished people for fostering & increasing awareness of Asian cultures.

### About Grand Prize

- Grand Prize has been awarded to Muhammad Yunus from Bangladesh, historian Romila Thapar and sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan. So far, eleven Indians have received the Fukuoka Prize. About 115 people from 28 countries and areas have received prizes in the past 30 years.

### About Enforcing Contracts

- These contracts are an essential area of measuring time and cost in order to resolve a standardized commercial dispute and a series of good practices in the judiciary.

### Fukuoka Prize 2021

- Noted journalist, P. Sainath, was selected as one of the three recipients of Fukuoka Prize 2021.

30<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

### Moderna Covid vaccine

- Drug regulator of India, DCGI, has allowed Mumbai-based pharmaceutical company Cipla to import Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine for restricted emergency use in India.

- Moderna's vaccine is going to be the fourth COVID-19 vaccine available in India after Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik.

### About Covishield

- This vaccine is locally manufactured by Serum Institute of India. It was created using a weakened variant of a common cold virus called adenovirus from chimps. This virus has been altered to resemble coronavirus, which will boost the immune system to produce antibodies.

### About Covaxin

- Covaxin is an inactivated vaccine. It has been made with coronaviruses after killing them. Thus, it is safe to inject into the body. It was created and manufactured by Bharat Biotech. Immune cells in the body have the ability to recognise a dead virus after it has been injected. It prompts the immune system to produce antibodies against the coronavirus.

### About Sputnik

- This vaccine was created by Gamaleya Institute in Russia. It is composed of a harmless cold-type virus as a carrier which will deliver a small portion of coronavirus in the body. Body then starts to manufacture antibodies which are specifically adapted to coronavirus after being vaccinated.

### About Moderna Vaccine

- Moderna's method of creating a vaccine to protect against Covid-19 is based on messenger RNA (mRNA). mRNA helps the cells to generate immunity against coronavirus. This vaccine along with Pfizer is being preferred among wealthy countries. They are more than 90% effective at preventing coronavirus.

### About Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)

- DCGI is the head of department of Central Drugs Standard Control Organization in India. It is

responsible for approval of licences of specified categories of drugs like blood and blood products, vaccines, IV fluids, and sera in India. It works under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. It also sets standards for manufacturing, import, sales and distribution of drugs in India.

## SEBI amends norms for Independent Directors

- Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has cleared amendments to SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 while reviewing regulatory provisions related to independent directors.

### Key Highlights

- To boost corporate governance between listed companies, SEBI approved amendments to rules that govern appointment, re-appointment and removal of independent directors.
- It also amended the rules that required disclosure letters of such individuals.

### Key Amended norms

- Appointment, re-appointment and removal of independent directors will be done only through special resolution passed by shareholders. This provision will be applicable to all listed entities.
- Under the amended rules, a one-year cooling period will be given for an independent director transitioning to a whole-time director in the same company or holding or subsidiary or any company belonging to the promoter group.
- Process to be followed by the Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC) when it is selecting candidates for appointment as independent directors was made transparent.
- NRC required to disclose skills required for appointment as independent director and how the proposed candidate fits into that skillset.

- Composition of NRC has been updated to include 2/3rd independent directors instead of the current requirement of majority of independent directors.
- Under the new rules, resident Indian fund managers have been allowed to be constituents of foreign portfolio investors and to amend mutual fund rules to provide investment of a minimum amount as prescribed by SEBI.
- Presently, investment of 1% of the amount raised in a New Fund Offer (NFO) or an amount of Rs 50 lakh (whichever is less) is required.

### ■ NOTE:

Accredited investors can be individuals, HUFs, family trusts, partnership firms, sole proprietorships, trusts and body corporates on the basis of financial parameters.

31<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2021

## Kerala's Kaval Plus programme

- The Department of Women & Child Development in Kerala has decided to expand Kaval Plus programme to five districts, after the success of this pilot project in two districts of Kerala.

### About Programme:

- It is an ambitious programme to lend holistic support to children in need of care & protection and to the survivors of sexual abuse.
- This programme was launched in December 2020 in two districts of Kerala, namely Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad. This project is being implemented with help and support of NGOs who have experience in working with children.
- An early identification system will also be launched under the programme using community-level workers like Asha and Anganwadi workers.

- Project has reached out to about 300 children in Thiruvananthapuram district and 150 children in Palakkad district. It will not be implemented in Ernakulam, Idukki, Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Kannur districts.

## Kudankulam

**Context:** Russia started construction of a fifth nuclear power unit at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu.

### Key points

- This development is a significant step in bilateral relations between both the countries.
- Rosatom (a Russian company) is providing technology to construct the Kudankulam plant.
- This plant has six units each having 1,000 MWe generation capacity.
- It is going to be India's first light water reactor.

### About Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP)

- This nuclear power plant is the largest nuclear power plant of India. It is located in Kudankulam town in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. Construction of the plant started on March 31, 2002. However, it faced several delays because of opposition from local fishermen.
- KKNPP is scheduled to have six VVER-1000 reactors. All these reactors have been built or are being built in collaboration with Russian state company and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL).
- Reactors have the installed capacity of 6,000 MW of electricity. Unit one was made operational and synchronised with the southern power grid in October 2013.
- It has been generating electricity up to 1,000 MW. Unit two was synchronised with the electricity grid on August 29, 2016. Units three & four was inaugurated on February 17, 2016. Now, construction of Unit five & six will start.

## New human species discovered in Israel

- An international group of archaeologists have discovered a missing piece in the story of human evolution.

### Key Points:

- Excavations at the Israeli site of Nesher Ramla have recovered a skull that may represent a late-surviving example of a distinct Homo population, which lived in and around modern-day Israel from about 420,000 to 120,000 years ago.
- Analysis finds that this jaw belonged to people who were neither fully Homo sapiens nor were Neanderthals.
- They found a parietal bone featuring “archaic” traits that are different from both early and recent Homo sapiens.
- Bone is considerably thicker than those found in Neanderthals and other homo sapiens.



As per researchers, fossils like the famous Lady of Tabun, found at other Israeli sites might be part of this newly excavated human population. “Lady of Tabun” was discovered in 1932 by pioneering archaeologist Yusra.

