



News Analysis (14 Aug, 2019)

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Threat to Human Habitation in the Highlands of Kerala

Investigation of **National Centre for Earth Science Studies (NCESS)** scientists in Kerala, in the wake of the **heavy rain and devastating floods in August 2018**, had found that **destabilising geological processes**, coupled with **extreme rainfall events** and **unscientific farming and construction activities**, pose a serious threat to human habitation in the highlands of the state.

- During the investigation in landslide prone areas in Thrissur and Kannur districts of Kerala, the researchers found **huge cracks across farmlands and dwellings**.
In the areas surveyed, most of the slopes were used for raising crops and farmers had **blocked the natural drainage systems**.
- **Land subsidence, lateral spread and soil piping** were an immediate threat to life and property in the uplands of the state.
Heavy intense rainfall triggers slope failure in locations where lateral spread and soil piping have occurred.
- Any developmental activities like construction of roads and buildings in such vulnerable areas require **remedial measures for slope stabilisation**.
- The team apart from outlining the remedial steps also **recommended the formation of a trained task force** for the highlands to monitor ground signatures like hollows, cracks, and water spouts that often precede land subsidence, lateral spread and landslides.
- Based on the recommendations of the NCESS, the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) has initiated steps to establish **a network of landslip monitoring stations** in the highlands.
The units based on acoustic emission technology will also have an **early warning mechanism to alert the local community**.

Landslide

- A landslide is defined as the **movement of a mass of rock, debris, or earth down a slope**.
- Landslides are a type of "**mass wasting**", which denotes any down-slope movement of soil and rock under the direct influence of gravity.
- There are 5 main types of landslides:
 - **Falls** are sudden movements of loads of soil, debris, and rock that break away from slopes and cliffs. They occur as a result of mechanical weathering, earthquakes, and force of gravity.
 - **Slides** are a kind of mass movement whereby the sliding material breaks away from underlying stable material.
 - **Topple** encompasses the forward spinning and movement of huge masses of rock, debris, and earth from a slope. It takes place around an axis near or at the bottom of the block of rock.
 - **Spread** takes place on gentle terrains via lateral extension followed by tensile fractures.
 - **Flow** landslide is categorized into earth flows, debris avalanche, debris flow, mudflows, and creep. The most prevalent occurring landslides are rock falls and debris flow.
- While landslides are considered naturally occurring disasters, human-induced changes in the environment have recently caused their upsurge.
- **Natural Causes of Landslides are:**
 - Climatic changes
 - Seismic activities
 - Weathering (natural procedure of rock deterioration that leads to weak, landslide-susceptive materials)
 - Erosion
 - Volcanic eruptions
 - Steeper slopes
- **Human causes of landslides are:**
 - Mining activities
 - Deforestation

National Centre for Earth Science Studies (NCESS)

- It was established in **1978 by Prof. C. Karunakaran**.
- It operates by the **Earth System Science Organization** under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- It **aims to understand the earth in its totality** and gain knowledge on the interactive and competing processes that shape the earth, from its evolution to the present status of ever increasing demand for natural resources.
- NCESS **fosters multidisciplinary research in emerging areas of solid earth science** by utilizing the knowledge for earth science applications .

- It is situated at **Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala.**

Source: TH

Delimitation of Jammu and Kashmir

Recently, the **Election Commission of India** held internal discussions on the delimitation of constituencies ahead of elections to the new Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

- According to the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the UT of J&K would be increased from **107 to 114**.
- In the new Assembly, 24 seats have been kept aside for areas under Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), which means elections will be **conducted for 90 seats**.
- The Act also specifies that delimitation will be based on the **2011 census** till 2026.

Delimitation in India

- Articles **82 and 170 of the Constitution of India** provides for readjustment (Delimitation) and the division of each State into territorial constituencies on the basis of the 2001 census by such authority and in such manner as Parliament may, by law, determine.
Accordingly, the Parliament has enacted the **Delimitation Commission Acts in 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002 for this purpose.**
- Further, **Articles 330 and 332 of the Constitution of India** provides for refixing the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People and Legislative Assemblies of the States on the basis of the 2001 census.

Need for Delimitation

- The **uneven growth of population** in different constituencies in different parts of the country as well as within the same state.
- Also, **continuous migration of people** / electorate from one place to another especially from rural areas to urban areas have resulted in strikingly different sizes of electoral constituencies even within the same State.
- So, after every census, a readjustment is to be made in:
 - Allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha to the states
 - Division of each state into territorial constituencies.
- However, the **42nd Amendment Act of 1976 froze the allocation of seats** in the Lok Sabha to the states and the division of each State into territorial constituencies till the year 2000 at the 1971 level.
- Further, by the **84th Amendment Act of 2001**, this ban on readjustment was

extended for another 25 years (i.e., upto year 2026), **without affecting the total number of seats based on the 1971 census.**

- The **84th Amendment Act of 2001** also empowered the government to undertake readjustment and rationalisation of territorial constituencies in the states on the basis of the population figures of 1991 census.
- Later, **the 87th Amendment Act of 2003** provided for the delimitation of constituencies on the basis of the 2001 census and not 1991 census.
- Delimitation of constituencies is carried out by the **Simple Majority of Parliament.**
- Also delimitation exercise **cannot be questioned in any court.**

Source: TH

New Frog Species in Aravalis

An **amphibian survey conducted by Delhi University professor** has found four new species of frogs in the Aravalli biodiversity area.

- The survey has found the presence of **eight frog species in Aravalli biodiversity park.**
 - The four species reported earlier are Bull frog (largest frog in India), **Indian skipper frog, Narrow-mouthed frog (smallest land vertebrate from Delhi) and Pierrei's wart frog.**
 - The four new species found this year are **Nepal's Wart Frog, Indian Toad, Indus Valley Toad and Indian burrowing Frog.**
- Since frogs are an environmental indicator, their presence indicates a relatively healthy ecosystem.

Indian Skipper Frog

- The species is **widely distributed in South Asia and South-east Asia**, from southeastern Iran, southern Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, and eastern India at low to moderate elevations.
- They are often seen **at the edge of bodies of water** with their eyes above the water. They noisily move away from the shore when disturbed, giving them their common name.
- It is classified as **least concern** by the IUCN.

Pierrei's Wart Frog

- It is found in **India and its adjacent countries** Nepal Bangladesh and Bhutan.
- It is a common species associated with **paddy fields.**
- It is classified as **least concern** by the IUCN.

Nepal's Wart Frog

- It is a **small-sized frog native to northern and northeastern India**, Bangladesh, and Nepal.
- It is classified as **least concern** by the IUCN.

Indian Toad

- It is found **widely from northern Pakistan through Nepal, Bangladesh, India including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and other southeast Asian countries**.
- It lives mostly in **disturbed lowland habitats**, from upper beaches and riverbanks to human-dominated agricultural and urban areas but uncommon in closed forests.
- It is classified as **Near Threatened** by the IUCN.

Source: TOI

Smart Meter National Programme

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) has installed over 5 lakh smart meters in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. These meters have been distributed under the Smart Meter National Programme (SMNP).

- EESL's Smart Meter National Programme (SMNP) is working to eventually **replace 25 crore conventional meters with smart meters** across India.
- The smart meters are installed as per guidelines issued by the Central Electricity Authority.
- Smart meters are part of the overall **Advanced Metering Infrastructure solution (AMI)** that measures and records consumers' electricity usage at different times of the day and sends this information to the energy supplier through GPRS technology.
 - This gives consumers better access to information and enables them to make more informed decisions on the use of electricity in their homes.
 - This can immediately **control the Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses**, due to power pilferage, bypassing meters, defective meters, or errors in meter reading.
 - Every kilowatt of power drawn from the grid is accounted for – and billed, thereby **reviving revenues of the distributing companies (discoms)**.
- The programme is expected to better **billing efficiency by 75 to 100%** while increasing the revenues of the utility companies to Rs. 1,38,100 crore.
- EESL recovers the cost of these meters through the monetisation of energy savings, resulting from enhanced billing accuracy, avoided meter reading costs and other efficiencies.

Energy Efficiency Services Limited

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is a **joint venture of four national Public-Sector Undertakings** – NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation Limited, Rural Electrification Corporation Limited and POWERGRID Corporation of India Limited, **under the Ministry of Power**.
- It was founded in the year **2009** by the Government of India.
- As South Asia's first and foremost energy efficiency leader, EESL leads the market-related activities of the **National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE)**, one of the eight national missions under the Prime Minister's National Action Plan on Climate Change.
NMEEE consist of four initiatives to enhance energy efficiency in energy intensive industries which are as follows:
 - EESL is **implementing the world's largest energy efficiency portfolio**:
 - **Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA)**: World's largest zero-subsidy domestic LED bulb programme
 - **Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP)**: World's largest street light replacement programme
 - **Agriculture Demand Side management (AgDSM)**: To reduce the energy intensity of agriculture pumping sector by carrying out efficiency up gradation of agricultural pump sets.

Source: HBL

Swachh Nagar App

Recently, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has launched the **'Swachh Survekshan 2020'**, themed **"Cleanliness is Our Right"**.

The ministry has also launched **'Swachh Nagar App'** and **Water plus (Water+) protocol** on wastewater treatment that would become a part of cleanliness rankings of cities in the 2020 Swachh Survekshan.

Swachh Nagar App

People will be able to use the 'Swachh Nagar App' to place a **request to have solid waste, construction and demolition waste and wet waste picked up by the local civic body after making a payment**.

- They can also **track the waste-collection vehicle** on the app, ensuring accountability of municipal corporations.
- The app was already functional in Agra, Palwal and Port Blair and would now be extended to the whole country.

Water plus protocol

Water plus protocol, which aims to **provide a guideline for cities and towns to ensure no untreated wastewater is released into the environment**, enabling the sustainability of the sanitation value chain.

A city could be given the tag of Water+ if it ensures **100% treatment of wastewater and 10% use of treated wastewater**, among other things.

mSBM App

- The ministry also launched another app — **mSBM** — through which the government would be able to check **whether funds given to beneficiaries of the Swachh Bharat Mission for constructing toilets are used for the work before releasing the second instalment**.
- The app facilitates the applicants of individual household toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban (**SBM-Urban**) to know the status of their application in real-time and also help them to upload the correct photo.
 - Through the app user can **upload the photographs of beneficiaries receiving toilet facilities in their homes**.
 - While capturing the photograph, latitude and longitude of the location as well as date – time stamp is recorded automatically and gets uploaded on the central server of the Swachh Bharat Mission which is housed in the National Data Centre.

Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban

- The Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban (SBM-U), launched on **2nd October 2014** aims at making **urban India free from open defecation** and achieving 100% scientific management of municipal solid waste.
- **Objectives of the mission are:**
 - Elimination of **open defecation**.
 - Eradication of **Manual Scavenging**.
 - Modern and Scientific **Municipal Solid Waste Management**.
 - To effect **behavioral change** regarding healthy sanitation practices.
 - Generate **awareness about sanitation** and its linkage with public health.
 - **Capacity Augmentation** for Urban Local Bodies (ULB).
 - To create an enabling environment for **private sector participation** in Capex (capital expenditure) and Opex (operation and maintenance).
- **Components of mission are:**
 - Household toilets, including conversion of insanitary latrines into pour-flush latrines.
 - Community toilets.

- Public toilets.
- Solid waste management.
- Public Awareness.
- Capacity building and Administrative & Office Expenses (A&OE).
- By August 2019, **24 states and more than 3,800 cities have been certified Open Defecation-Free (ODF).**
- More than **98% of toilet construction targets have been met.**

Source: TH

Injeti Srinivas Committee Report on CSR

The committee chaired by **Injeti Srinivas**, secretary, corporate affairs ministry, has submitted its **recommendations on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** to the Minister of Corporate Affairs (MCA).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- The term "Corporate Social Responsibility" in general can be referred to as **corporate initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on the environment** and impact on social welfare.
- In India, the concept of CSR is governed by **clause 135 of the Companies Act, 2013.**
- India is the **first country in the world to mandate CSR spending** along with a framework to identify potential CSR activities.
- The CSR provisions within the Act is **applicable** to companies with **an annual turnover of 1,000 crore and more**, or a **net worth of Rs. 500 crore and more**, or a **net profit of Rs. 5 crore and more.**
- The Act requires companies to setup a CSR committee which shall recommend a Corporate Social Responsibility Policy to the Board of Directors and also monitor the same from time to time.
- The Act encourages **companies to spend 2% of their average net profit in the previous three years** on CSR activities.
- The indicative activities, which can be undertaken by a company under CSR, have been specified under **Schedule VII** of the Act. The activities include:
 - Eradicating extreme hunger and poverty,
 - Promotion of education, gender equality and empowering women,
 - Combating Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and other diseases,
 - Ensuring environmental sustainability;
 - Contribution to the **Prime Minister's National Relief Fund** or any other fund set up by the Central Government or the State Governments for socio-economic

development and relief and funds for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes, minorities and women etc.

Recommendations

- The **expenses towards CSR should be eligible for deduction** in the computation of taxable income.
- A clarification may be issued that for newly incorporated companies, the CSR obligation under Section 135 of the Companies Act shall lie only after they have been in existence for three years.
- A provision to **carry forward unspent CSR balance for three to five years**.
 - CSR should not be used as a “means of resource-gap funding for government schemes”.
 - The Companies (Amendment) Act, 2019 provides that the CSR expenditure which remains unspent in three years would be transferred to any fund specified in Schedule VII of the Companies Act such as the Swachh Bharat Kosh, the Clean Ganga Fund, and the Prime Minister’s Relief Fund.
 - The committee report said that the central government funds should be discontinued as CSR spend, and instead a **special designated fund** should be created for transfer of **unspent CSR money beyond three to five years**.
- **Aligning Schedule VII** of the Companies Act with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- The companies having CSR-prescribed amount below ₹50 lakh may be exempted from constituting a CSR Committee.
- The **violation of CSR compliance may be made a civil offence** and shifted to the penalty regime.

This is a departure from the recent policy change which had provided for a three-year jail term for violating CSR norms.
- Introducing impact assessment studies for CSR obligations of ₹5 crore or more.
- CSR spending has to be a “board-driven process to provide innovative technology-based solutions for social problems” and that the board has to assess the credibility of an **implementation agency**, which have to be **registered with the MCA** to carry out CSR activities.
- **Developing a CSR exchange portal to connect contributors**, beneficiaries and agencies, allowing CSR in social benefit bonds and promoting social impact companies.

Source: TH

Norms For Regulatory Sandbox

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued the final framework for regulatory sandbox in order to enable innovations in financial technology (fintech) space.

- **A regulatory sandbox** usually refers to live testing of new products or services in a controlled/test regulatory environment for which regulators may permit certain regulatory relaxations for the limited purpose of the testing.
- The objective of the sandbox is to foster responsible innovation in financial services, promote efficiency and bring benefits to consumers.
- The framework will likely be a positive step for financial technology start-ups and companies looking to innovate in the fast changing and highly regulated sector.
- Also, it will enable authorities to take a considered view on the regulatory changes or new regulations that may be needed to support useful innovation, while containing the attendant risks.

Norms

- RBI will launch the sandbox for entities that meet the criteria of **minimum net worth of ₹25 lakh** as per their latest audited balance sheet.
The entity should either be a **company incorporated and registered in the country or banks licensed to operate in India**.
- While money transfer services, digital know-your customer, financial inclusion and cybersecurity products are included, **crypto currency, credit registry and credit information have been left out**.
- The proposed FinTech solution should highlight an existing gap in the financial ecosystem and the proposal should demonstrate how it would address the problem, and bring benefits to consumers or the industry and/or perform the same work more efficiently.

Source: TH
