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Global Talent Competitiveness Index

Why in News

India has moved up eight places to the **72nd position in the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) 2020.**

Switzerland topped the list of 132 nations, **followed by the US and Singapore.**

Rank	Country	Score
1	Switzerland	81.23
2	US	79.09
3	Singapore	78.48
4	Sweden	75.82
5	Denmark	75.18
6	Netherlands	74.99
7	Finland	74.47

8	Luxembourg	73.94
9	Norway	72.91
10	Australia	72.53
72	India	40.42

Key Points

- It was started in 2013 and is an **annual benchmarking report** that measures the ability of countries to **compete for talent, their ability to grow, attract and retain talent**.
- **Theme** for 2020 was '**Global Talent in the Age of Artificial Intelligence**'. It explores how the development of **artificial intelligence (AI)** is not only changing the nature of work but also forcing a re-evaluation of workplace practices, corporate structures and innovation ecosystems.
- **Inequality**: The report noted that the gap between high income, talent-rich nations and the rest of the world is widening. More than half of the population in the developing world lack basic digital skills.
- **About GTCI Report**: It is launched by **INSEAD**, a partner and sponsor of the **United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** Davos, Switzerland recently.
 - INSEAD is one of the world's leading and largest graduate business schools with locations all over the world and alliances with top institutions.
 - The six metrics used to decide a country's rank are - enable, attract, grow, retain, vocational skills and global knowledge skills.

India

- The report stated that **India's GTCI score and GDP per capita are both lower** than the other emerging market economies such as **BRICS - Brazil (80th), Russia (48th), China (42nd), and South Africa (70th)**.
- India's **key strength** relates to **growing talent**, due to its **levels of lifelong learning** and **access to growth**. However, more could be done to **improve India's educational system**.
- The country's **highest-ranked sub-pillar is employability** but the ability to match labour market demand and supply stands in contrast to the country's poor "mid-level skills", which result in a mediocre score in vocational and technical skills.

- India faces the **challenge** of **attracting and retaining talent** and the weak ability to overcome it. India has to **strengthen the role of minorities and women** to raise the level of **internal openness** in the country which would make it more appealing.
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Establishment of Chairs in the Name of Eminent Women

Why in News

On the occasion of **National Girl Child Day (24th January)**, the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) have launched an initiative called '**Establishment of Chairs in the Universities in the name of eminent women administrators, artists, scientists and social reformers**'.

The programme intends to establish **10 chairs** across different universities after eminent women to encourage women to pursue higher education and excel in their chosen fields.

Key Points

- **Objectives:**

The establishment of chairs will help the universities to recognise women's contributions and promote female role models in respective fields especially the formulation of public policies.
- **Time Period:**

Initially, the chairs will be set up for a period of 5 years.
- **Funding:**

Each chair will be funded by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (₹50 lakh per year).
- **Eligibility:**
 - All the universities that are eligible to receive grant-in-aid from the UGC are eligible to apply for the establishment of the Chairs.
 - Any scholar or academician in the age group of 55-70 years, with specialisation in their fields, will be eligible for the chair.
 - The selected academicians will be appointed for a period of five years, which can be extended to another five years.

- **Functions:**

- Engagement in research and, in turn, contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the area of the study.
- Strengthening the role of university/academics in public policymaking.
- Designing short-term capacity-building programmes for teachers in higher education.
- Providing a forum for inter-university/ intercollegiate Post Graduate and Research level dialogues, discussion meetings, seminars.

- **Assessment:**

- The University will review the progress of the Chair **annually** and submit a final report on the activities and outcome of the Chair to the UGC after **five years**.
- However, the UGC may undertake the exercise of reviewing the Chair for its continuance, at any stage.

Sr.No	Subject	Proposed Name of the Chair
1	Administration	Devi Ahilyabai Holkar A proficient ruler and an erudite politician of Malwa; also known as Malwa queen
2	Literature	Mahadevi Varma A freedom fighter, Hindi poet, academician
3	Freedom Fighter (North East)	Rani Gaidinliu Naga spiritual and political leader who had led a revolt against British rule in India
4	Medicine & Health	Anandibai Gopalrao Joshi India's first woman physician
5	Performing Art	Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indian Carnatic singer from Madurai, Tamil Nadu. ● The first musician ever to be awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour.

6	Forest/Wildlife Conservation	Amrita Devi (Beniwal) She sacrificed her life along with her three daughters to save green trees being felled by the Maharaja of Jodhpur in Marwar, Rajasthan in 1730.
7	Mathematics	Lilavati It is a treatise on mathematics, written by Indian mathematician Bhāskara II's in 1150.
8	Science	Kamala Sohonie The first Indian woman to receive a PhD in a scientific discipline and also paved the way for women to study at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.
9	Poetry & Mysticism	Lal Ded Played a lead role in the creation of Vatsun style of mystic poetry.
10	Educational Reforms	Hansa Mehta A social activist, educator and eminent writer.

Source: PIB

World Bank loan for Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation

Why in News

Recently, the Union government, Maharashtra and the **World Bank (WB)** signed a loan agreement of \$210 million to support small farmers **participate in competitive agriculture** value chains, **facilitate agri-business investments**, increase market access and productivity, and build the **resilience of crops** to recurrent floods or droughts in Maharashtra.

Key Points

- It is a significant step towards transforming the state's rural economy through **sustainable agriculture** and **empowerment of farmers** by connecting them directly to the markets and doubling agriculture exports from the state.
- This project is also in line with the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (2008)**.
- **Maharashtra Agribusiness** and **Rural Transformation Project** will help:
 - Enhance the adoption of **climate-resilient production techniques** in the state.
 - Increase private sector investments in agricultural value chains.
 - Remove constraints for producers and entrepreneurs in accessing emerging domestic and export markets.
 - Capacity-building of state to respond to commodity-price fluctuations by providing access to timely information on markets.
 - **Focus on Women:**
 - At least 43% of farmers and farm-workers participating in project activities are expected to be women.
 - Specific focus will be given to **women-led enterprises** and the participation of women in the decision-making processes of **farmer producer organizations**.

Maharashtra and Agricultural Transformation

- Agricultural transformation is **already underway** in Maharashtra with an upsurge in the **production of high-value crops** such as fruits and vegetables, pulses, and maize and soybean for animal feed.
- The state has emerged as one of the **country's largest producer and exporter of fruits, vegetables, pulses, cotton, and soybean**.
- But, the area under cultivation for cereals such as **rice and wheat** has been **declining** since 2000.
- Many of these changes have led to several **positive developments** for Maharashtra where production is:
 - **labour intensive** in horticulture and floriculture.
 - **climate-resilient (pulse-based** cropping systems increases resilience, e.g. pigeon pea intercropping leads to higher soil **carbon sequestration** than mono-crop system)
 - Responds to domestic and global market needs.
- With a substantial urban population, relatively high per capita incomes, and highest industrialization levels, Maharashtra is **well-placed for an agriculture-sector transformation**.

Source: PIB

Archaea Microorganism

Why in News

Recently, scientists at the **National Centre for Microbial Resource under National Centre for Cell Science (NCMR-NCCS) in Pune** have reported a **new archaeon**, which they **discovered in Sambhar Salt Lake in Rajasthan**.

National Centre for Microbial Resource

- It **started as Microbial Culture Collection (MCC) in 2009** with a mandate to preserve and catalogue the diversity of bacteria collected from different ecological niches from all over India and to make them available for biotechnological exploitation by researchers.
- In April 2017 MCC was transformed as a **Centre of Excellence for National Centre for Microbial Resource (NCMR)**. It plays a crucial role as custodian of microbial diversity of India.
- It is a part of the **National Centre for Cell Science**.

National Centre for Cell Science

- It is a **national level** biotechnology, tissue engineering and tissue banking research centre located at **Savitribai Phule Pune University, Maharashtra**.
- It is **one of the premier research centres in India**, which works on cell-culture, cell-repository, immunology, chromatin-remodelling.



Key Points

- Archaea (singular archaeon) are a **primitive group of microorganisms** that thrive in extreme habitats such as hot springs, cold deserts and hypersaline lakes.
- These slow-growing organisms are **also present in the human gut** and have a potential relationship with human health.
- They are known for **producing antimicrobial molecules and for antioxidant activity** with applications in eco-friendly waste-water treatment.

- Scientists all over the world are working on the taxonomy of archaea but the studies on archaea are outnumbered and very little is known about how archaea behave in the human body.
- Based on **mandatory genome analysis**, researchers found that the organism has potential gene clusters that help **maintain the metabolism** of the archaea to survive in extremely harsh conditions.
- This particular organism also **harbours specific pathways for DNA replication, recombination and repair**.
- The new archaeon has been named **Natrialba swarupiae**, after Dr Renu Swarup, Secretary of the Department of Biotechnology, for her initiative in supporting microbial diversity studies in the country.

Source: IE

10th National Voters' Day

Why in News

10th National Voters' Day (NVD) is organized by Election Commission of India on 25th January 2020 to mark 70 years of Election Commission of India (ECI).

NVD has been celebrated on January 25 every year since 2011.

Key Points

- **Theme:** The theme for NVD 2020 is '**Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy**'. The theme sets the tone for year-long activities which focus on voter education and renewal of citizens' faith in the electoral process.
- **Aim:** NVD is celebrated to encourage, facilitate and maximize the voter enrolment, especially for the new voters. The day is utilized to spread awareness among voters for promoting informed participation in the electoral process.

Election Commission of India

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
ECI was established on 25th January 1950.
- The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.

- **Structure of the Commission**

- Originally the commission had only one election commissioner but after the Election Commissioner Amendment Act 1989, it has been made a multi-member body.
- The commission presently consists of one Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (ECs).
- The secretariat of the commission is located in New Delhi.

Source: TH

International Summit on Women in STEM

Why in News

The Department of Biotechnology (Ministry of Science & Technology) organized an International Summit on Women in **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)** in New Delhi in January 2020.

- The overall aim was **to boost the participation of women in the STEM fields** for the development of a scientific career.
- Theme: **Visualizing the Future: New Skylines.**

Key Points

- The objective of the summit was to showcase successful women in the field of STEM as **real-world examples of women scientists, doctors and engineers** as well as the rewards associated with it.
- **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)**
It is a **curriculum** based on the idea of educating students in 4 specific disciplines — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — in an **interdisciplinary and applied approach.**
- A robust STEM education creates critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and next-generation innovators.
- India is one of the countries that produce the highest number of scientists and engineers, the **growth of STEM has picked up significantly over the last few years.**
- According to the **National Science Foundation**, it is predicted that **80% of the jobs** created in the next decade will require some form of math and science skills.
- Despite having the top-quality talent, the exam-focused education model of India has limited students when it comes to innovation, problem-solving and creativity. This is where the STEM players come in to fill **this gap.**

- Under **Article 51A** of the Constitution of India it is a duty of every citizen of India to develop the **scientific temper**, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.

Source: PIB

US to Limit Visas to Curb Birth Tourism

Why in News

The **United States of America** is planning to bar pregnant women from attaining visas for **“birth tourism”**.

The measures are to be adopted to curb the number of foreigners who use the visa to secure **automatic permanent citizenship** for their children **by giving birth on American soil**.

Birth tourism

It is technically defined as a pregnant woman's decision to travel to another country for the specific reason of giving birth in that country and hoping to gain citizenship.

Key Points

- **B1/B2 visitor visas** would no longer be issued to “aliens seeking to enter the United States for birth tourism”.
- Pregnant women will need to **provide a specific reason** for travel, like **medical necessity**, beyond giving birth to travel to the US.
- The crackdown on “birth tourism” is **for public safety and national security** as well as to maintain the integrity of our immigration system because the birth tourism industry **threatens to overburden valuable hospital and national resources**.
- **Currently, US law does not bar foreign women from travelling to the US to give birth**. However, women need to prove that they have the financial means to pay for a medical procedure if that is the reason for the trip.
- The US considers this **“a glaring immigration loophole”**.

B1/B2 Tourist Visa

It is a temporary, non-immigrant visa, allowing the holder to travel to the US for business and tourism purposes.

Requirements for becoming a U.S. citizen

- **At birth:**
 - Have been born in the US or certain territories or outlying possessions of the US and subject to the jurisdiction of the US; OR
 - Had a parent or parents who were citizens at the time of birth (if the person was born abroad) and meet other requirements.
- **After birth:**
 - Apply for “derived” or “acquired” citizenship through parents.
 - Apply for naturalization.

Acquisition and Determination of Indian Citizenship

There are four ways in which Indian citizenship can be acquired: **birth, descent, registration and naturalisation**. The provisions are listed under the **Citizenship Act, 1955**.

79th Foundation Day of ITAT

Why in News

Recently, the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) celebrated its 79th foundation day.

Income Tax Appellate Tribunal

- **Establishment:** Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) is a **quasi-judicial** institution set up in 1941 under section 5A of the **Income Tax Act, 1922**.
 - Initially, it had three Benches at Delhi, Kolkata (Calcutta) and Mumbai (Bombay). But presently ITAT has 63 Benches at 27 different stations covering almost all the cities having a seat of the High Court.
 - ITAT is referred to as '**Mother Tribunal**' being the oldest Tribunal in the country.
- **Functions:** It deals with **appeals under the Direct Taxes Acts** namely, the **Income-tax Act, 1961**.

The orders passed by the ITAT are final, an appeal lies to the High Court only if a substantial question of law arises for determination.

Source: TH
