



News Analysis (03 Feb, 2020)

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Union Budget 2020-21: Highlights

Why in News

The Union Minister of Finance has presented the Budget 2020-21. The Budget, with the central theme of **ease of living for all citizens**, is based on three prominent themes:

- **Aspirational India** - better standards of living with access to health, education and better jobs for all sections of the society
- **Economic Development for all** - "Sabka Saath , Sabka Vikas , Sabka Vishwas".
- **Caring Society** - both humane and compassionate; Antyodaya as an article of faith.

Budget

- Union Budget of India is the country's comprehensive **Annual Financial Statement**.
- The Union Budget consists of a detailed account of the government's finances, its revenues from various sources and expenditures to be incurred on different activities that it will incur.
- As mentioned in **Article 112 of the Indian Constitution**, the Union Government lays a statement of its estimated receipts and expenditure for that year, From April 1 to March 31, before both the Houses of Parliament.
- The term "budget" is **not mentioned in the Constitution**.

Union Budget 2020-21: Economy

Why in News

The Union Minister of Finance has presented the Budget 2020-21. Given below are the important **macroeconomic indicators** and proposed **changes in taxation in India**.

- **Macroeconomic Indicators**

- **Nominal growth of GDP** - 10% (2020-21). Nominal GDP is an assessment of economic production in an economy that includes current prices in its calculation.
- **Fiscal deficit** - 3.8% of GDP (2019-20), 3.5% of GDP (2020-21).
 - The estimation for the FY20 was at 3.3%, thereby **deviating from the target set in the fiscal path.**
 - The Government has made use of **Section 4 of the FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) Act** which provides a trigger mechanism for a **deviation from the estimated fiscal deficit** on account of structural reforms in the economy with unanticipated fiscal implications.
 - **Reasons:** The increase in deficit estimate is mainly on account of the shortfall in revenue collection. The government on its part has lowered its expenditure on many of the heads. For example, food subsidy in the budget estimate 2019-20 was over ₹1.84 lakh crore, which has been lowered to ₹1.08 lakh crore in the revised estimate
 - **Fiscal deficit, by definition,** is the difference between a government's revenue receipts plus non-debt capital receipts (NDCR) and its total expenditure.
 - Fiscal deficit occurs when a government collects lesser money - in terms of personal and corporate taxes, GST, market loans and NDCR (money received from sale of old assets) etc. - than it spends, on items such as central sector schemes, salaries of employees, subsidies, payments to states and so on.
 - According to the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act** in India, the recommended **fiscal deficit should be 3% of GDP.**
- **Revenue deficit**- 2.7% of GDP (2020-21). By definition, revenue deficit is the excess of revenue expenditure over revenue receipts.
- **Size of Economy:** India is now the **fifth largest economy** of the world in terms of GDP.
- **Growth and Inflation:** 7.4% average growth clocked during 2014-19 with **inflation** averaging around 4.5%.
- **Poverty alleviation:** 271 million people raised out of poverty during 2006-16.
- **FDI:** India's **Foreign Direct Investment elevated** to US\$ 284 billion during 2014-19 from US\$ 190 billion during 2009-14.
- **Central Government debt reduced** to 48.7% of GDP (March 2019) from 52.2% (March 2014).

- Two cross-cutting developments:
 - **Proliferation of technologies** (Analytics, Machine Learning, robotics, Bioinformatics and Artificial Intelligence).
 - **Highest ever number of people in the productive age group** (15-65 years) in India.
- **15th Finance Commission** has **cut state share of central taxes to the states** by one percentage point to 41%.
 - This is due to the **newly formed Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh**, which will get funds from the Centre's share, which means **devolution will be for 28 states compared to 29 earlier**.
 - 42% was recommended by the 14th Finance Commission

Changes in Taxation

- **Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT) removed.** Instead of companies paying DDT on the dividend they give out, the **dividend income will now be added to the taxable income of the recipient**, and taxed at the applicable rate.
- **Income Tax**
 - New tax slabs and lower income tax rates. Around 70 of the existing exemptions and deductions to be removed in the new simplified regime.
 - New tax regime to be optional - an individual may continue to pay tax as per the old regime and avail deductions and exemptions.

Taxable Income Slab (Rs.)	Existing tax rates	New tax rates
0-2.5 Lakh	Exempt	Exempt
2.5-5 Lakh	5%	5%
5-7.5 Lakh	20%	10%
7.5-10 Lakh	20%	15%
10-12.5 Lakh	30%	20%
12.5-15 Lakh	30%	25%
Above 15 Lakh	30%	30%

- **Corporate Tax:** Concessional corporate tax rate of **15% to new domestic companies in manufacturing and power sector**.

- **5% health cess** to be imposed on imports of medical equipment given these are made significantly in India.
 - Issuance of **Unique Registration Number** to all charity institutions for easy tax compliance.
 - **'Vivad Se Vishwas'** scheme, with a deadline of 30th June, 2020, to reduce litigations in direct taxes.
 - **100% tax exemption** to the interest, dividend and capital gains income on investment made in infrastructure and priority sectors before 31st March, 2024 with a minimum lock-in period of 3 years by the Sovereign Wealth Fund of foreign governments.
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Union Budget 2020-21: Social Sector and Infrastructure

Why in News

The Union Minister of Finance has presented the Budget 2020-21. Given below are the provisions related to the social sector and infrastructure.

Agriculture

- A budget allocation of **₹2.83 lakh crore** for 16 action points.
- The action points include measures to provide farmers access to faraway markets by running trains (**Kisan Rail**) and flights (**Krishi Udaan**) and providing relief to farmers from water shortage.
- It will also include **'One-Product One-District'** for better marketing and export in the Horticulture sector. The scheme is already functional in Uttar Pradesh.
- The focus is also on **Jaivik Kheti Portal** (online national organic products market), **Zero-Budget Natural Farming, PM-KUSUM**.
- Agri-credit availability set at ₹15 lakh crore for 2020-21.

Health

- An allocation of ₹69,000 crore for the health sector.
- Proposal to set up hospitals in Tier-II and Tier-III cities with the private sector using PPP model.
- Expansion of **Jan Aushadhi Kendra Scheme** to all districts by 2024.
- A task force to be appointed to recommend regarding steps required to lower the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and improving nutrition.

Education

- ₹99,300 crore for the education sector in 2021 and about ₹3,000 crore for skill development.
- Urban local bodies to provide **internship to young engineers** for a year.
- **Degree-level full fledged online education programmes** by institutions ranked in the top 100 in **NIRF** rankings, especially to benefit underprivileged students.
- A **national police university** and a **national forensic science university** is proposed to be setup.
- **IND SAT exam** for students of Asia and Africa to promote “study in India” programme.

Infrastructure

- **Infrastructure Financing**
 - Rs. 103 lakh crore for **National Infrastructure Pipeline** projects announced.
 - An **international bullion exchange** to be set up at GIFT City.
 - Proceeds from divestment will go only into capital expenditure and not revenue expenditure.
- **Transport**
 - Budget proposes to provide ₹1.7 lakh crore for transport infrastructure in 2021.
 - National Logistics Policy to be released soon.
 - Chennai-Bengaluru Expressway to be started.
 - Government to monetise 12 lots of national highways by 2024.
- **Railways**
 - Aims to achieve electrification of 27,000 km of railway lines.
 - Plan to have a large solar power capacity for Indian Railways.
- 100 more airports will be developed by 2024 to support UDAN.
- 5 new smart cities in public-private partnership mode.

Culture and Tourism

- Proposal to establish **Indian Institute of Heritage and Conservation**.
- **5 archaeological sites** to be developed as iconic sites:
 - Rakhigarhi (Haryana)
 - Hastinapur (Uttar Pradesh)
 - Shivsagar (Assam)
 - Dholavira (Gujarat)
 - Adichanallur (Tamil Nadu)
- Maritime museum to be set up at Lothal (Gujarat).
- Tribal Museum in Ranchi
- **A museum on Numismatics and Trade** to be established.

Why in News

The Union Minister of Finance has presented the Budget 2020-21.

Key Points

- **Bank deposit insurance cover** has been increased from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh per depositor.
- Government plans to amend the Companies Act to decriminalise civil offences.
- Government to sell part of its stake in LIC via public offering.
- Scheme to encourage manufacturing of mobile phones, electronic equipment and semiconductor packaging.
- **National Technical Textiles Mission** for a period of 4 years.
- **NIRVIK Scheme** for higher export credit disbursement launched.
- Setting up of an **Investment Clearance Cell** to provide end to end facilitation.
- Early life funding proposed, including a **seed fund** to support ideation and development of early stage Start-ups.
- Audit threshold for MSMEs raised to ₹5 crore from ₹1 crore.
- Certain specified categories of Government securities to be opened fully for non - resident investors also.
- Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) limit in corporate bonds increased to 15% from 9% of its outstanding stock.
- NBFCs eligibility limit for debt recovery reduced from:
 - Rs. 500 crore to Rs 100 crore asset size
 - Rs 1 crore to Rs 50 lakh loan size.

Digitisation

- Knowledge Translation Clusters for emerging technology sectors.
- Policy to enable the private sector to build Data Centre parks throughout the country.
- Rs.8000 crore proposed over five years for **National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications**.
- **Mapping of India's genetic landscape**- Two new national level Science Schemes to be initiated to create a comprehensive database.

Governance

- An independent, professional and specialist **National Recruitment Agency (NRA)** for conducting a computer-based online Common Eligibility Test for recruitment on all non gazetted posts. A test-centre in every district, particularly in the Aspirational Districts will be set up.

- **New National Policy on Official Statistics** to promote the use of the latest technologies including AI and lay down a road-map towards modernised data collection, integrated information portal and timely dissemination of information.
- A sum of Rs. 100 crore allocated to begin the preparations for **G20 presidency** to be hosted in India in the year 2022.

Source: TH

World Wetlands Day

Why in News

- **World Wetlands Day** is celebrated every year on the 2nd of February. This day marks the date of the adoption of the **Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971** in the **Iranian city of Ramsar**.
- The **theme** for 2020 is '**Wetlands and Biodiversity**'.
- It was **first celebrated in 1997**.

Wetlands

- **Wetlands** are ecosystems saturated with water, either **seasonally or permanently**. They include mangroves, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice-fields, coral reefs, marine areas no deeper than 6 metres at low tide, as well as **human-made wetlands** such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.
- Though they cover only around **6% of the Earth's land** surface, **40% of all plant and animal species** live or breed in wetlands.

Significance of Wetlands

- Wetlands are a critical part of our natural environment. They **mitigate floods, protect coastlines and build community resilience to disasters, reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and improve water quality**.
- Wetlands are critical to human and planet life. More than 1 billion people depend on them for a living and 40% of the world's species live and breed in wetlands.
- They are a **vital source for food, raw materials, genetic resources for medicines, and hydropower**.
- **30%** of land-based **carbon** is stored in **peatland**.
- They play an important **role in transport, tourism and the cultural and spiritual well-being of people**.
- Many wetlands are areas of natural beauty and many are important to **Aboriginal people**.

Threats

- As per the **IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)**'s global assessment wetlands are the **most threatened ecosystem**.
- Wetlands are **disappearing 3 times faster than forests** due to human activities and global warming.
- According to **UNESCO**, the threat to wetlands will have an **adverse impact on 40% of the world's flora and fauna** that live or breed in wetlands.
- **Major threats:** Agriculture, development, pollution and climate change.

IPBES

- IPBES is an **independent intergovernmental** body established to strengthen the **science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services** for the **conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity**, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.
- It was established in **Panama City (US)**, in April **2012**.
- It is **not** a United Nations body.

Status of Wetlands in India

- Recently, the Ramsar Convention declared **10 wetlands** from India as Ramsar sites taking the total number of Ramsar Sites in the country to **37**.
 - Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines of the convention.
 - There are currently over **2,300 Ramsar Sites around the world**.
- India has over 7 lakh wetlands, covering **4.5%** of the country's **area**, yet **none** of the wetlands has been notified under domestic laws.
- Wetlands are regulated under the **Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017**.
- The 2010 version of the Rules provided for a **Central Wetland Regulatory Authority**, but new Rules of 2017 replaced it with **state-level bodies** and created a **National Wetland Committee**, which functions in an **advisory role**.
 - The newer regulations **removed** some items from the definition of "wetlands" including **backwaters, lagoons, creeks, and estuaries**.
 - Under the 2017 regulations process to identify the wetlands has been **delegated to the States**.

Source: IE

Facial Recognition for Elections

Why in News

In the upcoming Telangana urban local bodies polls, the State Election Commission (SEC) will be using a facial recognition app for verification and real-time authentication of voters on the pilot basis in 10 selected polling stations.

- The use of facial recognition for election will be a **first-of-its-kind in India**.
- It will help **to counter impersonation by voters** during polling.

Key Points

- The initiative will be implemented in **Kompally Municipality of Medchal Malkajgiri district of Telangana**.
- The facial recognition is proposed as an **additional tool to validate the identity of the voter** in addition to the existing procedures prescribed including use of photo electoral rolls, the insistence of photo ID proof in addition to the personal scrutiny by the polling agents appointed by the contesting candidates.
- **Proposed Procedure:**
 - The additional polling officer-in-charge of the mobile phone will work with a facial recognition system.
 - The app will display results of the verification based on the match established with the voters with an appropriate message.
 - However, non verification from this procedure shall not be a sufficient ground to deny voting rights to any voter and it needs to be accompanied by the existing identification systems.
 - Further, the photographs taken will not be stored or used for any other purpose. These photographs will be erased from the memory of the mobile phone used in the polling station and also the server of TSTS (Telangana State Technology Services).

Source: IE

Chola Dynasty Port- Poompuhar

Why in News

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has launched '**Project Digital Poompuhar**' to recreate the **Chola Dynasty port** city (Poompuhar) in **Tamil Nadu**.

- The reconstruction of Poompuhar is a part of **DST's Indian Digital Heritage (IDH) project**. An exhibition of its first project '**Digital Hampi**' is currently on display at the National Museum.
- The Poompuhar project is a part of the **second phase of IDH**. The second phase will focus on the heritage sites that are currently underwater in Gujarat (eg. Dwarka) and Tamil Nadu.

Key Points



- **History:**

- The Poompuhar is mentioned in works of **Sangam Tamil literature** which refers to the city located 30 km from the existing Poompuhar town in southern Tamil Nadu.
- The port city flourished in inter-continental trade but shifted with time. Finally, it was re-established at the present location at the **mouth of the river Cauvery** around **3,000 years ago**.
- The shifts took place due to the continuous "kadalkol" or rising sea levels and the submergence of the deltas,

- **Previous Studies:**

- The Indian Remote Sensing Satellites showed that the city was established initially in the Cauvery Delta about 30km away from the present Poempuhar town around 15,000 years ago.
- It had discovered a **harbour-like structure** as well as sea walls and probably a bridge in the region.
- The study also provided insights about the life history and the social, cultural as well as technological evolution of Poempuhar. It also revealed the **age of Poempuhar** from **3000 years to 15,000 to 20,000 years**.
- Despite several studies on Tamil literature, archaeology, underwater exploration and geosciences, the exact location of initial establishment of Poempuhar, its age, later shifts and the reasons and periods of its extinction, remained unresolved.

Project Digital Poempuhar

- The project involves underwater surveys and photography by remotely operated vehicles and remote sensing-based geodynamic studies to bring out comprehensive information on the time series evolution and extinction.
- It also involves the visualisation of geodynamic processes of the last 20,000 years like land subsidence, sea-level rise, Cauvery's migration, floods, tsunamis, cyclones and erosion.
- The study is also expected to provide scientific information not only on the life history of Poempuhar and the socio-cultural evolution but also the science and technological evolution and the disaster history of this region,

Indian Digital Heritage Initiative

- India Digital Heritage is an initiative by the **Department of Science and Technology** in the areas of technology and humanities for digital documentation and interpretation of our tangible and intangible heritage.
- The project highlights art, architecture and cultural legacy of the world heritage site **Hampi in Karnataka**, the medieval capital of the **Vijayanagara dynasty**.

Cholas

- The Cholas controlled the central and northern parts of Tamil Nadu.
- Their core area of the rule was the Kaveri delta, later known as Cholamandalam. Their capital was Uraiyur (near Tiruchirapalli town) and Puhar or Kaviripattinam was an alternative royal residence and chief port town.
- **Tiger** was their **emblem**.
- The Cholas also maintained an **efficient navy**.

- **King Karikala** was a famous king of the Sangam Cholas.
 - Many Sangam poems mention the **Battle of Venni where he defeated the confederacy of Cheras, Pandyas and eleven minor chieftains.**
 - Trade and commerce flourished during his reign.
 - He founded the **port city of Puhar (identical with Kaveripattinam)** and constructed 160 km of an embankment along the Kaveri River.

Source: IE

Rakhigarhi to be Developed as an Iconic Site

Why in News

Union Budget (2020-21) has proposed to develop **Rakhigarhi** (Hisar district, Haryana) as an **iconic site.**

4 other archaeological sites in **Hastinapur** (Uttar Pradesh), **Shivsagar** (Assam), **Dholavira** (Gujarat) and **Adichanallur** in (Tamil Nadu) will also be developed as iconic sites with onsite museums.

Rakhigarhi

- **Rakhigarhi** is the largest Harappan site in the **Indian subcontinent.**
Other large sites of **Harappan civilization** on Indian sub-continent are **Harappa, Mohenjodaro** and **Ganveriwala** in **Pakistan** and **Dholavira (Gujarat)** in India.
- At Rakhigarhi, the excavations are being done to **trace its beginnings** and to study its **gradual evolution** from **6000 BCE (Pre-Harappan phase)** to **2500 BCE.**
The site was excavated by **Amarendra Nath** of ASI.

Major Findings at the Site

Settlements

The archaeological excavations revealed **the mature Harappan phase** represented by planned township having **mud-brick** as well as **burnt-brick** houses with a **proper drainage system.**

Seals and Pottery

- A **cylindrical seal** with **5 Harappan characters** on one side and a symbol of an **alligator** on the other is an **important** find from this site.

- The ceramic industry represented by **red ware**, which included **dish-on-stand**, vase, **perforated jar** among others.

Other Antiquities

Blades; terracotta and shell bangles, beads of **semi precious stones**, and **copper objects**; animal figurines, **toy cart** frame and wheel of terracotta; bone points; inscribed **steatite seals and sealings**.

Rituals and Burials

- **Animal sacrificial pit** lined with mud-brick and **triangular** and **circular fire altars** on the mud floor have also been excavated that signifies the ritual system of Harappans.
- The excavations have yielded a few extended burials, which certainly belong to a very late stage, maybe the medieval times.

Recent findings

- Recently, a study of **DNA** from **skeletal remains** excavated from the Harappan cemetery at Rakhigarhi found that the people in **the Harappan Civilization have an independent origin**.
- This study **negates** the theory of the Harappans having Steppe pastoral or ancient **Iranian farmer ancestry**.

Harappan Civilization

- It is also known as **Indus Valley Civilization**.
- It flourished around 2,500 BC, in the western part of South Asia, in contemporary Pakistan and Western India.
- The Indus Valley was home to the largest of the four ancient urban civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China.
- In the 1920s, the Archaeological Department of India carried out excavations in the Indus valley wherein the ruins of the two old cities, viz. Mohenjodaro and Harappa were unearthed.

Source: TH

Inquiry into Study on Bats and Bat-Hunters

Why in News

- The government has ordered an inquiry into a study conducted in **Nagaland** by researchers from **China, US, and India** on **bats and humans** carrying **antibodies to deadly viruses like Ebola**.
- The study is investigated for how the scientists were allowed **to access live samples of bats and bat hunters (humans) without due permission**.
- The inquiry comes at a time when people worldwide are grappling with the spread of **novel coronavirus (nCoV)** from China.

Key Points

- **Bats** are **harvested** in an **annual ritual** by a **Naga Tribe** in **Nagaland**. The study conducted research on **individuals who participated in the ritual**.
- The Nagaland **study** suggests bats in **South Asia** act as a **reservoir host** of a diverse range of **filoviruses**, and **filovirus spillover** occurs through **human exposure to these bats**.
Spillover effect means the virus seems to have moved from bats to humans in one event and after this moved from one human to another.

Filovirus

- Filoviruses belong to a virus family called **Filoviridae**.
- Filovirus is a **filamentous RNA virus** of a genus which causes **severe hemorrhagic fever** in **humans** and **nonhuman primates**.
- 3 genera of this virus family have been identified: **Cuevavirus, Marburgvirus and Ebolavirus**.
- **Northeast India** is a region with **no historical record of Ebola virus**. But, this study has **found the presence of filovirus** (ex. **ebolavirus, marburg virus**) reactive **antibodies** in **both human (ex. bat hunters)** and **bat populations** implying **zoonotic spread**
- However, the potential **virus** present in bats may **not** be an exact copy of the virus responsible for various outbreaks.

Diseases Linked to Bats

- All bats can carry viruses. Many high-profile **epidemics** have been traced to **bats**.
 - **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)** antibodies were found in insectivorous bats.
 - **Ebola** antibodies were found in Hammer-headed fruit bat.
 - **Indian Flying Fox**, hosts over 50 viruses.
 - **Rabies**
- With around 1,200 species, bats comprise 20% of the earth's mammalian diversity.

- Long periods of flying raises the **temperatures of bats, boosting their immune responses** and helps them survive the microbes' pathogenic effects.

Way Forward

Given the widespread challenges from the newly discovered viruses, it must be ensured that all medical studies in the country adhere to strict norms.

Source: TH

Waterholes Revival in Bandipur Tiger Reserve

Why in News

Prolonged monsoon and unseasonal rains have helped to rejuvenate the waterholes in Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Karnataka.

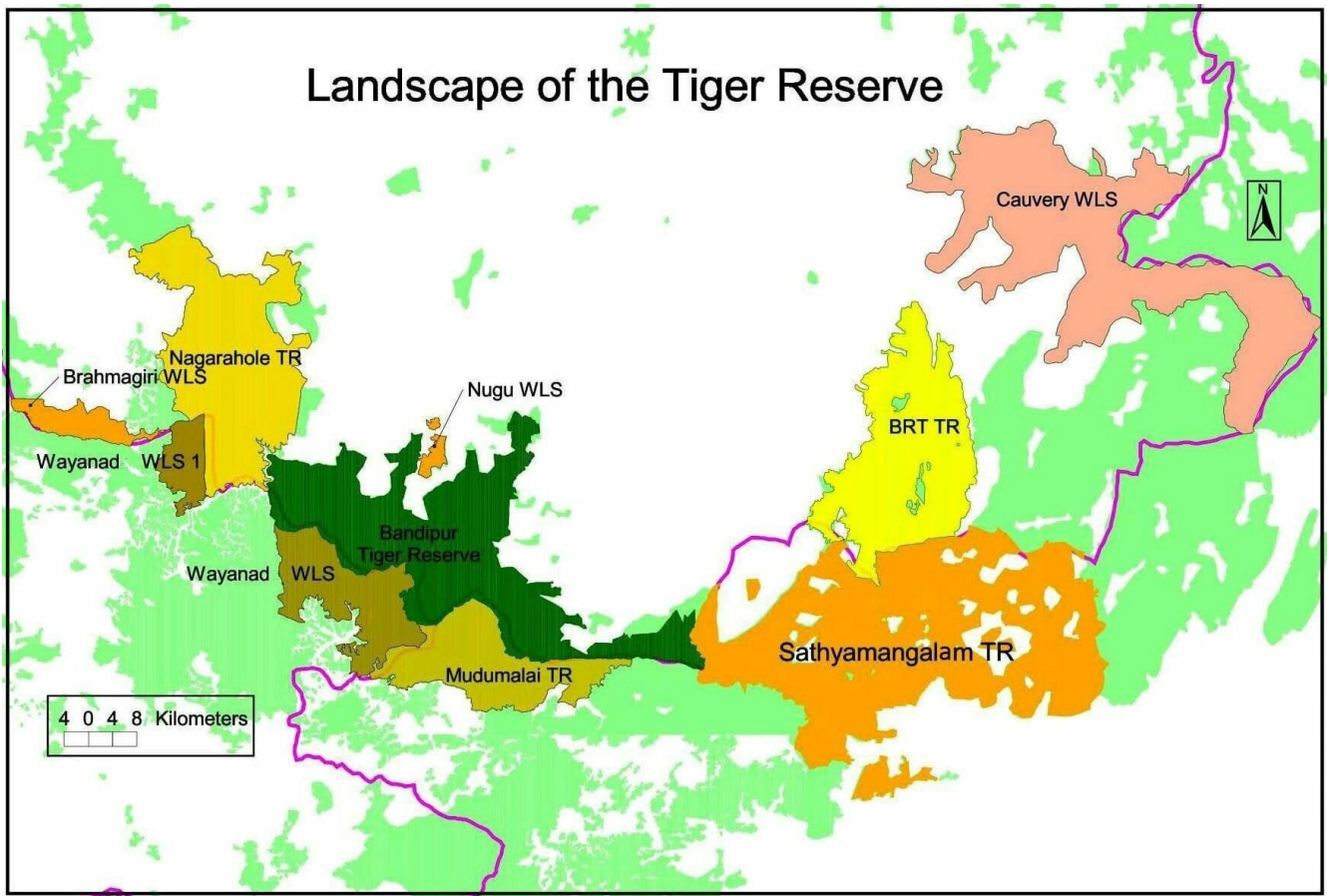
Key Points

- There are **370 big and small waterholes** (a **depression** in which water collects from where animals usually drink) in Bandipur and **85% of them are full**.
- At Bandipur, majority of waterholes dry up by **February and March** leading to severe water stress situation for animals. But this year, it is expected that the depletion of water levels will take a little longer.
- Also, in the areas of water stress, **37 solar-powered borewells** have been arranged that will function to replenish the waterholes periodically to further minimise the water scarcity.

Bandipur Tiger Reserve

- **Established in:** **Bandipur Tiger Reserve** was established in **1973** under **Project Tiger**. In **1985**, by including adjacent areas from **Venugopala Wildlife Park**, it was enlarged and named as **Bandipur National Park**.
- **Location:** The Tiger Reserve is situated in **two contiguous districts (Mysore and Chamarajanagar) of Karnataka** and is located at the tri-junction area of the States of **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala**. It forms a part of **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**.

- **Ecological Diversity:** Bandipur Tiger Reserve lies in one of the **richest biodiversity areas** of the country. It is surrounded by
 - **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve** in the South,
 - **Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary** in the South-west &
 - The **Kabini Reservoir** separates the Bandipur and **Nagarahole Tiger Reserve** on the North-west.
- **Biodiversity:** The Reserve is endowed with rich floral and faunal diversity and is recognized as one of the **Mega Biodiversity Areas** in the country. The **Tiger and the Elephants** are the **flagship (iconic or symbolic species** for a defined habitat, issue, campaign or environmental cause) **and umbrella** (species selected for making **conservation-related decisions**) species for the conservation of all the biota that this ecosystem represents.
 - The Bandipur along with Nagarahole, Mudumalai, Sathyamangalam & Wayanad constitutes the **single largest Wild population of Tigers in the world**. This landscape comprises of **21% of the total forested area** of the Western Ghats and holds **one-eighth** of the world's Tiger population (**one-fourth** of India's Tiger population).
 - This Landscape is also home to the **single largest Asian Elephant population in the world** and is part of the **Mysore Elephant Reserve (MER)**.
- **Rivers:** The park is located between the **Kabini river in the north** and the **Moyar river in the south**. The **Nugu river runs** through the park. The highest point in the park is on a hill called **Himavad Gopalswamy Betta**.



Source: TH

Flame-Throated Bulbul

Why in News

- The flame-throated bulbul, also called the **Rubigula (State bird of Goa)**, has been chosen as the **mascot of the 36th National Games**.
- The 36th National Games will be held between October 20 and November 4 in the year 2020.

Flame-Throated Bulbul

- The Flame-throated Bulbul is **endemic to southern peninsular India** where it is locally distributed in southern Andhra Pradesh, eastern Karnataka, Goa, Orissa, eastern Kerala and northern Tamil Nadu.
- The Flame-throated Bulbul prefer habitats like rocky, scrub-covered hills mostly in the Eastern Ghats and central peninsular India but also in some places in the Western Ghats.
- IUCN status: **Least Concern**

- India's **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**: It is a **Schedule - IV bird**.

Schedules under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972



- **Schedule I and part II of Schedule II provide absolute protection** - offences under these are prescribed the highest penalties.
- Species listed in **Schedule III and Schedule IV** are also protected, but the penalties are much lower.
- **Schedule V** includes the animals which may be hunted.
- The specified **endemic plants in Schedule VI** are prohibited from cultivation and planting.

Source: TH

34th Surajkund International Crafts Mela

Why in News

The President of India inaugurated the **34th Surajkund International Crafts Mela** in Surajkund, Haryana on February 1, 2020.

The Mela is organized by the Surajkund Mela Authority & Haryana Tourism in collaboration with Union Ministries of Tourism, Textiles, Culture and External Affairs.

Key Points

- The Surajkund Mela is unique as it showcases the richness and diversity of the handicrafts, handlooms and cultural fabric of India, & is the **largest crafts fair in the world**.
- The Mela was **initiated in 1987** to promote the pool of skilled artisans, who used indigenous technology, but were suffering due to the cheaper machine-made imitations.

The fair was upgraded to an international level in **2013**.

- **Himachal Pradesh** is the '**Theme State**' and **Uzbekistan** is the '**Partner Nation**' for the Year 2020.
 - **A record number of 20 countries participated** in the Mela in **2015** when **Lebanon** was the **partner nation** and **Chhattisgarh** was the **theme state**.
 - Every year, each theme state constructs a replica of one of the most popular monuments of its state to be displayed as a Commemorative Structure in the Mela Grounds.
- **England** will participate for the **first time** in the Surajkund mela.

Source:PIB
