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2023 is the International Year of Millets- FAO

India's proposal to observe an **International Year of Millets in 2023** has been approved at the by the **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)**.

India is celebrating **2018 as the national year of millets**.

- Millet is a collective term referring to a number of small-seeded annual grasses that are cultivated as grain crops, primarily on marginal lands in dry areas in temperate, subtropical and tropical regions.
- Some of the common millets available in India are Ragi (Finger millet), Jowar (Sorghum), Sama (Little millet), Bajra (Pearl millet), and Variga (Proso millet).

Millets as Smart Food

- Millets are **less expensive and nutritionally superior** to wheat & rice owing to their high **protein, fibre, vitamins** and minerals like **iron** content.
- Millets are also rich in **calcium** and **magnesium**. For example, **Ragi** is known to have the highest calcium content among all the food grains.
- Millets can provide **nutritional security** and act as a shield against nutritional deficiency, especially among **children** and **women**. Its high iron content can fight high prevalence of **anaemia** in India women of reproductive age and infants.
- Millets are rich in **antioxidants**.
- Millets can help tackle **lifestyle problems** and health challenges such as **obesity** and **diabetes** as they are **gluten-free** and have a **low glycemic index** (a relative ranking of carbohydrate in foods according to how they affect blood glucose levels).

Millets as Smart Crop

- Millets are **Photo-insensitive** (do not require a specific photoperiod for flowering) & **resilient to climate change**.

- Millets **can grow on poor soils** with little or no external inputs.
- Millets are less water consuming and are **capable of growing under drought conditions**, under non-irrigated conditions even in very low rainfall regimes
- Millets have **low carbon and water footprint** (rice plant needs at least 3 times more water to grow in comparison to millets).
- Millets can **withstand high temperature**. In times of climate change Millets are often the last crop standing and, thus, are a good risk management strategy for resource-poor marginal farmers.

Way Forward

- Since India, which supports more than 15% of the world's population, but only has 4% of its water resources, promotion of millets could be helpful.
- To efficiently feed the growing population, increase in the production of and demand for millets is need of the hour.
- Policy changes need to address infrastructure development in regions growing millets.
- Cultivation of several varieties of millets should be encouraged and practised.
- The government should include millets in Public Distribution System (PDS) and nutrition programmes.

For example, Odisha has planned to introduce millets in PDS, mid-day meal scheme (MDM) and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).

- The government should incentivise farmers growing millets and practising mixed cropping, besides providing financial support for their processing, storage and marketing.
- Specific value addition practices, like grading, sorting, cleaning, processing and packaging should also be supported.

Additional Information

- FAO (specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger) Council approved **India's membership** to the Executive Board of the United Nations **World Food Program (WFP)** for 2020 and 2021.
- World Food Programme is the **UN agency focused on hunger alleviation and food security**.
- Globally, it responds to emergencies making sure food reaches where it is needed, especially in times of civil strife and natural disasters.
- In India, WFP has moved from providing direct food aid to providing technical assistance and capacity building services to the Government of India.

Global Status Report on Road Safety: WHO

World Health Organization (WHO) has released the Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018.

Key Points

- The report highlights that road traffic deaths are rising, with 1.35 million deaths in 2016 globally.
- Road Accidents are the eighth leading cause of death for all age groups surpassing HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and diarrhoeal diseases.
- The road traffic deaths rates are highest in Africa (26.6 per 100 000 population) and lowest in Europe (9.3 per 100 000 population).
- However, the rates of death relative to the size of the world's population has stabilized in recent years.
- Progress is attributed to better legislation around key risks such as **speeding, drinking and driving, and failing to use seat-belts, motorcycle helmets and child restraints, safer infrastructure like sidewalks, dedicated lanes for cyclists, motorcyclists, and improved vehicle standards.**
- The progress has not occurred at a pace fast enough to compensate for the rising population and rapid motorization of transport taking place in many parts of the world.

Road Accidents in India

- The trend in India shows that deaths have been increasing since 2007 even though India has put in place most of the rules needed to protect people.
- The report highlights India as an example of the implementation of seven or eight of the priority United Nations vehicle safety standards.
- Cities in India have reduced traffic crashes, and through media campaigns and stronger enforcement, more cities have cut drink driving.
- Despite this, India reported more than 150,000 deaths in 2016.
- There is a need to take a multi-sectoral approach to tackle road crashes and deaths. **Better infrastructure that can allow safer travel, better vehicles, improved intervention and enforcement of laws and a health system that can take care of accident victims are the need of the hour.**

- **Vehicle Safety Standards in India**

- In 2014, crash tests carried out by the Global New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP) revealed that some of India's top-selling car models have failed the UN's frontal impact crash test.
- Global NCAP tests at a higher speed resulted in zero-star ratings for Indian cars indicating a high risk of fatal or serious injury.
- In 2015 the Indian government announced the application of new regulations consistent with the UN standards for front and side impact and also pedestrian protection.
- For new car models, the use of front and side crash tests came into force from October 2017 and will apply to all new cars from October 2019.
- The pedestrian protection regulation for new models came into force from October 2018 and will apply to all new cars from October 2020.
- In addition, new cars are required to have airbags fitted as standard and to have a speed warning device above 80 km/h.

Recommendations

- **Safe Roads:** Safety consideration during the planning, design, and operation of roads, contributes to reducing road traffic deaths and injuries
- **Safe Vehicles:** Vehicle safety features such as electronic stability control and advanced braking make a substantial contribution to reducing road traffic deaths and injuries.
- **Behavioral Changes:** Increasing motorcycle helmet use, increasing seat-belt uses and increasing child restraint use.
- **Post Crash Care:** Simple and affordable post-crash care interventions can save lives. Effective care for the injured requires timely care at the scene, prompt transport to appropriate emergency and surgical care at the hospital, and early access to rehabilitation services.
- **Role of bystanders:** Bystanders play a major role in post-crash care. They contribute by activating the emergency care system and taking simple, potentially life-saving actions until professional help is available.

Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety

- The declaration was signed at the Second Global High-Level conference on Road Safety held in Brazil.
- Through the Brasilia Declaration Countries plan to achieve **the Sustainable Development Goal 3.6: By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.**
- United Nations has also declared **2010-2020 as the decade of action for Road Safety.**

- The main points of the Brasilia Declaration are:
 - Countries should form transport policies in order to favor more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and using public transport.
 - It highlights strategies to ensure the safety of all road users,
 - by improving laws and enforcement;
 - making roads safer through infrastructural modifications;
 - ensuring that vehicles are equipped with life-saving technologies;
 - and enhancing emergency trauma care systems.

The International Road Assessment Programme(iRAP)

The International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) is a registered charity dedicated to saving lives through safer roads.

Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan Committee

- Supreme Court had set up the three-member KS Radhakrishnan panel on road safety in April 2014.
- The main recommendation of the committee was
 - Ban on the sale of alcohol on highways (both state and national) to restrain drunk driving.
 - The states were directed to implement laws on wearing helmets.
 - Audit of road safety to be implemented by states to ensure the safety standards in the design, construction, and maintenance of roads.
 - The committee stressed the importance of creating awareness among people on road safety rules.

Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2016

- It proposes to create a National Register for Driving Licence and a National Register for Vehicle registration through **“Vahan” and “Sarathi” web portals**. This is in order to smoothen the process of registration and licensing.
- It proposes alterations in vehicles, in order to make them suitable for specially-abled people.
- It provides for a **Motor Vehicle Accident Fund**, which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.
- It provides for a **National Road Safety Board**, to be created by the Central Government through a notification. The Board will provide advice to the Central and State Governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic management.
- Contractors, consultants, and civic agencies will be accountable for faulty design, construction or poor maintenance of roads leading to accidents. Those found guilty would be penalized up to Rs 1 lakh.
- The bill also provides for the protection of good samaritans.

Important Facts for Prelims (8th December 2018)

CAD Widens to 2.9% of GDP

- India's Current Account Deficit (CAD) widened to **2.9% of the gross domestic product** in the Q2 (quarter which ended in September) compared with 1.1% in the year-ago period.
- Major reasons for rising CAD was **sharp rise in oil prices**, and **weakening rupee (imports become costlier)**. However both these factors are **not that severe now** and therefore CAD is projected to **come down later in the year**.

Current Account Deficit (CAD)

- CAD, is the difference between the **inflow and outflow of foreign exchange**. It reflects that the imports of goods, services and investment incomes into the economy outstripped the value of its exports.
- Current Account Deficit and Fiscal Deficit (also known as "budget deficit", it is a situation when a nation's expenditure exceeds its revenues) are **together are known as twin deficits** and often both reinforce each other i.e. High fiscal deficit leads to higher CAD and vice versa.

Global Hackathon On Artificial Intelligence

- **NITI Aayog** in partnership with **Perlin, a Singapore-based Artificial Intelligence (AI) startup** has launched the '**AI 4 All Global Hackathon**'.
 - Hackathon will invite developers, students, start-ups and companies to develop **AI applications to make significant positive social and economic impact for India**.
 - With the vision to further expand the idea of '**Artificial Intelligence, AI for All**' articulated in the **National AI Strategy**, NITI Aayog organises hackathons to source sustainable, innovative and technologically-enabled solutions to address various challenges in the development space.
 - Earlier it had also organised '**MoveHack**' , on the sidelines of the Global Mobility Summit 2018
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