



News Analysis (05 Mar, 2020)

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Ban on Cryptocurrency Trading Removed

Why in News

The Supreme Court has **struck down a ban on trading of Virtual Currencies (VC) in India**, which was imposed by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** in April 2018.

- The RBI order prohibited banks and entities regulated by it from dealing in VCs or providing services for facilitating any person or entity in dealing with or settling VCs.
- Such services include maintaining accounts, registering, trading, settling, clearing, giving loans against virtual tokens, accepting them as collateral, opening accounts of exchanges dealing with them and transfer/receipt of money in accounts relating to purchase/ sale of VCs.

WHERE OTHER COUNTRIES STAND

Canada: Cryptocurrencies permitted as a payment system and as a form of investment; income from them is taxed

Virtual Currencies

Switzerland: Permitted as a payments system (including consumer-to-government transactions) and as a form of investment

Japan: Permitted and regulated as a payment system

China: Banned for all purposes

- There is no globally accepted definition of what exactly is virtual currency. Basically, virtual currency is the larger umbrella term for **all forms of non-fiat currency being traded online**.
Fiat Money is a kind of currency, issued by the government and regulated by a central authority such as a central bank. Such currencies act like legal tender and are not necessarily backed by a physical commodity.
- Virtual currencies are mostly created, distributed and accepted in local virtual networks. Virtual Currencies **also includes cryptocurrencies**.
- Cryptocurrencies have an extra layer of security, in the form of encryption algorithms.
 - Most cryptocurrencies now operate on the **blockchain or distributed ledger technology**, which allows everyone on the network to keep track of the transactions occurring globally.
 - **Popular forms of cryptocurrencies** include Bitcoin, Ethereum, etc.
- **Satoshi Nakamoto**, widely regarded as the founder of the modern virtual currency **bitcoin** and the underlying technology called blockchain, defines bitcoins as “a new electronic cash system that’s fully peer-to-peer, with no trusted third party (central regulator)”.

Reasons Behind Banning Virtual Currencies

- Lack of any underlying fiat, episodes of excessive volatility in their value, and their anonymous nature which **goes against global money-laundering rules**.
- Risks and concerns about data security and consumer protection.
- Potential impact on the effectiveness of monetary policy.

Arguments in Support of Use of Virtual Currencies in India

- Digital/virtual currencies (both private or government backed) are integral part of digital economy and digital countries.
 - 5 million Indians are engaged in virtual currency activities.
 - India is the second largest user of Pundi X's blockchain wallet.
- India is at the forefront of all things digital and an inspiration to the world. Its balanced approach between risk and innovation can become a role model for the world.

Highlights of the Judgement

- **Test of Proportionality**
 - The ban did not pass the “proportionality” test. The test of proportionality of any action by the government must pass the test of **Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution**, which states that all citizens of the country will have the right to practise any profession, or carry on any occupation or trade and business.
 - Till date, the RBI has **not come out with a stand** that any of the entities regulated by it have suffered any loss or adverse effect directly or indirectly, on account of VC exchanges.
 - Besides, the court found that the RBI **did not consider the availability of alternatives** before issuing the order i.e. achieving the same objective by imposing a less drastic restraint.
- **Inconsistent with the RBI's Stand:** The RBI's order was disproportionate” with an otherwise consistent stand taken by the central bank that VCs are not prohibited in the country.
- **Referred to the Global Approach:** Organisations across the globe have called for caution while dealing with virtual currencies, while also warning that a blanket ban of any sort could push the entire system underground, which in turn would mean no regulation.
- **On RBI's Power:** The Court held that the RBI has powers to regulate any currencies in the system.

Possible Impact of the Judgement

- With the order, resumption of operations at cryptocurrency exchanges and backward linkages with the banking sector are expected.
Even as virtual currency investors and businesses will welcome the Supreme Court's order on cryptocurrency, the relief for such players may be only temporary given that the Centre, in a draft law, has **proposed to ban all private cryptocurrencies.**
- The Supreme Court's judgment could lead to the RBI rethinking its policies surrounding virtual currencies.

Source: TH

Visit of UN Delegation on Palestine to India

Why in News

Recently, A **UN delegation on Palestine** visited New Delhi to seek India's political and diplomatic support for a peaceful resolution to the long-standing conflict between Israel and Palestine.

The delegation of the **United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP)** intends **to engage India in the settling of the question of Palestine.**

Key Points

- During the visit of the UN delegation on Palestine, **India has reiterated its stand and supported the Two -State solution** for the **Israel-Palestine Issue**.
- The visit aimed to **enhance the political and diplomatic support of India for a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict** and engaging Indian counterparts on synergies in capacity building for staff and institutions of Palestine.
- The delegation intends to involve countries like India as it **shares good relations with both Israel and Palestine**, and are **also attached to multilateral principles**, to play a bigger role in the resolution of the issue.

Two-State Solution

- The “two state solution” is based on a **UN resolution of 1947** which proposed two states - one would be a state where Zionist Jews constituted a majority, the other where the Palestinian Arabs would be a majority of the population. The idea was however rejected by the Arabs.
- For decades, it has been held by the international community as the only realistic deal to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- India has consistently voted in favour of those resolutions that **promote the two-state solution** with a Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem.

India's Stand on Israel-Palestine Issue

- **In June 2019**, India voted in **favor of a decision introduced by Israel** in the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.
- **In June 2018**, India had **voted in favour of Palestine** on the **UN General Assembly** (UNGA) resolution to investigate an indiscriminate force usage by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians.
- As a part of **Link West Policy**, India has **de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018** to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- **In December 2017**, India had **criticised the United States** vote for recognising **Jerusalem as the Israeli capital** at the UNGA vote.
- **In 2014**, India favored **UNHRC's resolution** to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza. Despite supporting the probe, **India abstained from voting against Israel** in **UNHRC in 2015**.



CEIRPP

- United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) was founded in 1975 by the United Nations General Assembly.
- It aims to formulate a programme to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination, to national independence and sovereignty, and the right of Palestine refugees to return.

Source:TH

India Pharma & India Medical Device 2020 Conference

Why in News

- The Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, in association with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry(FICCI) is organising India Pharma 2020 & India Medical Device 2020 Conference & Exhibition .
- This is the fifth edition, and is being organised for **the first time in the State of Gujarat** (which is also the partner state for this event) at Gandhi Nagar from March 5-7, 2020.

Key Points

- **Theme-** "India Pharma: Meeting Challenges of Affordable and Quality Healthcare and India Medical Device: Promoting Affordable responsible and Quality Medical Device for Universal Health Care"
- **Objectives**
 - To encourage innovations to further reduce the cost of quality healthcare for all and a platform to the global investment community to connect with stakeholders in the **Medical Device Sector in India.**
 - To promote consumer centric manufacturing by involving Medical Electronics, Devices, Health Diagnostics, Hospitals and Surgical Equipment etc.

Indian Pharma Industry

- The Indian pharmaceutical market is the **third largest in terms of volume** and **thirteenth largest in terms of value**.
- India is the **largest supplier of generic medicines globally**.
- From 2018-19, India's pharmaceutical exports were worth **USD 19.13 billion** with a **growth of 10.72% over USD17.28 billion in pharma exports** the previous year..
- The cost of manufacturing in India is approximately **33% lower than that of the US**.
- India is also the **largest vaccine producer** in the world.
- **Bio-Pharma** is the largest sector contributing to 62% of the total revenue.

Medical Devices Sector in India

- The Medical Devices industry in India is **valued at USD 5.2 billion**, contributing about **4-5% to the USD 96.7 billion Indian healthcare Industry**.
- Medical devices sector in India is very small in size as compared to the rest of the manufacturing industry, though India is one of the top twenty markets for medical devices in the world and is the 4th largest market in Asia after Japan, China, and South Korea.
- India's medical devices industry is poised for significant growth in the next five years:
 - India is among **the top-20 markets** for medical devices in the world.
 - **Market size** for medical devices expected to reach **USD 50 bn by 2025**.
 - Indian medical devices industry is growing at a **CAGR of 15.8%, vis-à-vis a CAGR of 4.1% for the Global medical devices industry**.

- India currently imports 80-90% of medical devices of the USD15 billion market, the vast majority of which are unregulated for quality and safety. The U.S., Germany, China, Japan, and Singapore constitute the five largest exporters of high technology medical equipment to India.

Source: PIB

Increased Recycling of E-waste in India

Why in News

Recently, the government has informed that **E-waste recycling has doubled** in the country compared to 2017-18.

The government has reported that the **recycling rate of 10% in 2017-18 has risen to 20% in 2018-19.**

E-waste

- E-Waste is short for Electronic-Waste. It is the term used to describe old, end-of-life or discarded electronic appliances. It includes computers, mobiles, consumer electronics etc.
- It majorly includes electronic equipment, completely or in part discarded as waste by the consumer or bulk consumer as well as rejects from manufacturing, refurbishment and repair processes.

Why should E-waste be managed properly?

- E-waste consists of toxic elements such as Lead, Mercury, Cadmium, Chromium, Polybrominated biphenyls and Polybrominated diphenyl.
- Non-Disposal and burning of e-waste can have serious implications on human health and can cause air, soil pollution and groundwater contamination.

Key Points

- **Production of E-waste in India:**
 - According to the **Global E-Waste Monitor 2017**, India generates about **2 million tonnes (MT)** of E-waste **annually**.
 - India ranks **fifth among E-waste producing countries**, after the US, China, Japan and Germany.
 - But the government has stated that the **E-waste produced in India is lower than estimates by international agencies**.

- **Management of E-waste:**

- **Producers:**

- The government has implemented the **E-waste (Management) Rules (2016)** which enforces the **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**.
 - Under EPR principle the producers have been made responsible to collect a certain percentage of E-waste generated from their goods once they have reached their “**end-of-life**”.

- **State Governments:**

- They have been entrusted with the responsibility for maintaining industrial space for e-waste dismantling and recycling facilities.
 - They are also expected to establish measures for protecting the health and safety of workers engaged in the dismantling and recycling facilities for e-waste.

- **Recycling of E-waste:**

- Most of India's **e-waste is recycled by the informal sector and under hazardous conditions.**
 - A report by the Union Environment Ministry in 2018 found that many of India's e-waste recyclers didn't have the capacity to **handle a large quantity of waste**.
 - **India's first e-waste clinic** for segregating, processing and disposal of waste from household and commercial units will soon be set-up in **Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh**.

E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016

- The **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** notified the E-Waste Management Rules, 2016 in supersession of the e-waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 2011.
- The new E-waste rules included Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) and other mercury containing lamps, as well as other such equipment.
- For the first time, the rules brought the producers under **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**, along with targets. Producers have been made responsible for the collection of E-waste and for its exchange.
- Various producers can have a separate Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) and ensure collection of E-waste, as well as its disposal in an environmentally sound manner.
- **Deposit Refund Scheme** has been introduced as an additional economic instrument wherein the producer charges an additional amount as a deposit at the time of sale of the electrical and electronic equipment and returns it to the consumer along with interest when the end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment is returned.
- The **role of State Governments** has been also introduced to ensure safety, health and skill development of the workers involved in dismantling and recycling operations.
- **A provision of penalty for violation of rules** has also been introduced.
- Urban Local Bodies (Municipal Committee/Council/Corporation) has been assigned the duty to collect and channelize the **orphan products** to authorized dismantler or recycler.

Source: TH

Court Documents Accessibility to Third-party

Why in News

Recently, a bench of the **Supreme Court** judges ruled that court documents such as copies of judgments and pleadings **can now be obtained by third-parties or those not party to a case.**

- The information will be **only available after the court rules permit it** and **not under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.**
- This decision comes a few months after a five-judge bench of SC opened the office of the **Chief Justice of India to scrutiny under the RTI Act.**

Key Points

- **Rule 151 of Gujarat High Court Rules** was being upheld, which **allows access to certified copies of judgments, orders and pleadings to a third-party, or those not party to a case**, only under the order of an officer of the court.
- High courts of **Bombay, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madras etc** have similar provisions.
- The bench held that the High Court **holds the information as a trustee for the litigants in order to adjudicate upon the matter and administer justice.**
Third parties should not be permitted to have open and easy access to such personal information of the litigants or information given by the government in the proceedings because there would be a misuse of the court process and the information to an unmanageable level.
- According to the rules, **litigants are entitled to receive copies of documents/judgments**, etc on filing of an application with prescribed court fees stamp.
 - Third parties are not given copies of judgments and other documents without the assistant registrar's order.
 - The registrar, on being satisfied about the reasonable cause for seeking the information/certified copies of the documents, allows access to the documents.

Source: IE

QS World University Subject Rankings 2020

Why in News

The 2020 edition of the QS World University Subject Rankings has ranked as many as 26 departments of higher education institutions in India among the top 100 in the world in their respective subject category.

- The QS World University Subject Rankings 2020 has been released from London by **Quacquarelli Symonds**. Quacquarelli Symonds is the world's leading provider of services, analytics, and insight to the global higher education sector.
- QS uses **four key metrics** to compile the rankings including **academic reputation, employer reputation, citations per paper** and the **h-index** which measures how productive an institution's research faculty are.
- 1,368 institutions have been ranked across 48 subjects in 5 broad categories across 159 locations.
- **Top Rankers:** Globally, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT - USA) emerged as the world's best-performing institution, achieving 12 number-one positions, followed by Harvard University (USA) with 11 number-one positions and University of Oxford (United Kingdom) with eight top ranked subjects.

India's Performance

- As against **21 institutions getting ranked in 2019**, the latest edition has seen 26 Indian departments entering the top-100 list for their subjects. **All 26 departments are in institutions run by the Union government** — IITs, IIMs, IISc and Delhi University.
- QS has also seen an **increase in the number of Indian programs ranking among the global top 50**.
 - In terms of institutes and subjects, India's highest-ranked programs included Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay's Mineral & Mining Engineering program at 41st rank globally, shared jointly with the University of Delhi's Development Studies program.
 - Top-50 ranks have also been attained by IIT Kharagpur (46) for Mineral & Mining Engineering, IIT Delhi (49) for Electrical & Electronic Engineering and IIT Bombay (50) for Chemical Engineering.
- **IIT Bombay** emerged with more top-100 ranks than any other Indian university in QS World University Rankings by Subject 2020.
- In the **business and management studies subject category**, both Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad and IIM Bangalore were ranked in the 51-100 band.
- The rankings **indicate India's particular strength** in the natural sciences, life sciences, and in engineering disciplines.

Source: IE

MAC Binding

Why in News

- The authorities have removed ban on social media and restored full internet access in Kashmir on 4th March 2020.

- Among various conditions, the Internet connectivity will be made available “**with mac-binding**”.

Key Points

Every device has a **Media Access Control (MAC) address**, a hardware identification number that is unique to it. While accessing the Internet, every device is assigned an **Internet Protocol (IP) address**.

- This **forces a particular device to access the internet from a specific IP address**.
- If either the MAC (Media Access Control) address or the IP address changes, the device will not be able to access the internet.
- MAC-binding will also enable authorities to **trace a device on the basis of its online activity**.

Media Access Control (MAC) address

- Address that **uniquely defines a hardware interface** is called MAC (Media Access Control) Address.
- It identifies the **physical address** of a computer on the internet.
- It is **48 bits (6 bytes) hexadecimal address**.
- MAC Address of each computer on a network is unique.

Internet Protocol (IP) address

- The address provided to a **connection in a network** is called IP (Internet Protocol) address.
- It identifies the connection of a computer on the internet.
- **IPv4 is a 32-bit (4 bytes) address, and IPv6 is a 128-bits (16 bytes) address**.
- IP address **does not uniquely identify a device on a network** but, it specifies a particular connection in a network.
- IP address **changes each time a device is connected** to the network as it is dynamically allocated to the device when it participates in the network.
- Mobile internet services too will be available **only on postpaid connections**. Prepaid connections will not have access to the internet "unless verified as per the norms applicable to postpaid connections," the order said.
- Further, internet speed is restricted to second generation 2G networks, while the high-speed 4G networks will remain blocked.

Source: IE

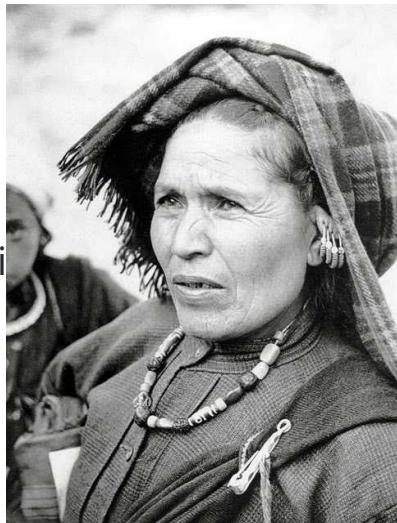
Gaura Devi as Part of International Women's Day Celebrations

Why in News

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is celebrating Women's Week from 1st March to 8th March 2020.
- International Women's Day is observed on 8th March every year.
- MHRD remembered the women of history who have made significant contributions in the past and planted a sapling in memory of Gaura Devi, a **Chipko Activist**.

The Chipko Movement

- The Chipko movement was a **non-violent agitation in 1973**.
- It is best remembered for the **collective mobilisation of women** for the cause of preserving forests, which also brought about a change in attitude regarding their own status in society.



Gaura Devi

- The movement was led by Gaura Devi, who saved their communal forest from clear felling, beginning a decade of Chipko direct actions by women throughout the Uttarakhand region.
- Gaura Devi led the first all-women action to save their community forest and mobilised the women of this region to protect their natural heritage.
- During the activist phase of Chipko in the 1970s, the courage and vigilance of Uttarakhandi women saved many forests and earned them a hallowed place in the history of the global environmental movement.
- From this action, Chipko was to emerge as a peasant movement in defence of traditional forest rights, continuing a century-long tradition of resistance to state encroachment.

Source: PIB

Gairsain: Summer Capital of Uttarakhand

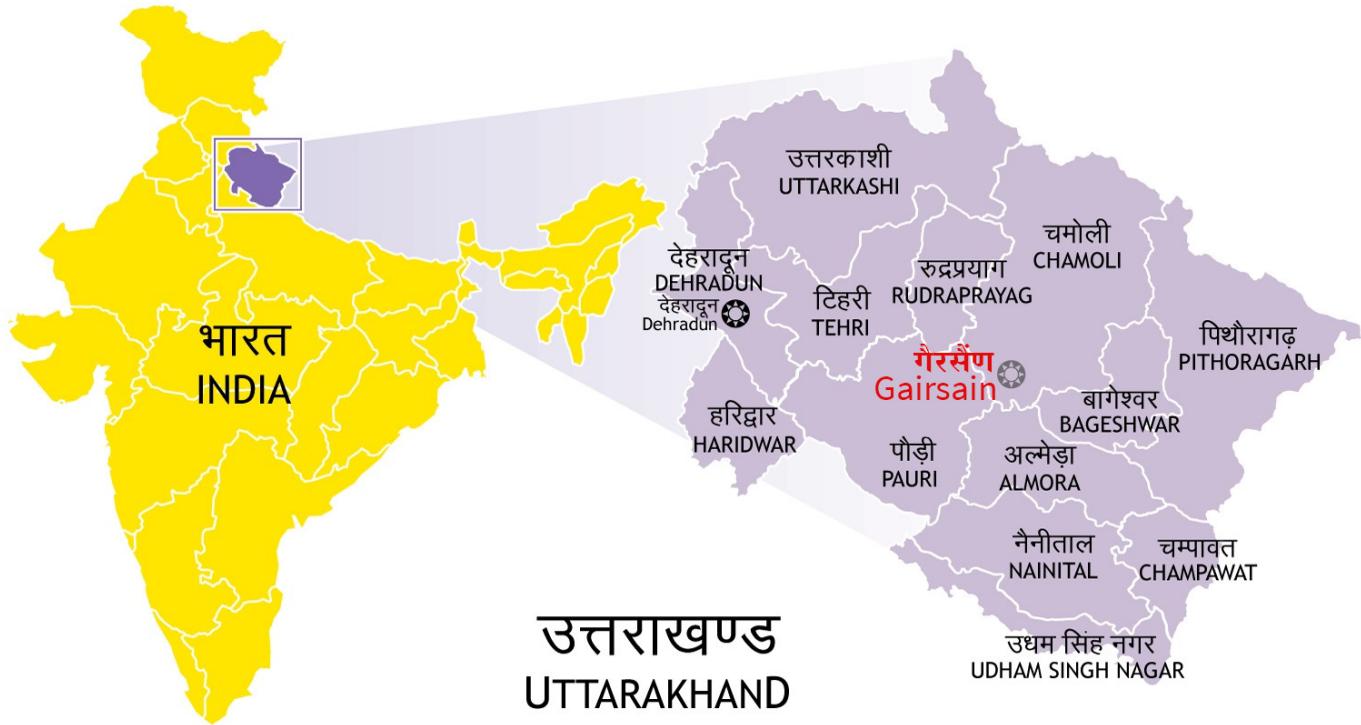
Why in News

Recently, the Uttarakhand Government named **Gairsain as the new summer capital** of the state.

A **summer capital** is a city used as an administrative capital during extended periods of particularly hot weather.

Key Points

- Uttarakhand (**earlier known as Uttranchal**) was **carved out as a separate state from Uttar Pradesh in 1998**. Those who spearheaded the movement for statehood to Uttarakhand wanted Gairsain to be made its permanent capital.
- However, **Dehradun has been the temporary capital** of the state since it attained statehood and still houses the chief minister's residence, Raj Bhavan and MLA residences. The state Assembly is located in Dehradun but sessions are held in Gairsain as well.
- Statehood activists had long contended that Gairsain, a **tehsil in Chamoli district**, was best suited to be the capital of the mountainous state as it was a hilly region falling on the **border of Kumaon and Garhwal regions**.
 - It covers a large area **suitable for the construction** of the capital and accommodating people.
 - It is emerging as a **tourist place** and it is also a part of the **major route** connecting Garhwal with the Kumaon region.
 - It is the site of the source of the **Ramganga River** which rises near the **Dudhatoli Parvat**.
 - The famous tourist attractions are the Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (**UNESCO World Heritage Site**), Badrinath, Vasundhara Falls etc.
- With the fresh announcement, there is no clarity whether Dehradun's current status will remain the same or it will be considered the new winter capital.



Source: IE

Black Redstart

- It is a **small-sized bird** (14-15 cms) and it **breeds across the Himalayan Range**.
- It occurs almost throughout **Europe, Asia** and in the **portions of Africa** and breed in the high altitude areas of **Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet** and the **Central Himalayan Range**.
In India, the bird sticks to areas near wetlands, open cultivation, scrubs, gardens and orchards.



- The bird has **two races**:

- **P. phoenicuroides** (in Western Himalayas)
- **P. Rufiventris** (in Central and Eastern Himalayas)

- The **primary difference** between them is that the male of the former has a grey crown, nape and lower back while the latter ones are much darker.
- Both sexes display a **bright rufous-orange tail** which is best seen when they fly or flash it open while shivering their tails, justifying the name Redstart (**steort** means 'tail' in proto-Germanic language).

- **IUCN Red List** status- **Least Concerned**.
 - It is protected under the **Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
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Pragyan Conclave 2020

Why in News

Recently, the “**Pragyan Conclave 2020**”, a two-day **Indian Army International Seminar** was organised by **Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)** at New Delhi.

Key Points

- The event brings together cross-domain national and international experts to deliberate on the complex subject of '**Changing Characteristics of Land Warfare and its Impact on the Military**'.
- The seminar provided a platform for deliberations on emerging ideas, perspectives and narratives that define the '**New Age Warfare**' which is increasingly witnessing a change in its character as well as battlespace with the **usage of new 'means' to pursue the 'ends'**.

Centre for Land Warfare Studies

- The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) is an **autonomous think tank** on strategic studies and land warfare in the Indian context.
- CLAWS aims to develop and promote strategic culture and futuristic thinking on security issues across the continuum of conflict affecting Land Warfare.
- It is located in **New Delhi**.
- CLAWS is registered under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860** and is a membership-based organisation. It is governed by a Board of Governors and an Executive Council.
- CLAWS organises seminars and conferences, round-table discussions, workshops and guest lectures and undertakes research projects on national security related issues, especially those pertaining to land warfare.

Source:PIB

Endophytic Actinobacteria for Chemical-free Tea

Why in News

Researchers at the **Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) Guwahati**, have found that the endophytic actinobacteria can replace fertilizers & fungicides in tea.

- Endophytic actinobacteria (predominantly free-living microorganisms) which live within a plant are found in diverse environments.
- The Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati is an autonomous institute under Department of Science & Technology.

Key Points

- **Research findings**
 - Endophytic actinobacteria have the potential to exhibit **multiple growth-promoting traits** that positively influence tea growth and production and can hence be used in the **management and sustainability of Teacrop**.
 - Application of endophytic Actinobacteria could **reduce chemical inputs** in Tea plantation.
- In recent years, due to higher demand of chemical residue-free made tea by the importing countries, the export of tea has declined. The use of endophyticactino bacteria on tea plantations is expected to benefit the Indian tea market.

Tea

- **Tea (*Camellia sinensis*)** plays an important role in the Indian economy as a **major portion of the tea produced is exported**.
- India is the **second largest tea producer** in the world, right behind China.
- Tea found in India is categorized into 3 types namely **Assam tea (highest cultivation)**, **Darjeeling tea (Superior quality tea)** and **Nilgiri tea (subtle and gentle flavors)**.
- **Growth Conditions:** Tea requires well drained soil with a high amount of organic matter and pH 4.5 to 5.5. The performance of tea is excellent at elevations ranging from 1000 - 2500 m. Optimum temperature: 20-270 C.

Source: PIB
