



## News Analysis (21 Mar, 2020)

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## UN World Happiness Report- 2020

### Why in News

The **Sustainable Development Solutions Network** for the United Nations released the World Happiness Report on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2020.

March 20 was designated as the **World Happiness Day by the UN General Assembly in 2012.**

### About the World Happiness Report

- The World Happiness Report ranks **156 countries** by how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be.
- The **rankings are based on polling** (Gallup World Poll) which looks at **six variables:** GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption.
- The 2020 Report **for the first time ranked cities** around the world by their subjective well-being and looked into how the social, urban and natural environments combine to affect happiness.

### Highlights From the Report

- **Top Performers**
  - **Finland** is ranked as the world's happiest nation for the third consecutive year.
  - **Nordic states dominated the top 10**, along with countries such as Switzerland, New Zealand and Austria.
  - Luxembourg edged into the 10<sup>th</sup> spot for the first time this year.

- **Worst Performers**

The countries at the bottom are those afflicted by **violent conflicts and extreme poverty**, with Zimbabwe, South Sudan and Afghanistan classified as the world's least happy nations.

- **India's Performance**

- **India, previously ranked at 140 dropped to 144.**
- Its rank is way lower than its neighbours. Nepal is ranked 92, Pakistan is at 66, Bangladesh at 107 and Sri Lanka at 130.
- India is a **new entrant** to the bottom-fifteen group.

## **Sustainable Development Solutions Network**

- The SDSN, launched in 2012, mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical problem solving for the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement.**
- It was established under the auspices of the **United Nations Secretary-General.**
- The SDSN and the Bertelsmann Stiftung have been **publishing the annual SDG Index & Dashboards Global Report since 2016.**

### **SOURCE: TH**

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## Whiteflies Resistant Variety of Cotton

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### Why in News

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Recently, the National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow has developed a **whiteflies-resistant variety of cotton.**

- Whiteflies are **one of the top ten devastating pests in the world** that damage more than 2000 plant species and also function as **vectors for some 200-plant viruses.**
- Cotton is one of the worst-hit crops by whiteflies. As **two-third of the cotton crop** was **destroyed** by the **whiteflies in Punjab in 2015.**

### Key Points

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- **Need for Development :**

Even though **Bt cotton** is also genetically-modified cotton and present in the market for farmers usage, it is resistant to two pests only and not resistant to whiteflies.

- **Constituents :**
  - The leaf extract of an **edible fern Tectaria Macrodongta** causes **toxicity to the whitefly**.
  - It works against whiteflies but is safe for application on the crop plants and provides protection from them.
- **Process:**
  - When whiteflies feed on doses of insecticidal protein of Tectaria Macrodongta, it interferes with the **life cycle of insects**.
  - The whiteflies suffer from very poor egg-laying, abnormal eggs, nymph and larval development, and the poor overall growth of the fly.
- **Target and Non-target Insects:**
  - The Tectaria Macrodongta is found to be **in-effective on non-target insects**.
  - Thus, it clearly shows that the protein is **specifically toxic to whitefly** and **does not cause any harmful effect on other beneficial insects like butterflies and honeybees**.



**Tectaria Macrodongta**

- Tectaria Macrodongta is **native to tropical areas of Asia** and **commonly found in Western Ghats of India**.
- The fern is known to be used in salads in Nepal and as a concoction for gastric disorders in many regions of Asia

### **National Botanical Research Institute**

- The CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI) – is amongst one of the constituent research institutes of the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)**, New Delhi.

- It undertakes basic and applied research on various aspects of plant science, including documentation, systematics, conservation, prospection, and genetic improvement.
- It emphasises on under-exploited, non-traditional, and wild plant genetic resources of the country for sustainable development and human welfare.

**Source:PIB**

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## Mid Day Meal

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has asked state governments to provide **Mid Day Meals (MDM) or food security allowance** whichever is feasible, to all eligible children till schools are closed due to COVID-19.

- Kerala is already providing hot-cooked meals to students at home.
- The schools across the country have been closed to contain the transmission of **COVID-19 outbreak.**

### Key Points

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- The ministry's order came after the Supreme Court issued notices to all state governments to explain how they would ensure the midday meals reach the vulnerable while schools stay shut.
- According to the **MDM Rules 2015**, when meals cannot be provided to students on account of unavailability of foodgrains, cooking cost, or due to any other reason, the state government is expected to provide a **food security allowance to each child consisting of foodgrains and cooking cost entitlement.**

- The MDM rules 2015, provide that:
  - The place of serving meals to the children shall be school only.
  - If the Mid-Day Meal is not provided in school on any school day due to non-availability of food grains or any other reason, the State Government shall pay **food security allowance** by 15<sup>th</sup> of the succeeding month.
  - The meal shall be prepared in accordance with the Mid Day Meal guidelines issued by the Central Government from time to time.
  - Procuring **AGMARK** quality items for preparation of midday meals, tasting of meals by two or three adult members of the school management committee, including at least one teacher, before serving to children.
  - The School Management Committee mandated under **Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** shall also monitor implementation of the Mid-day meal Scheme.
  - The **State Steering-cum Monitoring Committee (SSMC)** shall oversee the implementation of the scheme including establishment of a mechanism for maintenance of nutritional standards and quality of meals.

## Mid Day Meal Scheme

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- The MDM Scheme comes under the Ministry of HRD.
- It was launched in the year 1995 as a **centrally sponsored scheme**.
- The scheme provides that every child within the age group of **six to fourteen years** studying in **classes I to VIII** who enrolls and attends the school, shall be provided **hot cooked meal** having nutritional standards of 450 calories and 12 gm of protein for primary (I- V class) and 700 calories and 20 gm protein for upper primary (VI-VIII class), free of charge every day except on school holidays.
- The scheme covers all **government and government aided schools** and also Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under the **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**.

## Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

- It is an overarching programme launched in 2018 for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12.
- It has been prepared with the broader goal of improving school effectiveness measured in terms of equal opportunities for schooling and equitable learning outcomes.
- It subsumed the three schemes of **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**, **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)** and **Teacher Education (TE)**.

**Source: IE**

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## Why in News

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Recently, the **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)** has launched a transformational “**Tech For Tribals**” program in partnership with Institutes of National Importance (INIs) to develop Tribal entrepreneurship.

## Key Points

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- **Tech For Tribals** program aims to **transform 5 crore Tribal Entrepreneurs** by **capacity building and imparting entrepreneurship skills to tribal forest produce gatherers** enrolled under the **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY)**.
- The program will ensure higher success rate of the Tribal Entrepreneurs by enabling and empowering them to run their business with marketable products with quality certifications.
- Under the program **trainees will undergo a 30 days training program** over six weeks comprising 120 sessions. The **Partner institutions will develop course contents relevant to Entrepreneurship in Value Addition and Processing of Forest Produces.**

The course curriculum will include Achievement Motivation and positive psychology, Entrepreneurial Competencies, capacity utilization, Product positioning - Grading / Sorting, Branding, Packaging, etc.

## TRIFED

- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) came into existence in 1987. It is a national-level apex organization functioning **under the administrative control of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.**
- The **objective of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people in the country by way of marketing development of the tribal products** such as metal craft, tribal textiles, pottery, tribal paintings and pottery on which the tribals depend heavily for a major portion of their income.
- TRIFED acts as a facilitator and service provider for tribes to sell their product.
- The approach by TRIFED aims to empower tribal people with knowledge, tools and pool of information so that they can undertake their operations in a more systematic and scientific manner.
- It also involves capacity building of the tribal people through sensitization, formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and imparting training to them for undertaking a particular activity.
- TRIFED has its Head Office located in **New Delhi** and has a network of 13 Regional Offices located at various places in the country.

## Huntington Disease

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### Why in News

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A team of scientists from the **National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS), Pune** studied the HTT gene in **fruit flies**.

**Mutations in the HTT gene** (also called Huntington or HD gene) cause Huntington Disease (HD).

### Huntington Disease

- Huntington Disease (HD) is a **progressive genetic disorder** which affects the **brain**.
- It causes uncontrolled movements, impaired coordination of balance and movement, a decline in cognitive abilities, difficulty in concentrating and memory lapses, mood swings and personality changes.
- The **HTT genes** are involved in the **production of a protein called huntingtin**. They provide the instruction for making the protein.
  - Mutated genes provide faulty instructions leading to production of abnormal huntingtin proteins and formation of clumps.
  - These clumps disrupt the normal functioning of the brain cells, which eventually leads to death of neurons in the brain, resulting in Huntington disease.
- **No cure exists**, but drugs, physiotherapy and talk therapy can help manage some symptoms.

### Key Findings

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- In the study on fruit flies, it was observed that the pathogenic Huntingtin protein causes a decrease in the overall protein production in cells.
- The Huntingtin clumps collect together (sequester) molecules of another protein called **Orb2**, which is also involved in the process of protein formation.

Orb2 protein is **crucial for maintenance of memory in fruit flies**.
- In humans, a **family of proteins called CPEB** is equivalent to the Orb2 protein in fruit flies.

Further studies found that the CPEB proteins are also sequestered by the pathogenic Huntingtin clumps, similar to the Orb2 protein molecules.
- The study, thus, becomes relevant to and valuable in understanding HD in humans.

### National Centre for Cell Science

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

**Source: PIB**

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## Annual Refresher Programme In Teaching (ARPIT)

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Union Minister for Human Resource Development (HRD) informed Parliament about **the Annual Refresher Programme In Teaching (ARPIT).**

**37,199 teachers** were trained in **2018-19** under this program whereas in **2019-20**, **1,46,919 teachers** were trained.

### Key Points

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- It is an initiative for **online professional development of 15 lakh higher education faculty** using the **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** platform **SWAYAM.**
- For implementing ARPIT, 75 discipline-specific institutions have been identified and notified as **National Resource Centres (NRCs).**
  - NRCs prepare online training material with focus on latest developments in a discipline, new & emerging trends, pedagogical improvements and methodologies for transacting revised curriculum.
  - NRCs are located in a mixed range of institutions such as, Central Universities, IISc, IUCAA, IITs, IISERs, NITs, State Universities.
- The training materials are uploaded and made available through SWAYAM. NRC also publishes the list of the faculty who have been certified.

### Massive Open Online Course

MOOC is a **free Web-based distance learning program** that is designed for the participation of large numbers of geographically dispersed students. The government has launched SWAYAM platform for **open online courses.**

### SWAYAM

- SWAYAM platform is **indigenously developed** by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) with the help of Microsoft.

- It is designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of Education Policy viz.access, equity and quality.
- The objective of this effort is to take the best teaching learning resources to all, including the most disadvantaged.

**Source:PIB**

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## Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana

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- The Bunkar Bima Yojana was **introduced by the Government of India in December, 2003**. Since **2005-06** this scheme has been revised and implemented with the title **“Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Yojana”**.
- It is being implemented by **the Ministry of Textiles**.
- **Objective:** To provide enhanced insurance cover to the handloom weavers in the case of natural as well as accidental death and in cases of total or partial disability.
- **Eligibility:** All weavers, whether male or female, between the age group of 18 and 59 years.
- The claim benefits are provided by the **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)** directly into the bank account of beneficiaries through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**.
- The **annual premium is Rs. 470** out of which Rs. 290 is paid by the central government.
- The Government of India organizes **Hastkala Sahyog Shivirs** in handloom clusters across the country in association with State Governments and LIC for **creating awareness** about the scheme among the weavers.
- The Ministry of Textiles also **regularly organizes awareness programmes and camps** through its **Weavers’ Service Centres (WSCs)** to facilitate enrolment under the insurance schemes.  
WSCs provide the weavers with different facilities including banking, passport, etc.

**Source: PIB**

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## Navroz

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- Navroz is the new year celebrations for **Parsis (Zoroastrians)** and **Muslims** (both **Shia and Sunni**).
- It is celebrated on **21<sup>st</sup> March** every year.
- In 1079 AD, a Persian (Iranian) king named Jalaluddin Malekshah introduced this festival to **generate revenue and collect taxes from people**.

- It was observed on March 21 to mark the **beginning of spring and the day of equinox.**
  - The equinoxes are the **only time when both the Northern and Southern Hemisphere experience roughly equal amounts of daytime and nighttime.**
  - The equinoxes happen in March (about **March 21**) and September (about **September 23**). These are the days when the Sun is exactly above the Equator, which makes day and night of equal length.
  - March equinox is also known as **vernal** or **spring** equinox and the September equinox is also known as **autumnal** or **fall** equinox.
- It is inscribed in the list of **UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of India.**
- In India it is known as **Jamshed Navroz.**

### Intangible Cultural Heritage of India

Kumbh Mela	Yoga	Traditional brass and copper craft of utensils among thatheras of Punjab	Sankirtana (ritual singing, dancing and drumming of Manipur)
Buddhist chanting of Ladakh	Chhau Dance	Kalbelia (folk song and dance of Rajasthan)	Kutiyattam (a Sanskrit theatre of Kerala)
Tradition of Vedic Chanting,	Ramlila	Novruz (Persian New Year)	Ramman (religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas)
Mudiyettu (ritual theatre dance drama of Kerala)			

**Source: PIB**

## House Sparrow

### Why in News

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Every year **March 20** is observed as the '**World Sparrow Day**' to raise awareness about the bird.

- The Day was **first celebrated in 2010**.



- The initiative was started by the '**Nature Forever Society (NFS)**' of India.
- In India, **House Sparrow** is found throughout the country, up to the Assam valley and lower parts of the Assam hills. Towards the eastern Himalayas, the species is replaced by the **Eurasian tree sparrow**.

## Key Points Related to House Sparrow

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- **Scientific Name- Passer domesticus**
- **Conservation Status-** Least Concern on the Red List of The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- **Habitat and Distribution**

The house sparrow is widespread across the world, inhabiting every continent, **except Antarctica, China and Japan**. It is native to **Eurasia and North Africa**.
- It is the **State bird of Bihar and Delhi**.
- It is known to stay **close to human habitations**, and is therefore among the most commonly found bird species in urban cities.
- Some of the **causes for decline in its population** are as follow:
  - Unfriendly architecture of our homes.
  - The use of chemical fertilisers in crops.
  - Noise pollution.
  - Exhaust fumes from vehicles.

**SOURCE: PIB**

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