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Fall in Global Carbon Emissions

Why in News

Center for International Climate and Environmental Research Covid-19's carbon emissions. Recently, the (CICERO) has evaluated effect on

Key Points

- **fall between 4.2 and 7.5% against a rise of 1% pandemic** It has predicted that emissions will on last year, as which was earlier predicted for 2020 before the outbreak.
- **International Energy Agency Global Energy Review: 2020** Earlier, the (IEA) released with details on the effects of the pandemic on global energy demand and carbon emissions.
- **India, improved the air quality.** In the nationwide lockdown led to minimal air pollution and
- **Data Analysis:**
 - **5% lower** Carbon emissions were than during the same time in 2019.
 - **Decline coal emissions oil emissions natural gas emissions** was noticed in (8%), (4.5%) and (2.3%) as well.
 - **impacted the highest by the disease.**
China and Europe, USA. For example, there was an 8% decline in emissions in and a 9% decline in the
Emissions declined the most in regions which were
 - **lockdown full average decline of 25% partial lockdown, 18% per week.** Countries in are seeing an in energy demand per week, while in those with a the fall in energy demand is about

- **Reasons:**
 - **lockdowns restricted road and air travel.**
carbon-intensive fuels saw the biggest fall In the first quarter of 2020, most in demand.
Global energy demands have lowered due to the and
 - **decline in carbon emissions** It led to the which was more than the fall in global energy demand.
 - **Commercial demand fell and domestic electricity demand increased.** for energy has as people are confined to their homes. However, has
- **Implications:**
 - **not slow down climate change cumulative problem** This temporary decline in carbon emissions will as it is a and a drop from one single year will basically make no difference at all.
 - **A 5% drop is equivalent to 0.001 degree Celsius less warming.**

Center for International Climate and Environmental Research

- **Norway's interdisciplinary climate research.** It is foremost institute for
- **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** It has played an active role in the (IPCC), since 1992.
- **national role internationally recognised** CICERO has a in promoting knowledge about climate change and is as a driving force for innovative climate communication.

International Energy Agency

- **autonomous** It is an organisation which works to ensure reliable, affordable, and clean energy.
- **established in 1974, oil crisis of 1973 OPEC cartel** It was in the wake of the after the had shocked the world with a steep increase in oil prices.
- **Paris, France.** It is headquartered in
- **World Energy Outlook report** It releases the , annually.
- **India associate member in 2017.** became its

Way Forward

- **emissions will soar once economies restart.** The reduced emissions are not something to celebrate as it is expected that
- **sustain conscious decisions to change the sources of energy** The only way to the reduced emissions is governments taking like moving towards renewable energy sources.

Source: IE

Illicit Drug Supply and Covid-19: UNODC

Why in News

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 'Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia: Latest Developments and Challenges'. Recently, the (UNODC) released a report on

- **Covid-19 lockdowns** statistical reduction in drug seizures, without a real change in terms of supply. According to this report, induced and movement restrictions may lead to an initial but
- In other words, Covid-19 is unlikely to have any effect on illicit drug supply.

Key Points

- **Shifting of Priorities: pandemic threaten the efforts to strengthen drug prevention and treatment** Rearrangement of governments' priorities and resources to tackle the could programmes.
- **No Direct Correlation: Not every fluctuation would be a direct or indirect consequence** in terms of drug seizures, prices, drug-related arrests or deaths in the coming months of the outbreak.
- **Quick and Flexible Response: flexibility to respond raised risk levels** Active organised crime groups have shown to shortages of supplies and have on certain trafficking routes.
- **Local Capacities: Methamphetamine** Main synthetic drug of concern in the region, (also called), was manufactured, trafficked and consumed without the need for globalised supply chains.

Indian Context

- **amphetamine-type stimulants** India reported a substantial increase in seizures of (ATS), most of which are suspected to be meth.
- - **Golden Triangle routes crossing India.** Growth in trafficking of meth from the overland to Bangladesh, with some
 - **Golden Triangle rural mountains of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand.** The represents the region coinciding with the
 - **Southeast Asia's main opium-producing oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America.** It is region and one of the
 - **maritime trafficking routes cross Indian territorial waters.** Use of from Myanmar along the Andaman Sea, some of which

The reasons behind the spike are:

- **Golden Crescent in the west Golden Triangle in the east.** India is in the middle of two major illicit opium production regions in the world, the and the

Golden Crescent

- This region of South Asia is a principal global site for opium production and distribution.
- **Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.** It comprises

Challenges

- **Easy Borders:** The borders are porous and difficult to control in the lower Mekong region so cross-border movements in many places are not significantly hindered by Covid-19 measures.
- **Evolving Ways of Trafficking: containerised trafficking, couriers body-packing have reduced come up with other ways** The methods of and due to shutting down of borders and trade. However, dealers might limiting the impact of reduced trade.
- **Limited Control: limited government control Golden Triangle,** There is in the trafficking would continue at high volumes.
- **Unaffected Supply: source chemicals through direct diversion from industry** The supply of precursor chemicals is not likely to be disrupted because major organised crime groups and not diversion from illicit overseas trade channels.
- **Lowest Price Level: surge of supplies. increased its affordability** The price of meth has dropped to the lowest level in a decade with the This has in turn and, therefore, use.
- **Increased Crime: reduce the disposable income result in increased crime.**
 Street dealing of drugs might be significantly impacted and altered due to movement restriction and social distancing.
 Changed methods to access drugs and economic hardship might of some drug users, and
- **Additional Risks:** Vulnerable populations of drug users may be exposed to additional risks as funding is re-prioritised, access to programmes and services becomes difficult and activities of treatment providers are hampered as they are dealing with the pandemic.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

- **19972002.** Established in and was named UNODC in
- **United Nations International Drug Control Program Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna.** It acts as the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention by combining the (UNDCP) and the
- **World Drug Report.** UNODC publishes the

Way Forward

- **efforts national, regional, and international level analyse methods and trends** Additional would be required at the to carefully to understand changes to drug markets in the wake of the pandemic.
- **methods or procedures must be institutionalised** Moreover, to deal with illicit drug supply, their usage in order to ensure that fight against this menace is not compromised in face of a pandemic or any other crisis.

Source: TH

Hotter Oceans and Supercyclones

Why in News

supercyclone 'Amphan' The is likely to make landfall between the Sagar islands of West Bengal and the Hatiya islands of Bangladesh.

- **"super cyclonic storm (maximum wind speed is 120 knots)".** Cyclone Amphan (pronounced as UM-PUN) is a tropical cyclone formed over Bay of Bengal that has turned into a
- **higher than normal temperatures countrywide lockdown Covid-19 due to pandemic** The in the Bay of Bengal (BoB) with the have played a role turning a storm into a super cyclone.
- **strongest storms since the super cyclone of 1999** Additionally, the super cyclone Amphan is the to have formed in the BoB that ravaged Paradip in Odisha.

Key Points

- **'Cyclones' as a Regular Phenomenon**

- **energy from the heat and moisture warm ocean surfaces.** The cyclones gain their generated from

- **higher**

- **Slow Flowing Winds:** It keeps temperatures relatively high i.e. around 28 degrees around the year.

- **Higher Rainfall:** It provides required humidity for cyclone formation.

- **Constant Inflow of Fresh Water:** The inflow from the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers makes it impossible for the warm water to mix with the cooler water below, making it ideal for a cyclonic depression.

The BoB has Sea Surface Temperature (SST) compared to the Arabian Sea. Some of the reasons for higher SST of Bob are:

- **Arabian Sea receives stronger winds** On the other hand, the that help dissipate the heat, and the lack of constant fresh water supply helps the warm water mix with the cool water, reducing the temperature.

- **play a role in aiding the arrival of the monsoon.** Additionally, the tropical cyclones in these seas are a typical feature of the summer months and

- **Unusual Higher Temperature in BoB:**

- **record summer temperatures**

cyclone Fani The in 2019 was also fuelled by high temperatures in the BoB.

In 2020, the BoB has observed due to the global warming from fossil fuel emissions that has been heating up oceans.

- **maximum surface temperatures of 32-34°C** For the first two weeks of May, there were consecutively. These are record temperatures driven by climate change observed until now.

- **no longer restricted storm prediction less reliable disrupting monsoon patterns.** Such unusual warming around India is to just the BoB but also the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It makes as well as

- **Impact of Lockdown:**

- **Reduced particulate matter emissions fewer aerosols reflect sunlight and heat away from the surface.**

Every year, the particulate pollution from the Indo-Gangetic plains is transported towards the BoB which influences the formation of clouds over the ocean.

during the lockdown resulted in, such as black carbon, that are known to

- **minimal presence of heat and sunlight reflecting aerosols fewer clouds and more heat. 1-3°C higher than normal. amplified the strength** The in BoB resulted in Further, it raised the temperature of BoB by Thus, the whole phenomenon has of the cyclone.

- **Overall Impact:**

category-1 cyclone to category-5 18 hours The higher temperatures and minimal presence of aerosols helped the cyclone Amphan to intensify itself from a in that is an unusually quick evolution.

Cyclones

- **low-pressure system** Cyclones are the formation of a very with very high-speed winds revolving around it. Factors like wind speed, wind direction, temperature and humidity contribute to the development of cyclones.
- Before cloud formation, water takes up heat from the atmosphere to change into vapour. When water vapour changes back to liquid form as raindrops, this heat is released to the atmosphere.
- The heat released to the atmosphere warms the air around. The air tends to rise and causes a drop in pressure. More air rushes to the centre of the storm. This cycle is repeated.
- Hurricanes derive their energy from heated seawater which can be prevented by presence of upper-level-winds that disrupt the storm circulation forcing it to lose its strength.

Source: TH

Star Rating of Garbage Free Cities

Why in News

Star Rating of Garbage Free Cities Recently, the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MOHUA) has announced the results of the for the assessment year 2019-2020.

- A total of six cities have been certified as 5-Star, 65 cities as 3-Star and 70 cities as 1-Star.
- **Ambikapur (Chattisgarh), Surat and Rajkot (Gujarat), Indore (Madhya Pradesh) and Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra).** The 5-Star cities include

Key Points

- **Aim:**
 - **in 2018 to achieve Garbage Free status, sustainable cleanliness.** The Star Rating Protocol was launched by the Ministry to institutionalize a mechanism for cities and to motivate cities to achieve higher degrees of
 - **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)** It is one of the various initiatives which intends to make as a successful project.

- **Basis:**
 - **SMART framework –MART**It is based on 12 parameters which follow a Single metric, easurable, chievable, igorous verification mechanism and argeted towards outcomes.
 - **Solid Waste Management (SWM)**It is a comprehensive framework that assesses cities across 24 different components of and is graded based on overall marks received.
- **Procedure:**
 - **self-assessment and self-verificationinvolvement of citizen groups**The Star Rating is supported by for achieving a certain star rating. It also ensures the for a transparent system of self-declaration.
 - **independent third party agency**Further, the self-declaration is further verified through an appointed by MoHUA.
- **Significance:**
 - **significant weightage**Swachh Survekshan
annualSwachh Survekshan is the urban cleanliness survey conducted by the government.
The performance of cities under the Star Rating Protocol is crucial as it carries for their final assessment in .
 - **minimum standards of sanitation**It also ensures certain through a set of prerequisites defined in the framework.
 - **easier to implement and helps the cities incrementally improve**Since the rating is conducted at a city level, it makes the process their overall cleanliness.
 - **outcome-based tool**The rating protocol is an that helps MoHUA and other stakeholders to evaluate cities on the basis of this single rating.

Source: PIB

GST Waiver will Increase Cost

Why in News

Goods and Services Tax (GST)The Ministry of Finance is not in favour of granting exemption, as has been demanded by various sections of the industry.

Key Points

- **adverse implications on state finances, businesses would suffer**Providing GST exemption will have serious also and consumers would be hit by price rise.

- **block Input Tax Credit (ITC) because the final product is tax-free.** Exemption would as manufacturers will pay GST on inputs but cannot claim ITC Thus, it will increase the cost of manufacturing, which will lead to increase in cost of products.
- **increase compliance burden for manufacturers** The GST exemption will also who would be required to maintain separate accounts for inputs and goods used for the production of the item.
- **GST exemption provides incentive for imports,**
This makes imported goods cheaper than locally produced goods.
Further, the which do not have input taxes as compared to domestic supplies.
- In the past when the GST exemption on sanitary napkins was allowed, it had led to similar hardship for domestic manufacturers of sanitary napkins.

Goods and Services Tax

- **indirect tax** Goods and Service Tax (GST) is an levied on the supply of final goods and services. The GST has subsumed indirect taxes like excise duty, Value Added Tax (VAT), service tax, luxury tax etc.
- **consumption tax** It is essentially a and is levied at the final consumption point.
- **value addition** It is levied only on the and is collected on goods and services at each point of sale in the supply line.
- **can be set off later input tax credit.** The GST that a merchant pays to procure goods or services (i.e. on inputs) against the tax applicable on supply of final goods and services. The set off tax is called
- **cascading effect or tax on tax** The GST avoids the which increases the tax burden on the end consumer.

Benefit of Input Tax Credit

- Imagine a manufacturer of shirts. He buys raw material or inputs — cloth, thread, buttons, tailoring equipment — worth Rs 100, a sum that includes a tax of Rs 10. With these raw materials, he manufactures a shirt.
- In the process of creating the shirt, the manufacturer adds value to the materials he started out with. Let us take this value added by him to be Rs 30. The gross value of his good would, then, be Rs 100 + 30, or Rs 130.
- - Therefore, the effective GST incidence on the manufacturer is only Rs 3 (13 – 10).
 - **input tax credit** Rs. 10 is the for the manufacturer.

At a tax rate of 10%, the tax on output (this shirt) will then be Rs 13. But under GST, he can set off this tax (Rs 13) against the tax he has already paid on raw material/inputs (Rs 10).

Source: IE

United Nations Relief and Works Agency

Why in News

United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Covid-19 Recently, the , has applauded India's financial support to keep its basic services operating, under the crisis.

Key Points

- **USD 2 million UNRWA** The Government of India provided to the in support of its core programmes and services, including education and health.
- **USD 1.25 million USD 5 million** India had increased its annual contribution to the UNRWA from in 2016 to in 2019.
- It pledged another USD 5 million for 2020 which opens its way to become a member of the agency's advisory commission.
- It is also preparing medical supplies for the Palestinians.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency

- **General Assembly in 1949.** It is a United Nations agency established by the
- **relief human development Palestinian refugees education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.** Its services encompass It supports the and of across its five fields of operation.
- **Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.** Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in
- It is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support
- **Palestine refugees during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948,** are defined as persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.

Background

- **17 agreements India-Palestine development partnership USD 72 million projects post-2014 war reconstruction efforts in Gaza, construction of schools, setting up a centre of excellence for information and communication technologies at Al-Quds University satellite centre in Ramallah.** India would provide an assistance of around through these agreements in like the and developing a have been signed under an between the two sides in the fields of agriculture, health care, information technology, youth affairs, consular affairs, women empowerment and media.

- **United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP)**

Israel-Palestine issue India has reiterated its stand and supported the Two-State solution for the .

In March 2020, a delegation of visited india intended to engage India in the settling of the question of Palestine.

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

Source: IE

Malicious Software Cerberus

Why in News

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)malicious software (cerberus) threat Covid-19 Recently, the has sent alerts to all the States, Union Territories and the central agencies on a that is taking advantage of the pandemic.

cyber alertCerberusInterpol The related to has been sent on the basis of inputs received from the .

Key Points

- **Cerberus: Banking Trojan.** It is a It is primarily used to steal financial data, such as credit card numbers.

- **Trojan:**
 - Trojan is a type of malicious code or software to damage, disrupt, steal, or inflict harmful action on data or network.
 - **overlay attacks to trick victims two-factor authentication**
 - **Overlay attacks: (E.g. login credentials or bank card numbers),** An overlay attack happens when an attacker places a window over a legitimate application on the device. When the target application is running, the overlay opens messages or data input forms identical to the real ones. Victims enter information believing that they are dealing with the original program.
 - **Two-factor authentication:** It is a two step verification security process in which users go through two authentication processes to verify themselves. The Trojan can also use into providing personal information and can capture details.
 - **Banking Trojan** is a malicious program used in an attempt to obtain confidential information about customers and clients using online banking and payment systems.
- **Working of Cerberus**
 - **sends SMS**It takes advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic and to lure a user to download the link containing the malicious software.
 - **phishing campaigns**It deploys its malicious application usually spread via to trick users into installing it on their smartphones.
 - **Phishing:**
 - The link takes to a fake website and once details like login name and passwords are entered, the login credentials reach the hacker.
 - The email or text message carrying a link appears to come from a trusted source like a bank.

Source:TH

India to Chair WHO Executive Board

Why in News

World Health Organisation (WHO) Chairmanship one year (from May 2020- May 2021) Recently, India has been elected to the 's Executive Board. It will also be holding a of the Executive Board for the next

Japan. Currently, the chairmanship of the WHO Executive Board is being held by

Key Points

- **73rd World Health Assembly** The proposal to appoint India's nominee to the executive board was signed by the 194-nation at the between 18-19 May, 2020.
- **three-year-term**
 - **6 WHO regions** WHO Member States are grouped into namely, African Region, Region of the Americas, South-East Asia Region, European Region, Eastern Mediterranean Region, and Western Pacific Region.

In 2019, WHO's South-East Asia group had unanimously decided that India would be elected to the executive board for a beginning from May, 2020.
- India has been elected along with 10 other countries including Botswana, Colombia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Oman, Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United Kingdom.

WHO Executive Board

- **Composition: 34 individuals technically qualified in the field of health, three-year** Member States are elected for terms.
The Executive Board is composed of each one designated by a member state elected to do so by the World Health Assembly.
- **Chairman:**
 - **not a full time assignment** It is and the chairman is just required to chair the Executive Board's meetings.
The chairman's post is held by rotation for one year among regional groups.
- **Meeting: twice a year.** The Board meets at least
- **Functions:** The main functions of the Executive Board are to give effect to the decisions and policies of the World Health Assembly, to advise it and generally to facilitate its work.

World Health Assembly

- **decision-making body of WHO.** The World Health Assembly is the
- It is attended by delegations from all WHO Member States and focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.
- **determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget.** The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to
- **held annually in Geneva, Switzerland.** The Health Assembly is

Source: IE

India, U.S. to Collaborate on Covid-19 Vaccine Trials

Why in News

Covid-19 India and the U.S. plan to work together on vaccine research and testing for .

Key Points

- **Vaccine Action Programme (VAP):**

- **Vaccine Action Programme (VAP)** In the context of the current pandemic, partners under the are planning to collaborate on the development and testing of vaccine candidates and diagnostics for Covid-19.
- **Indo-U.S. Vaccine Action Program, Indian Department of Biotechnology (DBT) Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** The is a 33-year collaboration between the U.S. National Institutes of Health, the and the along with other partners.
- Focus is on safe, cost-effective vaccines against a range of infectious diseases.

- **Other Initiatives:**

- **ventilators**

It will be paid for by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), as part of \$5.9 million funding announced to date for India. 50 from the U.S. are expected in India shortly, as part of the donation of 200 ventilators announced by the US President.

- **U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention fund Government of India (GoI) "prevention, preparedness, and response activities in India"** The said it would separately the \$3.6 million to support , in collaboration with and concurrence from the GoI."

- **Hydroxychloroquine** India has exported antimalarial drug (HCQ) to the U.S. and several other countries.

Source: TH

Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve

Why in News

Recently, a new prey and predator estimation in Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Maharashtra found the presence of 115 tigers and 151 leopards.

Key Points

- **long-term monitoring of tigers, co-predators and prey species in TATR**
 - **core/buffer strategy.** The tiger reserves are constituted on a
 - **Project Tiger** The aims to foster an exclusive tiger agenda in the core areas of tiger reserves, with an inclusive people oriented agenda in the buffer.
 - **core areas buffer or peripheral areas** The have the legal status of a national park or a sanctuary, whereas the are a mix of forest and non-forest land, managed as a multiple use area.

The estimation was done as part of the inside the core and buffer areas of the reserve.

- **Population Density** represents the number of animals residing in per unit area. The tiger numbers appear to be up but the population density shows a decline

- **Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve**

- **Chandrapur district in Maharashtra.** It is located in
- **oldest and largest national park.** It is Maharashtra's
- **one of India's 50 "Project Tiger" reserves.**
 - Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve was established as the second Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra in 1993-94.
 - **Melghat Tiger Reserve** The first Tiger Reserve established in the State is (1973-74).

It is

- It represents Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Teak Forests in the Tiger habitat and has a viable tiger population

Source:IE

Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojna

Why in News

Chhattisgarh Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojna produce more crops and help them get the right price. is set to launch the to encourage farmers to

on May 21, death anniversary Rajiv Gandhi. The scheme will formally be launched in the state the of former prime minister

Key Points

- **Kharif crop season 10,000 per acre will be deposited in the bank accounts of farmers as agriculture assistance grant** Under the scheme, based on registered area and area under cultivation during 2019, Rs. for sowing crops such as paddy, maize and sugarcane.
- **at least 19 lakh farmers will benefit from the scheme, Rs 5,756 crore in the budget 2020-21.** According to the government, for which the state government had allocated
- **four instalments.** The money will be given to the farmers in

Source: ToI
