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States' Share in PMMSY and FME

Why in News

Recently, the Cabinet has approved the implementation of the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)** and **Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (FME)**.

- Both the schemes were **announced in the third tranche of the Rs. 20 lakh crore economic package under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.**
- It has been observed that about **Rs. 30,000 crore** worth of above schemes will rely on **40% share from states.**

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

- **Aim:** The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) was first mentioned during the 2019-20 Budget.
 - It aims to bring a **blue revolution** through sustainable and responsible development of the fisheries sector in India.
 - It also intends to augment fish production and productivity at an **annual growth rate of 9%** to achieve a target of 22 million metric tons by 2024-25.
 - It strives to create **direct employment to 15 lakh** fishers, fish farmers, etc. and about **thrice this number as indirect employment** opportunities.
 - It also aims to double the incomes of fishers, fish farmers and fish workers by 2024.
- **Time Period:** The Scheme will be implemented during a period of **5 years** from the Financial Year (FY) 2020-21 to FY 2024-25.

- **Funding:** It has a total estimated investment of **Rs 20,050 crore**. The investment share is segregated as:
 - **Central Share:** Rs 9,407 crores.
 - States' Share: Rs 4,880 crores.
 - **Beneficiaries' Share:** Rs 5,763 crores.
- **Implementation:** The PMMSY will be implemented as an umbrella scheme with two separate Components namely,
 - **Central Sector Scheme (CS):**
 - **Non-beneficiary Oriented:** The entire project cost will be borne by the Central government (i.e. 100% central funding).
 - **Beneficiary Oriented:** The individual/group activities undertaken by the entities of central government including the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), the central assistance will be **up to 40%** of the project cost for **General category** and **60% for SC/ST/Women category**.
 - **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS):**
 - **Non-beneficiary Oriented:** All the sub-components/activities will be implemented by the States/UTs, the **entire project/unit cost** will be **shared between Centre and State**.
 - **Beneficiary Oriented:** The individual/group activities under this component to be implemented by the States/UTs. The financial assistance of both **Centre and State/UTs governments together** will be limited to **40% of the project cost** for **General category** and **60% of the project cost for SC/ST/Women**.
 - The Centre and State financial assistance for **CS** and **CSS** as mentioned above will be shared as given below:
 - **North Eastern & Himalayan States:** 90% Central share and 10% State share.
 - **Other States:** 60% Central share and 40% State share.
 - **Union Territories (with legislature and without legislature):** 100% Central share.

Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises

- **Aim:**
 - The Scheme for Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (FME) intends to **increase access to finance and revenue targets** for the micro **food processing enterprises**. It also targets **2,00,000** micro-enterprises to be assisted with **credit linked subsidies**.
 - It envisages increased access to credit by existing micro food processing entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in the **Aspirational Districts**.
 - The project is likely to generate **9 lakh skilled and semi-skilled** jobs.
 - It will also help to **integrate** micro food processing enterprises with the **organized markets**.
- **Features:**
 - It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** on **All India basis** with an outlay of **Rs. 10,000 crore**.
 - The expenditure will be shared by the **Centre and the States** in a ratio of **60:40**.
 - Scheme will be implemented over a **5 year period** from 2020-21 to 2024-25.
 - The Scheme will majorly **focus on perishables**.
 - The Scheme would be monitored at Centre by an **Inter-Ministerial Empowered Committee (IMEC)** under the **Chairmanship of Food Processing Industries Minister**.
 - A State/UT Level Committee (SLC) chaired by the **Chief Secretary** will monitor and sanction/recommend proposals for expansion of micro units and setting up of new units by the **Self Help Groups (SHGs)/Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)**/ Cooperatives.
 - The Scheme also envisages the **third party evaluation** and mid-term review mechanism in the programme.

Source: IE

Coir Geo Textile

Why in News

Recently, the **National Rural Infrastructure Development Agency (NRIDA)** has announced that **coir geo textiles** will be used for construction of rural roads under the **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-III)**.

- This would give a **boost to the Coir industry** hit due to **Covid-19** pandemic.
- NRIDA is an agency under the **Ministry of Rural Development**.

Geo Textiles

- These are **synthetic** including polyester and polypropylene or **man-made materials** that have varying degrees of **permeability**.
Permeability means their surfaces have very small openings that allow liquid or gases to pass through.
- **Characteristics of Geo Textile Fabrics:**
 - It has the ability to separate, filter, reinforce, protect and drain when used in association with soils.
 - It drains areas where water pools while keeping soil in place.
 - It serves as effective filters, catching some materials to prevent drains from clogging.
 - It reinforces earthen structures like drains by holding layers in place.
 - It protects against erosion in places like roads and beaches.
- These functions make Geo Textile fabrics useful in many **industries, especially construction and civil engineering**.

Key Points

- **Coir Geo Textile:**
 - Coir is a 100% natural fiber, obtained from a **renewable source – the coconut husk**.
 - Coir Geo Textile is naturally **resistant to rot, molds and moisture**, and free from any microbial attack hence it needs no chemical treatment.
 - It has a **permeable, natural and strong fabric** with high durability.
 - It protects the land surface and promotes quick vegetation.
 - It is **totally biodegradable**, and helps in soil stabilisation.
 - It can dissipate the energy of flowing water and absorb the excess solar radiation.

- **PMGSY New Technology Guidelines:**

- The new guidelines encourage **locally available materials** and use of **green technologies for construction of roads** under **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)**.
- The State Governments are required to propose a **minimum 15%** of total length of annual road proposals under **new technologies such as** cement stabilization, Lime stabilization, cold mix, waste plastics, cell filled concrete, paneled cement concrete pavement, fly ash etc.
- Out of this, **5% roads** are to be constructed using **Indian Road Congress (IRC) accredited technology**. The IRC has now accredited coir Geo textiles for construction of rural roads.
- Thus, **5% length of the rural roads under PMGSY-III will be constructed using coir geo textiles**.
- **1674 km road** will be constructed using **Coir Geo textiles in 07 states i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamilanadu** and in **Telangana**.
- There will be a requirement of **One Crore Sq. mtrs of coir geo textiles**, estimated cost of which would come to **Rs.70 Crore**.

Indian Road Congress

- The Indian Roads Congress (IRC) is the **apex body of Highway Engineers** in the country.
- It was set up in December, 1934 on the recommendations of the **Indian Road Development Committee** also known as **Jayakar Committee** (under the Chairmanship of Shri M.R. Jayakar) with the objective of road development in India.
- It works in close collaboration with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- It is committed to utilise global best practices and promote the **use of cutting edge technologies** for construction for the maintenance of roads, bridges and road transportation.
- It promotes **environmental strategy for promotion of cleaner, less energy intensive and less polluting construction techniques** and use of recycled wastes.
- **Indian Road Congress (IRC) accredited technology:**
- The **Committee for Accreditation of New Materials and Techniques** formed under the aegis of **Highway Research Board of Indian Roads Congress** gives accreditations to patented or new materials, techniques developed in India and abroad and evaluated as per recognized National/ International Specifications.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana - III

- The Phase III of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) was **launched in 2019**.

- The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana was **launched to provide connectivity to unconnected habitations as part of a poverty reduction strategy.**
- The **National Rural Infrastructure Development Agency** works to implement the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana across states.

The Ministry of Rural Development along with state governments is responsible for the implementation of PMGSY.
- Under the PMGSY-III Scheme, it is proposed to **consolidate 1,25,000 Km** road length in the States.

It involves consolidation through routes and major rural links connecting habitations to **Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), Higher Secondary Schools and Hospitals.**
- The **duration** of the third phase is **2019-20 to 2024-25.**
- The **funds** are shared in the ratio of 60:40 between the Centre and State for all States except for 8 North Eastern states and Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand for which it is 90:10.

Source: PIB

Banks Seek Another Moratorium

Why in News

The banking sector is pushing for a moratorium on loan repayments by another **three months to 31st August**, easing of **bad loan (Non-Performing Assets) recognition norms** from 90 days to 180 days and **one-time restructuring of loans** as relief measures to tackle the impact of **lockdown** and the slowdown in the economy due to **Covid-19** pandemic.

These demands were raised at the recent meetings of the **Reserve Bank of India** (RBI) top officials with the chiefs of banks and **Non-Banking Financial Companies** (NBFCs).

Key Points

- **Background:**

- On 27th March, 2020, the RBI announced a **three-month moratorium** (1st March to 31st May) on loan and **card repayments** and **slashed its main policy rate, Repo rate** by 75 basis points and **Cash Reserve Ratio** (CRR) of banks by 100 basis points to stabilize the financial markets and reduce the pain on borrowers.
- The RBI had stipulated banks should create a **10% provisioning on all loans** that are overdue but not yet a **non-performing asset** (NPA) and where moratorium has been approved.
- While the provisioning could be adjusted against the provisioning for slippages into NPAs during fiscal 2021, it becomes important to see how the **banking sector manages asset quality** in the near term post the moratorium period.

- **Use of Moratorium Provision :**

- In the **retail** segment, higher instances of moratorium utilisation were observed in **agri loans, micro-credit, commercial vehicle loans and other unsecured retail products like credit cards.**
- Several **borrowers** opting for moratorium had sufficient account balances indicating that borrowers want to be more liquid.

- **Reasons Behind Demands:**

- Extension of moratorium is **required** as **factories are unlikely to start production** in May due to curbs in many important industrial belts, supply chains remain broken and job losses have increased.
- It will imply companies **need not pay till 31st August**, and it also implies almost minimal possibility of companies being able to pay their interest liabilities then in September, **failing which the account might be classified NPA** as per existing norms.

Currently, loans in which the borrower fails to pay principal and/or interest charges within 90 days are classified as NPAs and provisioning is made accordingly.

- Banks want the NPA recognition limit to be raised to 180 days to limit the surge in NPAs.
- Restructuring of loans will help in easing the interest burden on borrowers.
- Also, bankers are not sure whether RBI will change its **'June 7 circular'** concept on stressed assets and restructuring.

RBI's Prudential Framework for Resolution of Stressed Assets June 7 circular, mandates banks to recognize stress and initiate a review of default within 30 days. The June 7 circular is stringent and gives little flexibility to banks.

- **Negative Impact:**

- Extension means a **delay in payment and borrowers will have to shell out the installments and interest charges** later.
- Banks are already facing sluggish credit offtake and a spike in non-performing assets due to the lockdown and the contraction in the economy.
- According to **Crisil** ratings, NPAs are set to rise by 150-200 basis points this fiscal (2020-21).

Way Forward

- Banks and NBFCs have raised these demands as **moratorium alone is not sufficient** to come out of the crisis.
- The RBI needs to give **operational flexibility to banks** for a **comprehensive restructuring of the existing loans** and also a reclassification of 90-day norm.

Source: IE

Steps to Boost Ease of Doing Business

Why in News

Recently, the Government of India has decided to bring various amendments to **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** and Companies Act, 2013 to enhance **ease of doing business** in the country.

- The amendments to these laws are a part of the government's **economic stimulus** package announced under **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**.
- India was placed at **63rd position** in the **World Bank's ease of doing business report, 2020** out of 190 countries.

Key Points

- **Changes in Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC):**
 - Minimum threshold to initiate insolvency proceedings has been **raised to Rs.1 crore** (from Rs.1 lakh, which largely insulates **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises-MSMEs**).
 - Suspension of fresh initiation of insolvency proceedings up to one year, depending upon the pandemic.
 - Empowering the Central Government to exclude Covid-19 related debt from the definition of "default" under the IBC for the purpose of triggering insolvency proceedings.

- **Decriminalisation under Companies Act, 2013:**
 - The move seeks to **remove criminal penalties** from all provisions of the Companies Act, except provisions dealing with fraudulent conduct.
 - The decriminalised offences include administrative offences such as delays in filing **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** reports, or failure to rectify the register of members in compliance with orders from the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)**.
 - A number of offences under the Act previously classified as compoundable offences will not have imprisonment penalty now.
 - Compoundable offences are those offences that have either imprisonment or fines as punishments.
 - Some of the **offences under the Act have been omitted altogether** while **others have been shifted from the purview of the NCLT** to an in-house adjudication mechanism.
 - Under the in-house adjudication mechanism the matter will be dealt by the Registrar of Companies (RoC).
 - The RoC is empowered to decide penalties for the offences under the Act.
- **Other changes to raise funds for companies:**
 - Direct listing of securities by Indian public companies in permissible foreign jurisdictions.
 - Private companies which just want to list **Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs)** on stock exchanges not to be regarded as listed companies.
 - This will bring additional sources of funding to companies who do not wish to comply with the regulations applicable to listed companies.
- **Rationale behind the Amendment:**
 - The decriminalisation efforts are to **pull back on regulations introduced in 2014** aimed at boosting corporate compliance.
 - **As compliance levels have improved**, the government now felt a need to **boost ease of doing business** and therefore, it has started to relax criminal provisions.
 - These moves will bring great relief to companies as they can **focus on business revival rather** than worry about defaults and compliance.
 - These measures will prove to be **instrumental in easing the financial situation** of firms especially, MSMEs who have been one of the biggest victims of this pandemic crisis.
 - These amendments are admirable steps towards the three-pronged goal of:
 - Reducing the burden on company courts,
 - Ensuring investor interests, and
 - Facilitating the ease of doing business.
 - This could well be the step towards showing intent to incentivize domestic and global investments, especially post Covid-19.

- **Issues involved:**

- The move will **hamper the recovery proceedings of financial institutions** and lead to an **increase in the non-performing asset**.
- Suspension of insolvency initiation for up to a year may protect promoters from losing control of their companies **but will not prevent creditors from seeking recoveries through other means**.
- Decriminalisation of provisions in Companies Act are unrelated to Covid-19 and had been announced before the lockdown as part of previously planned reforms.

Sources: IE

Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade

Why in News

Recently, the **second Addendum to the Protocol** on **Inland Water Transit and Trade** was signed between India and Bangladesh.

The Protocol will further facilitate the trade between two countries with **improved reliability** and **cost effectiveness**.

Key Points

- **Protocol on Transit and Trade:** Bangladesh and India have a long standing and time-tested Protocol on Transit and Trade through **inland waterways**.
 - This Protocol was first signed in 1972.
 - It was last renewed in 2015 for five years with a provision for its automatic renewal for a further period of five years.

- **Second Addendum to the Protocol:** The second addendum includes new **Indo Bangladesh Protocol (IBP)** routes and declaration of new Ports of Call to facilitate trade between the two countries.
 - **Routes:**
 - As per the Protocol on **Inland Water Transit and Trade**, inland vessels of one country can transit through the specified routes of the other country. Under the Protocol, 50:50 cargo sharing by Indian and Bangladeshi vessels is permitted both for transit and inter country trade.
 - The number of **IBP** routes has been **increased from 8 to 10**.
 - Inclusion of **Sonamura-Daudkandi stretch of Gumti river** in the Protocol will improve the **connectivity of Tripura** and adjoining States with Indian and Bangladesh's economic centres.
 - The operationalization of **Rajshahi-Dhulian-Rajshahi Route** and its **extension up to Aricha, Bangladesh** will help the augmentation of infrastructure in Bangladesh. It will also decongest the Land Custom Stations on both sides.
 - **Port of Call:**
 - A port of call is an **intermediate port** where ships customarily stop for supplies, repairs, or transshipment of cargo.
 - There were six Ports of Call each in India and Bangladesh under the Protocol. These are Kolkata, Haldia, Pandu, Karimganj, Silghat and Dhubari in India and Narayanganj, Khulan, Mongla, Sirajganj, Ashuganj and Pangaon in Bangladesh.
 - **Five new ports of call:** Dhulian, Maia, Kolaghat, Sonamura and Jogighopa are on the Indian side while Rajshahi, Sultanganj, Chilmari, Daudkandi and Bahadurabad are on the Bangladesh side.
 - **Two extended Ports of Call** i.e. Tribeni (Bandel), West Bengal and Badarpur, Assam on Indian side and Ghorasal and Muktarpur on the Bangladesh side.
 - Inclusion of **Jogighopa** in India and **Bahadurabad** in Bangladesh will provide connectivity to Meghalaya, Assam and Bhutan.
 - Multimodal Logistics Park is proposed to be established in Jogighopa.
- **Movement on shallow draft mechanized vessels:**
 - It would introduce trade between **Chilmari (Bangladesh) and Dhubri (India)** through the use of shallow draft mechanized vessels.
 - This would allow export of stone chips and other Bhutanese and North East cargo to Bangladesh.
 - It would give an easy access for the traders to the hinterland of Bangladesh, enhancing the local economy in Bangladesh and the lower Assam region of India.

- **New opportunities on cargo movement:**
 - Under this Protocol, Inland vessels of both the countries can work on the designated protocol route and dock, notified for loading/unloading of cargo.
 - The Indian transit cargo is mainly **coal, fly-ash, Over Dimensional Cargo (ODC)** for power projects in North East region.
 - The other potential cargo for movement is fertilizers, cement, food grains, agricultural products, containerized cargo etc.

Source: PIB

Preventive Methods for Alzheimers

Why in News

Researchers at the **Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati** (IIT-G) have found methods for preventing the accumulation of **neurotoxic molecules** in the brain, which leads to **Alzheimer's** disease.

Key Points

- The cause of Alzheimer's is the **accumulation of amyloid-beta peptides** (neurotoxic molecules) in the brain.
 - **Peptide** is similar to the plaque that blocks arteries and affects blood supply, leading to cardiovascular diseases.
 - **Peptide aggregation/accumulation** means their formation of one over the other, **deforming the cortex of the brain** which leads to Alzheimer's.
 - The peptide molecules need to have a **certain structure to aggregate**.

- **Preventive Methods:**
 - **Use of Trojan Peptides:**
 - In this approach, the purpose is to design a **deceitful peptide** with **“negative syncretical points”** for checking the plaque formation.
 - **Trojan peptide** (deceitful peptide) has the same structure as the peptide in the body but its **function is contrary to aggregation**.
 - It adopts a similar **approach of deceit** to impede the aggregation of the amyloid peptide, and reduce poisoning of nerve cells that leads to memory loss.
 - The degeneration of poisoned cells can be delayed by intravenous injection of the trojan peptide, which in turn, can delay the onset of disease by 10 years.
 - **Application of a low-voltage electric field:**
 - The electric field can **prevent amyloid plaques from aggregating**.
 - The use of an external electric or magnetic field **modulates peptide molecules** to pull back the possibility of Alzheimer’s to a certain extent.
- **Earlier Discoveries:**
 - In **July 2019**, an Indian-American scientist at the **University of New Mexico** developed an **early version vaccine** for Alzheimer’s disease.
Vaccine intervention could **rescue memory impairments and prevent neurons from dying** by reducing tau tangles.
 - In **November 2019, China** approved the **world’s first multi-targeting** and **carbohydrate-based** drug **GV-971** for Alzheimer’s.

Alzheimer’s Disease

- It is a **neurological disorder** which causes brain cells to **degenerate and die**. This leads to loss of memory, problems with words in speaking or writing, poor judgment, changes in mood and personality, confusion with time or place, etc.
At the **first stage**, these symptoms are **mild** but they become **more severe with time**.
- Alzheimer’s is the **most common cause of dementia** among older adults.
Dementia is a group of brain disorders that cause the loss of intellectual and social skills.
- Alzheimer’s is caused by the **build-up of proteins** known as **tau tangles or plaques** within the brain and is also known as the **third type of diabetes**.
Tau is a protein that when it occurs in tangled formations in the brain of Alzheimer patients, disrupts the ability of neurons to communicate with one another in the brain.
- Alzheimer’s is an **incurable disease**, as the death of brain cells cannot be reversed.
- **Women have a higher risk** of having Alzheimer’s disease than men.

Way Forward

- **Around 100 potential drugs** for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease **failed** between 1998 and 2011 and now these developments are a **big step** in the direction.
- The cure is important for **India** because it **stands at the third position after China and the USA** in the number of Alzheimer's patients. Along with cure, India also needs to clearly define public health strategy with a significant focus on research into degenerative diseases and investment in the training of healthcare personnel.

Source: TH

Health Related Schemes in Haryana

Why in News

Recently, the Haryana government has launched '**H1N1 Vaccination Campaign for Healthcare Workers**' and **Hepatitis-B control programme**.

Key Points

- **H1N1 Vaccination Campaign for Healthcare Workers**
 - **Need:**
 - India usually witnesses **two peaks** of H1N1 infection, one during **January to March** and another in **post Monsoon** between August and October. Thus, precautions through vaccination for H1N1 is considered to be a better solution.
 - The health workers are already facing the risk of **Covid-19** while managing the **pandemic**, hence focussing on their **health safety** has become a top priority for the government.
 - In India, since 2016 about 85,000 persons are being infected by the H1N1 virus and 4,900 deaths have occurred in the last few years.
 - **Features:**
 - It will vaccinate around 13,000 health workers across the state.
 - It includes a **single dose vaccine** and is **effective** for a period of **one year**.
- **Hepatitis-B Control Programme**
 - The Hepatitis-B control programme has been launched under the **National Viral Hepatitis Control programme**.
 - The National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme aims at both prevention and treatment of hepatitis which is among the leading causes of liver cancer, cirrhosis of liver and acute liver failure.
 - The programme is a part of the **National Health Mission**.

Swine Flu

- Swine flu caused by the “**swine flu virus**”, the **H1N1**.
- Swine Flu is an infection of the **respiratory tract** characterized by the usual symptoms of flu — cough, nasal secretions, fever, loss of appetite, fatigue, and headache.
- It is called swine flu because it was known in the past to occur in people who had been in the **vicinity of pigs**.
- The virus is transmitted by **short-distance airborne transmission**, particularly in crowded enclosed spaces. Hand contamination and direct contact are other possible sources of transmission.

Hepatitis B

- It is a viral infection that attacks the **liver** and can cause both acute and chronic disease.
- The virus is most commonly transmitted from **mother to child during birth** and delivery, as well as through contact with blood or other body fluids.
- It is the primary cause of **liver cancer**.
- Hepatitis B can be **prevented by vaccines** that are safe, available and effective.
- Every year, **World Hepatitis Day** is celebrated on the **28th of July**.
- It is among the four diseases apart from **HIV-AIDS, TB, Malaria** for which, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially endorses disease-specific global awareness days.

Source:IE

India Resumes Purchase of Malaysian Palm Oil

Why in News

Recently, India has **resumed purchases of Malaysian palm oil after** a gap of four-month following a diplomatic row between the two countries.

Background

- The former Prime Minister had criticised India's **Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)** which was considered as an interference in the internal matter of India.
- Subsequently, the **diplomatic row** emerged between the two countries.
- Following the incident, India **imposed a ban on imports of palm oil** from Malaysia.

- The renewed purchases come amid improving trade relations between India and Malaysia after the formation of a new government in Malaysia.
India's total palm oil imports from Malaysia for the first four months of 2020 **fell by more than 50% from the same period in 2019.**

Key Points

- **India's Palm Oil import:**
 - India is the **world's biggest buyer of edible oils.**
 - India buys **more than two-thirds** of its total edible oil imports as **palm oil.**
- **Malaysian Import over Indonesia:**
 - **Malaysia** is the **world's second** largest producer of palm oil **after Indonesia.**
 - Malaysia's palm oil inventories **production has surged** and **coronavirus lockdowns** led to a slump in demand.
 - Thus, Malaysian palm oil is available at a **discount price** compared to supplies from Indonesia. On the other hand, Indonesia has also raised its **palm oil export levy.**
 - Additionally, Malaysia has also signed a deal to **buy 100,000 tonnes of Indian rice.**

India-Malaysia Relation

- India established diplomatic relations with Malaysia in 1957.
- **Economic Relation:** India and Malaysia have signed **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).** CECA is a kind of **Free Trade Agreement (FTA).**
 - India has also signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in services and investments with the 10-member **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).**
Malaysia is the third largest trading partner in ASEAN.
 - Bilateral trade between India and Malaysia is significantly biased in favour of Malaysia.
- **Defence & Security Cooperation:** Joint military exercises "**Harimau Shakti**" are held annually between the two countries.
- **Traditional medicine:** India and Malaysia have signed a MoU on cooperation in the field of Traditional Medicine in October 2010.
 - The Government of Malaysia has been working to popularize **AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) systems** in Malaysia.
 - AYUSH systems are practiced in Malaysia.



Source: ET

Solarisation of Konark Sun Temple

Why in News

The Government of India has launched **a scheme for 100% solarisation of Konark sun temple and Konark town in Odisha.**

The scheme will **meet all energy requirements of Konark town with solar energy.**

Key Points

- **Objective:**
 - To take forward the Prime Minister's vision to develop the historical Sun temple town of Konark in Odisha as '**Surya Nagri**'.
 - To convey a message of synergy between the modern use of solar energy and the ancient Sun Temple and the importance of promoting solar energy.
- **Plan:** It envisages **setting up of the 10-MW grid** connected solar project and various solar off-grid applications such as solar trees, solar drinking water kiosks and off-grid solar power plants with battery storage.
- **Funding:** 100% **Central Financial assistance (CFA)** support of around Rs. 25 crore through the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
- **Implementation Agency:** Odisha Renewable Energy Development Agency.

Konark Temple



- Konark was built by **King Narasimhadeva I** of the **Ganga Dynasty** (1238-1264AD) in the **13th century** and is located in Eastern Odisha near the sacred city of **Puri**.
- The temple is designed in the shape of a **colossal chariot**. It is **dedicated to the sun God**.
 - There are two rows of 12 wheels on each side of the Konark sun temple.
 - The seven horses are said to symbolize the seven days of the week.
- The temple was used as a navigational point by European sailors. They referred to it as the **'Black Pagoda'** due to its dark colour and its magnetic power that drew ships into the shore and caused shipwrecks.
- It is the culmination of **Odisha temple architecture**.
- It was declared a **UNESCO world heritage site** in 1984.

Source:PIB

Agappe Chitra Magna Kit for Covid-19

Why in News

The **Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST)** in collaboration with **Agappe Diagnostics Ltd.** has commercially launched the Agappe Chitra Magna Kit for detection of **Covid-19**.

SCTIMST is an **Institute of National Importance** under the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

Key Points

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- Agappe Chitra Magna is a **magnetic nanoparticle-based RiboNucleic Acid (RNA) extraction kit**.
 - **Working:**
 - It isolates RNA from the patient sample using magnetic nanoparticles.
 - **SARS-COV-2**, the causative virus of Covid-19 pandemic, is an **RNA virus**- a long single-stranded polymeric substance present in all living cells that carries the genetic information of the organism necessary for life.
 - One of the critical steps in **detecting this virus is by confirming the presence of the RNA** of the virus in the sample taken from the throat or nose.
 - The magnetic nanoparticle beads bind to the viral RNA and, when exposed to a magnetic field, give a highly purified and concentrated RNA.
 - As the sensitivity of the detection method is dependent on getting an adequate quantity of viral RNA, this innovation enhances the chances of identifying positive cases.
 - **Application:**

The kit can be used for RNA extraction for **RT-LAMP, RT-PCR** and other isothermal and Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) based protocols for the detection of SARS-COV-2.
 - **Significance:**

The indigenously developed and manufactured RNA extraction kit **would reduce the nation's dependence on imported kits** which are expensive and thus will bring down the cost of Covid-19 testing.

Source: PIB
