



News Analysis (15 Jun, 2020)

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Indian Naval LOs at Madagascar and Abu Dhabi

Why in News

India is planning to post **Naval Liaison Officers (LOs)** at the **Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC)** in **Madagascar** and the **European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH)** in **Abu Dhabi** for improved **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)**.

This move comes after **India joined the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)** as Observer in **March 2020** along with **Japan and the United Nations**.

Key Points

- The move **aims to improve linkages** of the Navy's **Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** in **Gurugram with other IFCs** and become the **repository for all maritime data** in the IOR.
- **India is working closely with France**, who is a pre-eminent member of IOC, to post a Naval LO at the RMIFC in Madagascar.
The **RMFIC functions under the aegis of the IOC** and is designed to deepen maritime domain awareness by monitoring maritime activities and promoting information sharing and exchange.
- The Navy LO is expected to be posted at **EMASOH by July** and at the **RMIFC by September or October 2020**.

India has a LO at the IFC in Singapore for over four years now.

- **Indian Ocean Commission**

- It is an **intergovernmental body and regional forum** created in **1984** to protect the interests of the **western Indian Ocean islands**.
- It consists of **Madagascar, Comoros, La Réunion** (French overseas territory), **Mauritius** and **Seychelles**.
- IOC has **five observers** which are **China, European Union (EU), Malta** and **International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), India, Japan** and **the UN**.

OIF is a 54 french speaking nations collective.

- **European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz**

- France started EMASOH with the aim to monitor maritime activity and guarantee freedom of navigation in the **Persian Gulf** and the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- It is **based at the French naval base in Abu Dhabi (UAE)**.
- It was declared operational by the French Ministry of Armed Forces in February 2020.

- **India's Other Initiatives:**

- To strengthen the naval forces and surveillance, India has signed a series of **white shipping agreements, Logistics Support Agreements (LSA)** and **maritime cooperation agreements** with several countries, recently.
For example, **India Australia Virtual Summit** announced a joint declaration on a shared vision for maritime cooperation in the **Indo-Pacific** in which they agreed to deepen navy-to-navy cooperation and strengthen MDA in the Indo-Pacific region through enhanced exchange of information.
- In **2015**, India unveiled it's strategic vision for the Indian Ocean i.e. **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)**. It is an increasing recognition of the increasing importance of maritime security, maritime commons and cooperation.

Through SAGAR, India seeks to **deepen economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours** and **assist in building their maritime security capabilities**.

Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region

- The **Indian Navy** set up the IFC-IOR in **December 2018** within the premises of the **Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC)** in Gurugram to track maritime movements in the region.
 - IMAC is located in **Gurugram** and is the main centre of the Indian Navy for **coastal surveillance and monitoring**.
 - IMAC is a **joint initiative of Indian Navy, Coast Guard and Bharat Electronics Ltd** and functions under the **National Security Adviser (NSA)**.
- IFC is the **single point centre linking all the coastal radar chains** to generate a seamless real-time picture of the nearly 7,500 km coastline.
- **France** became the **first country to deploy** a LO at the IFC-IOR **followed by the USA** and several other countries including Australia, Japan and the UK have announced their intention to post LOs.
- It **coordinates with similar centres** across the globe which include:
 - Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre (VRMTC)
 - Maritime Security Centre-**Horn of Africa** (MSCHOA)
 - **Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery** (ReCAAP)
 - Information Fusion Centre-Singapore (IFC-SG)
 - International Maritime Bureau-Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB-PRC)

Way Forward

- India's engagement with the Western Indian Ocean will facilitate collective engagement with the islands there, which are becoming strategically significant.
- Given China's growing presence in the region, India will be able to increase its naval presence and gain support for its maritime projects across the Indo-Pacific.
- India's consultative, democratic and equitable leadership can help achieve the security and sustainable growth to all in the region.

Source: TH

Indian Digital Payment System Outside India

Why in News

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** is exploring the possibility of expanding its payment system abroad, following the requests from several countries.

Key Points

- **Requests for Payment System:**

The RBI has received requests from abroad for implementing its payment systems like Cheque Truncation System (CTS), National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT), Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and messaging solutions.

- **Reason:**

The availability of low cost innovative digital payment products in India has led to many countries expressing their interest in Indian payment system.

- **Availability of Payment System Outside India:**

- Currently, there are no RBI authorised payment system operators providing payment services outside India.
- However, there is cross-country cooperation with Bhutan with respect to CTS, National Automated Clearing House (NACH) and NEFT. NEFT is also available for one-way transfers from India to Nepal.

- **Scope of Payment System Outside India:**

- According to RBI there is scope for enhancing global outreach of its payment systems, including remittances, through active participation and co-operation in international and regional fora by collaborating and contributing to standard setting.
- Efforts have been made to increase and widen the scope, coverage and usage of **RuPay card scheme** and **UPI to enhance their brand value internationally.**

- **Issues Involved:**

- Overdependence on the foreign funds (through digital payments) may lead to possible liquidity risk issues in India.
- Different time zones may pose a risk in digital payments.

- **Digital Payments and India:**

- India's growing use of retail digital payments, indicates a shift in the relationship with cash.
- According to the RBI, the digital payments in the country have witnessed a growth of 61% and 19% in terms of volume and value, respectively.
- The value of digital payments to **Gross Domestic Product** (GDP) has also increased from 660% in 2014-15 to 862% in 2018-19.
- The Point of sale (PoS) terminals grew at a high pace of 35%, contrastingly the deployment of ATMs has grown at a low pace (4%).

Unified Payments Interface

- It is an advanced version of **Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)**- round-the-clock funds transfer service to make cashless payments **faster, easier and smoother.**

- UPI is a system that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application (of any participating bank), merging several banking features, seamless fund routing & merchant payments into one hood.
- **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** launched UPI with 21 member banks in 2016.

National Electronic Funds Transfer

- **National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT)** is a nation-wide payment system facilitating one-to-one funds transfer. Under this Scheme, individuals, firms and corporates can electronically transfer funds from any bank branch to any individual, firm or corporate having an account with any other bank branch in the country participating in the Scheme.
- There is no limit – either minimum or maximum – on the amount of funds that could be transferred using NEFT.
- However, the maximum amount per transaction is limited to ₹ 50,000/- for cash-based remittances within India and also for remittances to Nepal under the Indo-Nepal Remittance Facility Scheme.

RuPay Card Scheme

- RuPay is the first-of-its-kind domestic Debit and Credit Card payment network of India.
- The name, derived from the words ‘Rupee and ‘Payment’, emphasises that it is India’s very own initiative for Debit and Credit Card payments.
- The card can also be used for transactions in Singapore, Bhutan, UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Cheque Truncation System

Cheque Truncation System (CTS) is an online image-based cheque clearing system undertaken by the RBI for faster clearing of cheques. It eliminates the associated cost of movement of physical cheques.

National Automated Clearing House

National Automated Clearing House (NACH) is a service offered by NPCI to banks which aims at facilitating interbank high volume, low value debit/credit transactions, which are repetitive and electronic in nature.

Source: IE

Why in News

Recently, researchers from the **Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)** have developed new drug molecules against the **protozoa 'Entamoeba histolytica'** that causes **amoebiasis**.

Key Points

- **The Protozoa and High Oxygen Level:**
 - The protozoa is **anaerobic or microaerophilic** in nature such that it **cannot survive high concentrations of oxygen**.
 - Anaerobic organisms are those who exist in the absence of free oxygen.
 - A **microaerophilic** atmosphere is ideal for a **microorganism** that can grow under **reduced oxygen** and increased carbon dioxide levels.
 - However, during infection, **it faces a high surge of oxygen** inside the human body. The organism synthesizes large amounts of cysteine to **counter oxidative stress**.
- **Synthesis of Cysteine:**

This **pathogen deploys cysteine** as one of the essential molecules in its defence mechanism against **high oxygen levels**. It **expresses two crucial enzymes** for **synthesizing cysteine**.

 - Cysteines are enzymes that degrade proteins in the body.
 - Cysteine biosynthesis is crucial for the survival of *E. histolytica* and for similar protozoan parasites.
- **JNU Research:**
 - Researchers have characterized and determined the molecular structures of both the crucial enzymes.
 - They have also successfully screened for potent inhibitors for one of the enzymes, **O-acetyl L-serine sulfhydrylase (OASS)**.
 - Some of these inhibitors can **check the growth of this organism with high efficacy** by targeting their pathways.
 - The identified molecules can lead to the **development of drug molecules**.

Protozoa

- Protozoans are the **single-celled eukaryotes, either free-living or parasitic**, which feed on organic matter such as other microorganisms or organic tissues and debris.
 - **Eukaryotes** are organisms whose cells have a nucleus enclosed within membranes, unlike prokaryotes, which have no membrane-bound organelles.
 - A **parasite is an organism** that lives on or in a host and gets its food from or at the expense of its host. E.g. plasmodium parasite which causes **malaria**.
- **Habitat:** Mostly they are **aerobic** (with oxygen) but some are **anaerobic** (without oxygen) and present in the rumen or human intestine.
- **Size and Shape:** The size and shape of Protozoa vary greatly, from microbial (1µm) to large enough and can be seen by the naked eye.
- **Nutrition:** Protozoans are **heterotrophs** and have **holozoic nutrition**.
Holozoic nutrition can be defined as a method of nutrition which **involves the ingestion of some complex organic substances** (such as parts of a plant or animal) that may be in the solid or the liquid form.

Entamoeba histolytica

- According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, *Entamoeba histolytica* is the **third-leading cause of morbidity and mortality** due to **parasitic disease in humans**.
 - Predominantly infecting humans and other primates, *E. histolytica* is estimated to infect about **35-50 million people** worldwide.
 - A **parasitic disease** is an infectious disease caused or transmitted by a parasite. E.g. Malaria.
- It causes **amoebiasis or amoebic dysentery**, which is highly prevalent in developing countries.

Amoebiasis

- It is a disease caused by the parasite ***Entamoeba histolytica***.
- Amoebiasis infection is most common **in tropical areas** with untreated water. E.g. India.
- It **spreads through drinking or eating uncooked food**, such as fruit, that may have been washed in contaminated local water.
- If symptoms occur, they may be mild and include cramping and diarrhoea.
- It can be treated through antibiotics.

Source: PIB

Behaviour Change Model for Living with Covid-19

Why in News

Recently, **Meghalaya** has issued a **new health protocol** saying that it would consider everybody as an **asymptomatic** (showing no symptoms) **carrier of Covid-19 'by default'** because it is the best way to prevent the threat of community transmission with **migrants** returning to the state from different zones.

Key Points

- **Behaviour Change Model for living with Covid-19:**
 - The pandemic has resulted in two kinds of fear: **fear for the loss of life** and **fear for the loss of livelihood**, that is why the state wants to build a system through which **people can protect themselves and carry out their livelihood** at the same time.
 - People have to live with the **coronavirus** now and that could be achieved through what psychologists call the '**locus of control**', or **the extent to which one feels control over events in their lives**.
 - As soon as people think that they could be Covid-19 positive, their entire **behaviour changes and they become more cautious and feel responsible** for their actions and thus help to reduce the risk of **community transmission**.

- **Implementation Method:**

- To implement this, there is a **four-pronged plan** that suggests **testing** everyone who enters the state, **isolating** them, **stressing on behavioural change** and finally **training** them.
- Everyone in the state shall be treated as **Category A patients** unless they are tested on a continuous basis.
 - This implies **living with the assumption that every person could be an asymptomatic, mobile carrier of the Covid-19 virus**, with a probability of transmitting the virus to others unknowingly.
- The Category A patients will have to follow **three non-negotiable practices: compulsory mask-wearing, hand hygiene and social distancing.**
- For that, the health department of the state has built a series of training modules by **dividing the entire population into three categories:**
 - The elderly, who are above 65.
 - Those who have **comorbidities** (It is the presence of one or more additional medical conditions often co-occurring with a primary condition and is associated with worse health outcomes, more complex clinical management and increased health care costs).
 - The mobile group or the mobile workforce including students who are constantly on the move.
- The **Health Department will carry out the training** with the help of identified master trainers and **a certificate will be provided** to all those who have successfully completed training.
- The two main components of training include **checklists and self-help diaries.**
 - **Checklists:** A checklist, with a **set of model questions** which address topics such as hand hygiene, social distancing, respiratory etiquette, will be provided for all three groups. The checklist is designed in such a way that **one can rate themselves** out of ten based on their performance on that day.
 - **Self-help Diaries:** The senior population and those living with comorbidities can use these as a tool to monitor themselves. **Accredited Social Health Activist** (ASHA) and **Anganwadi teams** will go to every house to train this section.

Way Forward

- Behavioural change does not happen through scaring people and it can be hoped that constant repetition of these habits, using the self-help diary or checklist through appreciation and progress monitoring will lead to change.
- In the healthcare field, **behavioural economics** can address concerns about optimizing people's well being.

- The shifts in responsibility will create a supportive environment that will remove fear and encourage compassionate care towards fellow beings.

Source: IE

Malabar Gliding Frog

Why in News

Recently, a rare amphibian i.e. **Malabar Gliding Frog (*Rhacophorus malabaricus*)** was spotted in Pullad, Kerala.

The amphibian is **endemic** to the rainforest of **western ghats**.

Endemic species are those plants and animals that exist only in one geographical region.

Key Points



- **Characteristics:**

- It is a **green frog with slender body, webbed feet, unusual body positions** and very well **camouflaged**.

Camouflage, also called **cryptic coloration**, is a defense mechanism or tactic that organisms use to disguise their appearance, usually to blend in with their surroundings.

- The fingers and toes are like sticks to attach and walk through tree branches.
- It has a **high gliding abilities**, with the long skin between the fingers which helps to cover **10 to 12 feet** in one leap.
- It has a **body length of 10 cm**, making it one of the **largest mossy frogs**.

Mossy Frogs: These frogs have the skin which is green in colour and resembles moss growing on the rock.

- The breeding period is during the monsoon and usually, the females choose to spawn on the lush green leaves overhanging a waterbody.
- As their body is so soft, they can live only in moist forests with streams.

- **Foam Nests:**

They built **foam nests** above small pools of water, into which the tadpoles drop after hatching.

Behaviour like **cannibalism** has been found among tadpoles.

- **Protection Status:**

In the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List**, it is placed in the **Least Concern** category.

- **Concern:** The Malabar gliding frog population is declining **due to deforestation, climate change, developmental activities, and toxic chemicals**.

The Western Ghats

- These are the mountain ranges running parallel along the **western coast of India starting from Gujarat and ending in Tamil Nadu.**
- **Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala** are the six Indian states covered by Western Ghats.
- The mountain range is also a “**Hottest Hotspot**” of biodiversity.
- The Ghats are often called the **Great Escarpment of India** and are also a **UNESCO World Heritage Site.**
- **High Biodiversity and Endemism** are special features of Western Ghats along with the presence of **Evergreen Forests.**

Amphibia

- They fall under the **Chordata phylum** of the kingdom Animalia, Eg., **Frogs, Salamanders etc.**
- These are **multicellular vertebrates** that live both on **land and water.**
- They are the **first cold-blooded animals** to have appeared on land.
Cold-blooded animals can be defined as the animals which cannot regulate their internal body temperature with the change in the environment.
- They respire through the lungs and skin.
- They have **three chambered** hearts.

Source: TH

Jet Zero Plan

Why in News

Recently, the United Kingdom (U.K.) announced a ‘**Jet Zero**’ plan to bring down its aviation emissions.

Key Points

- **Aim:** The Jet Zero aims to bring down greenhouse gas emissions from aviation to make carbon-free **transatlantic flights** possible within a generation.
A transatlantic flight is the **flight of an aircraft across the Atlantic Ocean** from Europe, Africa, or the Middle East to North America, Central America, or South America, or vice versa.

- **Jet Zero Council:** A group called 'Jet Zero Council' has been formed by the U.K. government by bringing together leaders from the aviation sector, environmental groups and government.
This group **has been given charge for making net zero emissions possible** for future flights.
- **Challenges:** To achieve its target of a **net-zero emissions economy by 2050**, it is important to cut transport emissions.
 - Aviation emissions currently account for more than 2% of **global greenhouse gases**, and have risen by 70% since 2005.
 - The **International Civil Aviation Organization** forecasts that the emissions will rise another 300% by 2050 in the absence of measures to bring them down.
- The U.K. government is **also funding Velocys** (aviation biofuels making company) in support of its plans to build a major jet biofuel plant in Lincolnshire.

NOTE:

Net-zero emissions means doing away with fossil fuels and other sources of emissions wherever possible. It also involves any emissions that are balanced by absorbing an equivalent amount from the atmosphere.

Source: IE

AarogyaPath: CSIR

Why in News

The government has launched an **information platform 'AarogyaPath' to provide real-time availability of critical healthcare supplies** for manufacturers, suppliers and customers.

It is a **Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)** National Healthcare Supply Chain Portal.

Key Points

- It is an integrated public platform that provides single-point availability of key healthcare goods such as medical equipment, drugs, apparel, etc.

- **Vision:**
 - To set up an information management and forecasting database platform at national level to capture demand and supply scenarios for key healthcare needs items.
 - CSIR expects AarogyaPath to become the national healthcare information platform of choice in the years to come, filling a critical gap in last-mile delivery of patient care within India through improved availability and affordability of healthcare supplies.
- **Beneficiaries:** Hospitals, Pathology laboratories, Research institutes, Medical colleges and Individual patients. It will also create **opportunities for business expansion** due to an expanded network of buyers and visibility of new requirements for products.
- **Importance in Situations like a Pandemic (Covid-19):**
 - Anticipated shortages can be addressed and met at national level.
 - Opportunistic Pricing, hoarding and over- forecasting can be checked.
 - Over- production can be avoided. This would help to reduce wastage of resources.

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research

- It was established by the Government of India in September 1942 as an autonomous body. It comes under the **Ministry of Science & Technology**.
- It is known for its cutting edge research and development knowledge base in diverse science and technology areas.
- It has been ranked first in the **Nature Ranking Index-2020**.
The Nature Index provides close to a real-time proxy of high-quality research output and collaboration at the institutional, national and regional level.

Source: PIB

Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants

Why in News

The **Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic plants (CIMAP)** has announced a photography competition on medicinal and aromatic plants to convey the message of conservation of these medicinal plants.

The **theme** of the competition is '**Know your Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs)**'.

Key Points

- **Established:** Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, popularly known as CIMAP, was established originally as Central Indian Medicinal Plants Organisation (CIMPO) in 1959. It was rechristened as Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP) in 1978.
- **Objectives:** It is a frontier plant research laboratory of **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)**. It focuses on high quality research in biological and chemical sciences and extending technologies and services to the farmers and entrepreneurs of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs).
- **Headquarters:** Lucknow, U.P.
CIMAP, Lucknow houses the **National Gene Bank of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants**, in addition to seed gene bank, tissue and DNA bank.
- **Research Centres:** Bangalore (Karnataka), Hyderabad (Telangana), Pantnagar (Uttarakhand) and Purara (Uttarakhand).
- CIMAP is presently accredited by **International Centre for Science and High Technology- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (ICS-UNIDO)** and **Indian-Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** as a focal point for research and training on Medicinal Plants among participating member countries.

International Centre for Science and High Technology

- ICS was **established in 1988** and operates under the **legal framework of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**. It focuses on the transfer of know-how and technology from industrialized to developing countries.
- The Centre focuses its activities on **four core scientific programmes:**
 - Rational drug design and development
 - Next generation biofuels and bio-based chemicals
 - Geothermal energy
 - Nanotechnologies
- **Headquarters:** Trieste, Italy.

Source: PIB
