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Swachh Survekshan 2020: MoHUA

Why in News

Recently, the **Swachh Survekshan 2020** report has been launched by the **Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**.

It is the **fifth edition** of the **annual cleanliness urban survey conducted by the MoHUA**. It is **one of the world's largest sanitation surveys**.

Key Points

- This year the Ministry has released **rankings based on the categorisation of cities on population, instead of releasing overall rankings**.
The categories based on population were introduced in 2019 for the first time but the exact groupings have been changed this year.

- **Major Categories and Rankings:**
 - **Cities with a population of more than 10 lakh:**
 - **Indore** was ranked first, **securing the rank for the fourth consecutive year**, followed by **Surat and Navi Mumbai**.
 - All the National Capital Region (NCR) cities, Greater Mumbai, Bruhat Bengaluru, Amritsar, Kota, Chennai, etc. have performed poorly.
 - **Patna** with the rank 47, is at the bottom of the list.
 - **Cities with a population of 1-10 lakh:**
 - **Chhattisgarh's Ambikapur** has been surveyed as the cleanest city in the country, followed by **Mysore and New Delhi**.
 - **Bihar's Gaya** with a rank of 382, is at the bottom.
 - **Cities with a population of less than 1 lakh:**
 - **Karad** has been ranked as the cleanest followed by Sasvad and Lonavala (all three in Maharashtra).
 - **Other Categories:**
 - **Varanasi** has been ranked the cleanest among 46 **Ganga towns**.
 - **Jalandhar** got the top rank among **cantonments**.
 - **New Delhi** was the cleanest **capital city**.
 - **Chhattisgarh** was ranked the cleanest **State out of those with over 100 urban local bodies (ULBs)** or cities.
 - **Jharkhand** was the cleanest **state with less than 100 ULBs** or cities.
- The **dynamic and evolving nature** of the Swachh Survekshan framework was also highlighted. From being just a monitoring framework for measuring outcomes, it has become an implementation accelerator for **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)**, enabling sustainability of outcomes by institutionalizing cleanliness.
 - SBM-U was **launched in 2014**, with the objective of making urban India **100% Open Defecation Free (ODF) along with 100% scientific solid waste management**.
 - It has a deep **impact on health, livelihoods, quality of life and behaviour**, which proved to be very helpful while dealing with the **Covid-19 pandemic** as well.

- MoHUA is also actively **working on coming up with a second phase of the SBM-U (SBM 2.0)**, which was initially supposed to be till March 2020 but has been extended till March 2021. **It envisions to:**
 - **Take current targets further**, making cities open defecation-free, including 100% sludge management and zero dumping of waste in the open.
 - **Safe containment, transportation and disposal of faecal sludge and septage** from toilets and also the grey and black water from households and establishments.
 - **Treat all wastewater before discharging into water bodies** and their maximum possible re-use.
 - **Provide adequate safety gear and mechanised equipment to all sanitation workers** with maximum attention.
- To ensure the sustainability of on-ground performance of cities, the MoHUA had also introduced **Swachh Survekshan League** in 2019.

It is a **quarterly cleanliness assessment of cities and towns done in three quarters with 25% weightage integrated** into the final Swachh Survekshan results.
- In **July 2020**, MoHUA launched the **sixth edition of the survey, Swachh Survekshan 2021** and also introduced a new performance category, the **Prerak DAUUR Samman**.

It has a total of **five additional subcategories** namely *Divya* (Platinum), *Anupam* (Gold), *Ujjwal* (Silver), *Udit* (Bronze) and *Aarohi* (Aspiring).

Source: PIB

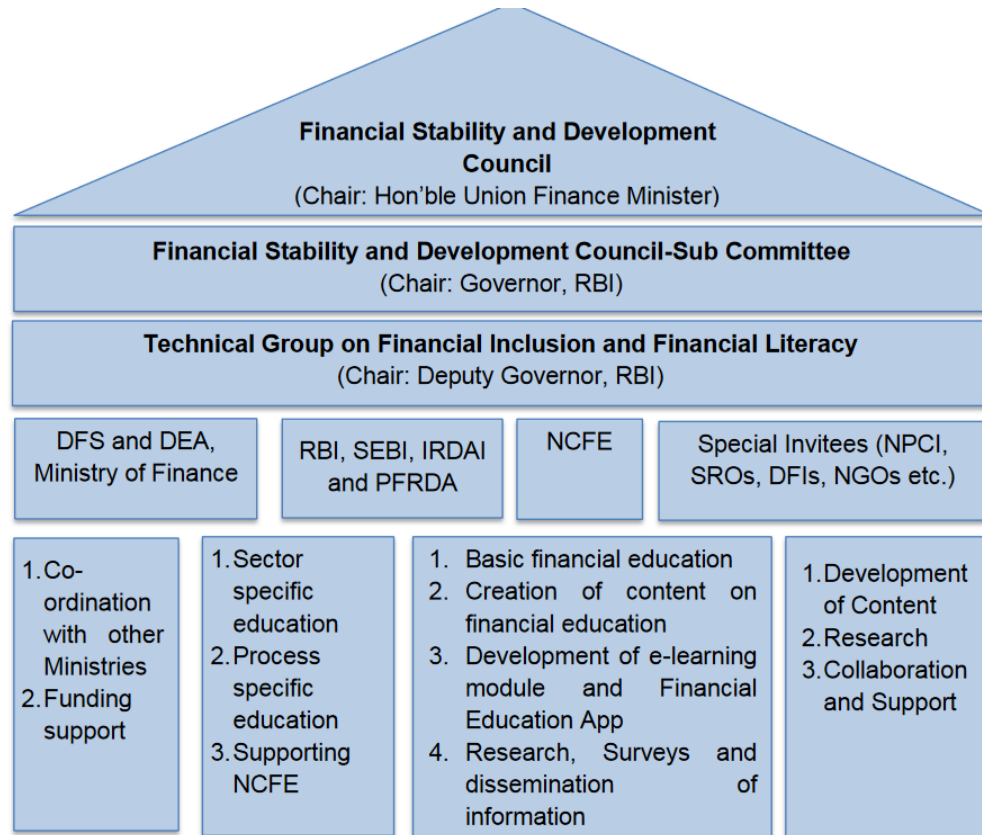
National Strategy for Financial Education

Why in News

The **Reserve Bank of India** (RBI) has released the **National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE): 2020-2025 document** for creating a **financially aware and empowered India**.

It is the **second** NSFE, the first one being released in 2013.

Key Points



- This NSFE for the period 2020-2025 has been prepared by the **National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE)** in consultation with all the **Financial Sector Regulators** viz. **RBI, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**, etc. under the aegis of the **Technical Group on Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy (TGFIFL)**.

NCFE is a Section 8 (Not for Profit) Company under the **Companies Act, 2013** promoted by RBI, SEBI, IRDAI and PFRDA.
- It emphasizes a **multi-stakeholder-led approach** for empowering various sections of the population to develop adequate **knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour** which are needed to manage their money better and to plan for the future i.e. ensuring their **financial well-being**.

- It has recommended a **‘5 C’ approach** for dissemination of financial education in the country:
 - **Content:** Financial Literacy content for various sections of population.
 - **Capacity:** Develop the capacity and **‘Code of Conduct’** for financial education providers.
 - **Community:** Evolve community led approaches for disseminating financial literacy in a sustainable manner.
 - **Communication :** Use technology, media and innovative ways of communication for dissemination of financial education messages.
 - **Collaboration :** Streamline efforts of **other stakeholders** for financial literacy.
- **Strategic Objectives:**
 - Inculcate **financial literacy** concepts among the various sections of the population through financial education to make it an important life skill.
 - Encourage **active savings** behaviour.
 - Encourage **participation** in financial markets to meet financial goals and objectives.
 - Develop **credit discipline** and encourage availing credit from formal financial institutions as per requirement.
 - Improve usage of **digital financial services** in a safe and secure manner.
 - Manage risk at various life stages through relevant and suitable **insurance** cover.
 - Plan for old age and retirement through coverage of suitable **pension** products.
 - Knowledge about **rights, duties and avenues** for grievance redressal.
 - Improve **research and evaluation** methods to assess progress in financial education.
- The Strategy also suggests adoption of a robust **‘Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** to assess the progress made.
 - TGFIFL would be responsible for periodic **monitoring and implementation** of NSFE under the oversight of **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)**.
 - TGFIL was set up in November 2011 by the FSDC.
- Recently, RBI also released the **National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI)** for the period 2019-2024.

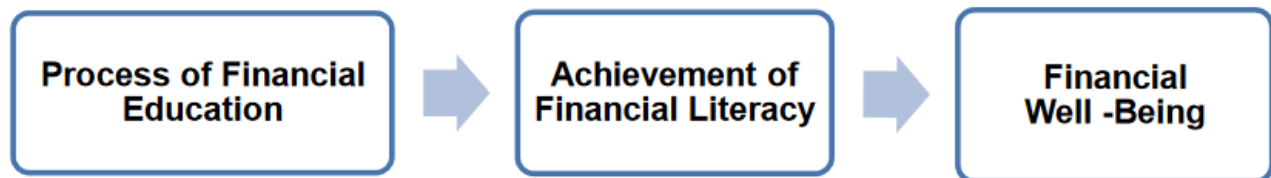
It is an ambitious strategy which aims to strengthen the ecosystem for various modes of digital financial services in all Tier-II to Tier VI centres to create the **necessary infrastructure to move towards a less-cash society** by March 2022.

Financial literacy

According to the **Organization for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD)**, it is defined as a combination of financial awareness, knowledge, skills, attitude, and behaviour necessary to make sound financial decisions and ultimately achieve individual **financial well-being**.

Financial Education

It is defined as the process by which financial consumers/investors improve their **understanding of financial products**, concepts and risks and through information, instruction and/or objective advice, develop the skills and confidence to become more **aware** of financial risks and opportunities, to make informed choices, to know where to go for help and to take other effective actions to improve their **financial well-being**.



Way Forward

- India has made tremendous progress in bringing its citizens into the formal financial system over the last many years. Many important financial inclusion initiatives have been taken by the government such as **Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana**, social security schemes viz. **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana**, **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana**, **Atal Pension Yojana**, **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana**, **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mann Dhan Yojana** (PM-SYM) and **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana**.
- The latest available **World Bank's Findex** 2017 Report had brought out that the proportion of adults with a formal account in the country has risen from 35% in 2011, to 80% in 2017.
- However, the country still needs to tread a long path to achieve a respectable financial literacy rate which is crucial for **inclusive growth**. For this besides the already existing delivery channels for disseminating financial education messages, newer modes such as social media platforms, should be effectively deployed.

Source: TH

Chinese Involvement in Teesta River

Why in News

Bangladesh is likely to receive **an almost USD 1 billion loan from China** for a comprehensive management and restoration **project on the Teesta river**.

The Teesta river water conflict is one of the most contentious issues between **India and Bangladesh** and the discussion comes amidst the ongoing **India-China standoff** in Ladakh.

Teesta River

- It is a **tributary of the Brahmaputra** (known as Jamuna in Bangladesh), flowing through India and Bangladesh.
- **Origin: In the Himalayas near Chunthang, Sikkim** and flows to the south through West Bengal before entering Bangladesh.
- **Drainage:** It covers nearly the entire floodplains of Sikkim while draining 2,800 sq km of Bangladesh. For West Bengal, it is the lifeline of half-a-dozen districts in North Bengal.
- **Latest Development:** In March 2020, the **Border Roads Organisation** (BRO) opened a 360 feet long bailey suspension bridge over Teesta river in Munshithang, Sikkim.



Key Points

- **About the Project:** The management and restoration project is **aimed at managing the river basin efficiently, controlling floods and tackling the water crisis** in Bangladesh in summers.

- **India-Bangladesh Teesta Dispute:**
 - Bangladesh sought a **fair and equitable distribution of Teesta waters** from India, on the lines of the **Ganga Water Treaty 1996**.
The treaty is an **agreement to share surface waters at the Farakka Barrage** near their mutual border.
 - In **2015**, the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Dhaka **generated expectations** to take forward the issue but it **still remains unresolved**.
 - In India, individual **states have significant influence over transboundary agreements**, impeding the policymaking process.
 - **West Bengal** is one of the key stakeholders of the Teesta agreement and is **yet to endorse the deal**.

Bangladesh-China Relations

- **China is the biggest trading partner of Bangladesh** and is the foremost source of imports with the trade heavily favouring China.
In 2019, the trade between the two countries was USD 18 billion.
- China **declared zero duty on 97% of imports from Bangladesh** recently and the move has been widely **welcomed in Bangladesh**.
The concession comes from **China's duty-free, quota-free programme for the least developed countries**.
- China has promised around **USD 30 billion worth of financial assistance** to Bangladesh.
- China is the **biggest arms supplier to Bangladesh** which has been a **matter of legacy**, strengthening the defence ties.
 - After the **liberation of Bangladesh in 1971**, officers of the Pakistan Army joined the Bangladesh Army and preferred Chinese weapons because they were **well-versed with them**.
 - As a result, **Bangladesh forces are equipped with Chinese arms** including tanks, missile launchers, fighter aircraft and several weapons systems.

India-Bangladesh Relations

- Both countries enjoy a **robust relationship with each other carefully cultivated since 2008**, especially with the Sheikh Hasina government.
- Bangladesh's **crackdown against anti-India outfits** has helped the Indian government **maintain peace in the eastern and Northeast states**.
- Bangladesh is **India's biggest trade partner in South Asia** and the economic and development partnership has benefitted it.
In 2018-19, India's exports and imports with Bangladesh stood at USD 9.21 billion and USD 1.04 billion respectively.

- India also **grants 15 to 20 lakh visas every year to Bangladesh nationals** for medical treatment, tourism, work and just entertainment.
- India has provided **developmental assistance worth USD 10 billion**, making Bangladesh the **largest recipient** of India's total of USD 30 billion aid globally.
- For India, Bangladesh has been a **key partner in the Neighbourhood First Policy**.
- Both have **cooperated on pandemic-related moves** and India has **provided medical aid** to Bangladesh.
 - Bangladesh supported India's call for a regional (**SAARC**) **emergency fund for fighting Covid-19** and declared a **contribution of USD 1.5 million** in March 2020.
 - Bangladesh is **ready to collaborate in the development of a Covid-19 vaccine**, including its trial and looks forward to the early and affordable availability of the vaccine.
- The **first trial run for trans-shipment of Indian cargo** through Bangladesh to Northeast states under a pact on the **use of Chittagong and Mongla ports** took place in July 2020.
- However, the proposed countrywide **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** and **the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019** have **irritated the relations**.
Bangladesh has expressed reservations about CAA and has held it unnecessary.
- Bangladesh has expressed **concerns at the rise in killings at the Indo-Bangladesh border** by the **Border Security Force (BSF)**.
- Indian Foreign Secretary has recently visited Dhaka to discuss "**security-related issues of mutual interest**" while trying to address the potential irritant issues.
 - There was an agreement on **timely implementation of projects** and greater attention to development projects in Bangladesh under the **Indian Lines of Credit**.
 - Bangladesh has requested to reopen travel through **Benapole-Petrapole land port** which has been halted by the West Bengal government in the wake of the pandemic.

Way Forward

- In the wake of the Ladakh standoff, India needs to become even more sensitive to Chinese defence inroads into Bangladesh.
- The Teesta project is important and urgent from India's point of view, so it is crucial to solve it as soon as possible.
- India has to implement all its assurances in a time-bound manner otherwise the latent anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh threatens to damage the friendly ties.

Source: IE

Military Coup in Mali

Why in News

Recently, **Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita has resigned** after soldiers had arrested him and Prime Minister Boubou Cisse in the capital, Bamako as part of a coup.

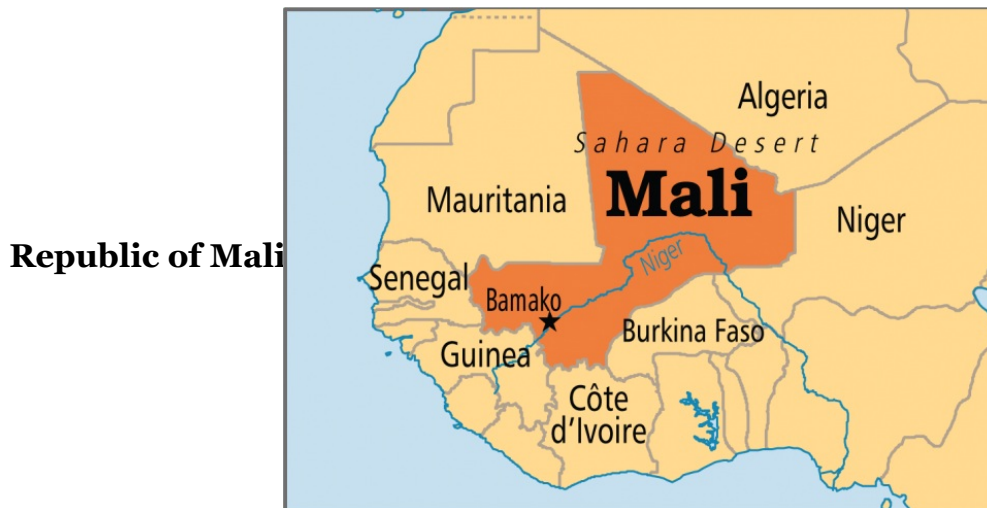
It has prompted its West African neighbours to threaten border closures and sanctions against the coup leaders.

Key Points

- **Background:** The **2011 crisis in Libya** led Mali along the path to chaos. **Weapons from Libya were supplied across the Sahara Desert** and fuelled a **separatist conflict** in northern Mali. This turned into an **Islamist militant offensive** which prompted a coup in the capital Bamako (Mali).
- **Reasons:** Mali has **three overlapping sets** of problems:
 - **Political crisis** that grew out of the disputed legislative elections of March 2020.
 - **Economic crisis** due to economic stagnation, corruption and further complications by the **Covid-19 pandemic**. There was dissatisfaction among the troops due to poor payments.
 - **Security crisis** due to the failure to contain **terrorism** and jihadists and the actions of the military against civilians.
- **Military Coup:** It calls itself the **National Committee for the Salvation of the People** and has **pledged to stabilise the country** by enacting a **political transition and stage elections** within a reasonable time.
 - It has imposed a curfew and closed the borders sealing the country.
 - It would respect all the past agreements, including **Mali's support for anti-jihadist missions** in the region and its **commitment to the Algiers process** which is a **2015 peace agreement between the Malian government and armed groups in the north of the country**.
 - It held that **United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)**, **France's Barkhane force**, the **G5 Sahel** (Institutional framework of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), **Takuba** (a European special-forces initiative) will remain Mali's partners.

- **Reactions:**

- **France has urged Mali to return to civilian rule**, saying "the fight against terrorist groups and the defence of democracy and the rule of law are inseparable".
 - **France, Mali's former colonial ruler**, has several thousand troops based in Mali fighting Islamist militant groups.
 - Various jihadist groups, some linked to **al-Qaeda** and the **Islamic State group**, are based in the deserts of northern Mali, from where they have spread to neighbouring countries, especially Burkina Faso and Niger.
- The **African Union** had already **suspended Mali** on the account that military coups were something of the past and cannot be accepted in present times.
- The **15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** has also **taken swift action against Mali** by closing borders, suspending financial flows and ejecting it from decision-making bodies.
- The **UN's Security Council** has **demande the immediate release** of all government officials and the **restoration of constitutional order**.



- Mali is a vast country stretching into the **Sahara Desert in western Africa**.
- Once home to several pre-colonial empires, the **landlocked, arid African country** of Mali is **one of the largest on the continent** and is **among the poorest in the world**.
- After **independence from France in 1960**, Mali suffered droughts, rebellions, a coup and 23 years of military dictatorship until **democratic elections in 1992**.
 - It has experienced **several military takeovers** and is currently battling to contain a wave of jihadist attacks and ethnic violence.
- **Capital:** Bamako.
- **Population:** Around 19 million.
- **Area:** 1.25 million sq km.
- **Major languages:** French, Bambara, Berber and Arabic.

- **Religions:** Islam and Indigenous beliefs.
- **Currency:** Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) franc.

Way Forward

- The latest military coup is apparently a reaction to the security challenges but also to corruption, disputed elections, and political drift. However, it itself seems unlikely to fix anything.
- It highlights a familiar truth that while foreign intervention has its uses, the key to repairing a nation like Mali lies in its own hands and with its own faltering democratic institutions.

Source: TH

Organic Farming in India

Why in News

India ranks 1st in number of organic farmers and 9th in terms of area under organic farming.

Key Points

- **Indian Scenario Regarding Organic Farming**
 - **Sikkim** became the first State in the **world** to become **fully organic in 2016**.
 - **North East India** has traditionally been organic and the consumption of chemicals is far less than the rest of the country.
 - Similarly the tribal and island territories have been traditionally practicing organic farming.
 - The major organic exports from India have been **flax seeds, sesame, soybean, tea, medicinal plants, rice and pulses**.
 - There was an increase of nearly 50% in organic exports in 2018-19, touching Rs. 5151 crore.
 - Commencement of exports from Assam, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland to UK, USA, Eswatini and Italy have proved the potential by increasing volumes and expanding to new destinations as the demand for **health foods** increases.
- **Government Initiatives to Promote Organic Farming**

- **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North East Region (MOVCD)**
 - Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North East Region (MOVCD-NER) is a **Central Sector Scheme**, a sub-mission under **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**
 - It was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in 2015 for implementation in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.
 - The scheme aims to develop certified organic production in a value chain mode to link growers with consumers and to support the development of the entire value chain.
- **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**
 - Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, launched in 2015 is an elaborated component of **Soil Health Management (SHM)** of major project **National Mission of Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**.
 - Under PKVY, Organic farming is promoted through adoption of organic villages by cluster approach and Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) certification.
- **Certification Schemes**
 - **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** is the food regulator in the country and is also responsible for regulating organic food in the domestic market and imports.
 - **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS):** PGS is a process of **certifying organic products**, which ensures that their production takes place in accordance with laid-down quality standards. **PGS Green** is given to chemical free produce under transition to 'organic' which takes 3 years. It is mainly for **domestic purpose**.
 - **National Program for Organic Production (NPOP):** NPOP grants organic farming certification through a process of third party certification for **export purposes**.
 - **Soil Health Card Scheme** has led to a **decline of 8-10% in the use of chemical fertilizers** and also raised productivity by 5-6%.
- **Agri-export Policy 2018**
 - **Focus on clusters and Marketing and promotion of “Produce of India”** have positively impacted the organic farming in India
- **One District - One Product (ODOP)**
 - The programme aims to encourage more **visibility and sale of indigenous and specialized products/crafts of Uttar Pradesh**, generating employment at the district level.
 - The presence of aggregators is imperative to bring about economies of scale for the small and marginal farmers.

- **PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM FME)**
 - The **Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI)** launched the **PM FME scheme** as a part of '**Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**'.
 - It aims to bring in new technology, apart from affordable credit to help small entrepreneurs penetrate new markets.
- **Zero Budget Natural Farming**
Zero budget natural farming is a method of chemical-free agriculture drawing from traditional Indian practices.

Organic Farming

- According to FSSAI, 'organic farming' is a system of farm design and management to create an ecosystem of agriculture production **without the use of synthetic external inputs** such as chemical fertilisers, pesticides and synthetic hormones or genetically modified organisms.
- **Organic farm produce** means the produce obtained from **organic agriculture**, while **organic food** means food products that have been produced in accordance with **specified standards for organic production**.

Way Forward

- Natural farming is not a new concept in India, with farmers having tilled their land without the use of chemicals - largely relying on organic residues, cow dung, composts, etc. since time immemorial. This is also in sync with the **Sustainable Development Goal 2** targeting 'end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture'.
- Hence with **greater awareness** and **capacity building** of the producers in compliance with international standards, Indian organic farmers will soon be reinforcing their rightful place in global agri trade.

Source: PIB

ARIIA 2020 Rankings

Why in News

Recently, the **Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) 2020** rankings was announced.

Around 674 institutions participated in the ARIIA rankings in 2020 compared with 496 in 2019.

Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)

- It is an **initiative of the Ministry of Education**, Government of India to systematically rank all the major higher educational institutions and universities in India on indicators related to “**Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development**” amongst students and faculties.
- More than quantity, ARIIA **focuses on quality of innovations** and tries to measure the real impact created by these innovations nationally and internationally.
- **Rank Categorisation:**
 - Two broad categories: **publicly funded institutions and private or self-financed institutions.**
 - The **publicly funded institutions** have been further categorized into:
 - Institute of National Importance, Central Universities & Central Funded Technical Institutes.
 - State University & Deemed Universities (Government & Government Aided)
 - Government and Government / Aided College/Institutes
 - The **private or self-financed institutions** have been categorized further into:
 - private or self-financed universities
 - private or self-financed college/institutes
 - A **6th sub- category** for higher educational institutions **for women** has been introduced in 2020 **to encourage women** and bringing **gender parity** in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship
- **Major Indicators For Rankings:**
 - Budget & Funding Support.
 - Infrastructure & Facilities.
 - Awareness, Promotions & support for Idea Generation & Innovation.
 - Promotion & Support for Entrepreneurship Development.
 - Innovative Learning Methods & Courses.
 - Intellectual Property Generation, Technology Transfer & Commercialization.
 - Innovation in Governance of the Institution.

Key Points

List of Topper Institutes in 2020:

- **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras** in **Institute of National Importance, Central Universities & Central Funded Technical Institutes** category.
- **Maharashtra's Institute of Chemical Technology** in the **government and government-aided universities** category.
- **College of Engineering Pune** in the **government and government aided college/institutions** category.
- **Odisha's Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT)** in the **private or self-financed universities** category.
- **SR Engineering College, Telangana** in the **private colleges** category.
- **Avinashilingam Institute for Home Sciences and Higher Education, Coimbatore** in the **higher educational institutions for women** category.

Source: TH

Expansion of the NCC

Why in News

Recently, the Ministry of Defence has approved the proposal to expand the **National Cadet Corps (NCC)** in border and coastal districts.

- The expansion of the NCC was announced by the Prime Minister in his Independence Day speech.
- Restructuring of the NCC was one of the **key recommendations of the Committee of Experts (CoE) headed by Lt Gen DB Shekatkar (Retd)** in 2016.

Shekatkar Committee

- The Ministry of Defence under the chairmanship of Lt. Gen (Retd) DB Shekatkar had constituted a committee to recommend measures to **enhance combat capability and rebalance defence expenditure of the armed forces** which submitted its report in December 2016.

- Few Recommendations:
 - Closure of Military Farms and Army Postal Establishments in peace locations.
 - Enhancement in standards for recruitment of clerical staff and drivers in the Army.
 - Improving the **efficiency of the National Cadet Corps.**
 - Recommended a roll-on defence budget to have enough capital expenditure available for modernisation as against the present practice of surrendering unspent capital budget at the end of each financial year.

Key Points

- **Expansion:** A total of one lakh cadets from **173 border and coastal districts** will be inducted into the NCC of which **one-third of them will be girls.**
The expansion plan would be implemented in partnership with the States.
- **Training and Administration:** The **Army** will provide training and administrative support to the NCC units located **in the border areas**, **Navy** to the units in the **coastal areas** and **Indian Air Force** to the units **close to Air Force stations.**
- **Benefit:** It will provide **trained manpower for disaster management** and **skill training to youth** for making their career in the armed forces.
 - It will increase **youth's interest in careers** in Navy, Coast Guard and also Merchant shipping avenues.
 - In the border area, the trained cadets **can play supporting roles** to the Armed forces in various forms.

National Cadet Corps

- The NCC was **formed in 1948** (on the recommendation of H. N. Kunzru Committee-1946), and has its roots to British era uniformed youth entities like University Corps or University Officer Training Corps.
Currently it has a strength of around 14 lakh cadets from Army, Navy and Air Force wings.
- The NCC falls under the **purview of the Ministry of Defence** and is headed by a **Director General of three-star military rank.**
- It **enrolls cadets at high school and college level** and also awards certificates on completion of various phases.
 - The NCC cadets receive basic military training at various levels and also have academic curriculum basics related to Armed forces and their functioning.
 - Various training camps, adventure activities and military training camps are an important aspect of NCC training.

- **Significance:** NCC cadets have played an important role over the years in relief efforts during various emergency situations.

During the ongoing pandemic, over 60,000 NCC cadets have been deployed for voluntary relief work in coordination with district and state authorities across the country.

Source:TH

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program

Why in News

The **approval of projects under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program (PMEGP) increased 44%** during the first five months (April - August) of the financial year 2020-21.

- **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** has approved and forwarded 1.03 lakh project applications to the banks as compared to 71,556 projects during the corresponding period in 2019.
- The higher number of projects approved **signifies the government's resolve to create self-employment** and sustainable livelihood for the people by promoting **local manufacturing**.

Key Points

- **Launch:** The Government of India approved the introduction of a **credit linked subsidy programme** called Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) in **2008** for generation of **employment opportunities through establishment of micro enterprises** in rural as well as urban areas.
- **Administration:** It is a **central sector scheme** being administered by the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME)**.
- **Implementing Agency at the National Level:** Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) - a statutory organization under the administrative control of the Ministry of MSME.

- **Features: It allows entrepreneurs to set up factories or units.**
 - **Eligibility:**
 - Any individual, above 18 years of age.
 - **Only new projects/units** are considered for sanction of loans.
 - Self-help groups that have not availed benefits under any other public scheme, societies, production co-operative societies, and charitable trusts.
 - **Maximum Cost of Project/Unit Admissible:**
 - **Manufacturing Sector:** Rs. 25 lakh
 - **Service Sector:** Rs.10 lakh
 - **Government Subsidy:**
 - **Rural Areas:** 25% for general category and 35% for special category, which includes SC/ST/OBC/Minorities, NER, Hill and Border Areas.
 - **Urban Areas:** 15% for general category and 25% for special category.
 - **Role of Banks:** Loans are provided by Public Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Co-operative Banks and Private Scheduled Commercial Banks approved by respective State Task Force Committee.
- The MoMSME has also launched a **scheme of ‘second financial assistance’** to help the PMEGP and **Mudra** units expand or upgrade.

Challenges

- The Scheme is crippled by structural issues and **high rate of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)**. From 2015-16 to 2019-20, assistance of Rs. 10,169 crore was provided. Out of this, Rs. 1,537 crore has turned out to be NPA.
- **A deficiency in skills, lack of market study, low demand and stiff competition** are believed to be the key reasons for such a large number of NPAs.
- While normally all central schemes are given definite annual targets, this scheme is **not driven by any such target**. As both the states and the banks work without the aim of completing the annual target of disbursement of loans, the programme may lose its drive.

Way Forward

- Besides providing financial support, the government **needs to conduct an intensive training programme to help potential entrepreneurs** focus on the right market and right products.
- The scheme can prove beneficial at the time when the economy needs to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. **Timely disbursal of funds** is crucial for execution of projects and creating employment in the country.

Source: PIB

Women in Research And Development

Why in News

According to the **Science and Technology Indicators (STI), 2018**, India's private sector research companies appear to **employ a larger proportion of women in core research and development activities** than government-funded major scientific agencies do.

Key Points

- India had 3,41,818 scientists in R&D with nearly 2,03,759 employed by government institutions or in the higher education sector, as of 2018.
- Of the 20,351 women employed in private R&D companies, about **three in four** were involved in "R&D activities".
- However, of the 23,008 women in major scientific agencies (government), **fewer than half** were in the same 'R&D activities' category.
- Also, for **every one woman, there are six** male scientists in **private** sector R&D establishments. However, the ratio is **four for one** in major scientific agencies.
- The bulk of scientists (in private and publicly funded organisations included) were in 'Engineering Technology' followed by the Medical Sciences and Natural Sciences.

Science and Technology Indicators (STI)

- The STI is a periodic compendium of the state of scientific research in India.
- It is prepared by the **National Science and Technology Management Information System**, a division of the **Department of Science Technology**.
- **Reasons for low participation of women in R&D:**
 - The recruiters and managers at private firms are held **more accountable** to hire as well as promote female employees, as compared to those in government offices.
 - The large drop in the number of women between the doctoral and professional stages appears to be in part due to **social pressure on women** to have a family which is seen as incompatible with a professional career.
 - There are also **patriarchal attitudes in hiring practices**, so many women are discriminated against at this stage as well, with administrators deciding that women 'should' be opting for family over a career.

- **Global Scenario:**

- **Women in STEM:**

- **UNESCO** data from 2014-16 shows that only around **30% of female students** select STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)-related fields in higher education.
- Female enrolment is particularly **low** in information technology (3%), natural science, mathematics and statistics (5%) and engineering and allied streams (8%).

- **Research as a Profession:**

According to a 2018 fact sheet prepared by UNESCO on women in science, only **28.8% of researchers are women.**

- **Share in Nobel Prizes:**

Between **1901 and 2019**, 334 **Nobel Prizes** have been awarded to 616 Laureates in Physics, Chemistry and Medicine, of which just **20 have been won by women.**

- **Share in Abel Prizes:**

- In 2019, the **American mathematician Karen Uhlenbeck** became the first woman to win the Abel Prize, following 16 male mathematicians.
- The Abel Prize is a Norwegian prize awarded annually by the King of Norway to one or more **outstanding mathematicians.**

- **Share in Fields Medals:**

- The Fields Medal so far has also been awarded to only one woman mathematician, the late Maryam Mirzakhani of Iran, as opposed to 59 men since 1936.
- The Fields Medal is awarded **every four years** by the **International Congress of Mathematicians** to recognize outstanding mathematical achievement for existing work and for the promise of future achievement.

- **National Scenario**

- **Women in STEM:**

- The female enrolment in science streams rose from 2010-11 to 2015-16.
- According to the **NITI Aayog** report in 2015-16, 9.3% of female students in Undergraduate (UG) courses were enrolled in engineering, compared to 15.6% across genders. Conversely, 4.3% of female students were enrolled in medical science, compared to 3.3% across genders.

- **Research as a Profession:**

Only 13.9% of women work as a researcher in India. At **master's and doctoral levels, female enrolment** remained **lower** than overall enrolment.

- **Presence at Technical Professions:**

The NITI Aayog report has also found that in over 620 institutes and universities, including IITs, NITs, ISRO, and DRDO, the presence of women was 20.0% among Scientific and Administrative Staff, 28.7% among Post-Doctoral Fellows, and 33.5% among PhD scholars.

- **Gender Gap Index**

- According to the **Global Gender Gap Index 2020**, a study covering 153 economies, India has slipped to the 112th spot from its 108th position in 2018.
- The report also says it would take nearly a hundred years to close the gender gap in various fields in India compared to the time it would take in other countries.

- **Work Participation:**

- According to the **World Bank**, India ranks **163rd out of 181 countries** in **female labour force participation**.
- Also, India is one of the few countries in the world where women's work participation rates have fallen sharply — from 29% in 2004-5 to 22% in 2011-12 and to 17% in 2017-18.

- **Inequality at Work:**

- According to the **Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)**, a large percentage of all the jobs lost last year were held by women. Out of the 11 million jobs lost in 2018, women accounted for 8.8 million.
- **Indian women receive 34% fewer wages** than men for equivalent work, spend around five hours a day on unpaid care work compared to a mere half an hour for men and are primarily engaged in low-paying, informal sector work.

- **Initiatives to Promote Women in Science**

- **Vigyan Jyoti Scheme:**

- **Vigyan Jyoti Scheme** is launched by the **Department of Science & Technology (DST)**.
- It is intended to create a **level-playing field** for the **meritorious girls in high school** to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in their higher education.
- It also offers exposure for girl students from the rural background to help to plan their journey from school to a job of their choice in the field of science.

- **GATI Scheme:**

The **Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI)** will develop a **comprehensive Charter and a framework for assessing Gender Equality** in STEM

- **KIRAN Scheme**

Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing (KIRAN) Scheme is started by the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** aimed to **bring gender parity in the Science & Technology sector** by inducting more women talent in the research & development domain.

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme**

BBBP is the joint initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Human Resource Development to ensure **survival, protection, and empowerment of the girl child.**

- **National Science Day (NSD)** was celebrated on 28th February 2020 with the theme 'Women In Science'.

Dr Niti Kumar, a senior scientist from the **CSIR- Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI)**, Lucknow received **SERB Women Excellence Award-2020** on this occasion.

- According to the **All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2018-19**, the gender gap in the country **narrowed** as compared to the previous year, i.e. 2017-18.

- Initiatives like **She-box** are ensuring **workplace safety** and boost better participation of women in all areas of economy,

Way Forward

- Inequalities in gender participation in science emanate from social-economic issues, which can be treated by bringing **behavioural change.**
- Also, **better political representation of women** can go a long way in deconstructing the stereotype of women

- **Better workforce participation** can only be brought by collective effort of the society and the people in governance.
- Growth in jobs must be inclusive and new jobs need to be secure with **better work conditions, including social security benefits.**

Source: TH

ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks

Recently, India participated in the **6th roundtable meeting of the ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks (AINTT)**. ASEAN stands for **Association of Southeast Asian Nations**.

AINTT was established **to provide policy inputs** to India and **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** countries on future directions of their cooperation.

Key Points

- **Issues Raised by India:**
 - India **highlighted the difficulties** that were hindering strong response to deal with the **Covid-19 pandemic**. It said that **individual behaviour of many states and old-styled multilateral organisations** prevented a collective response to global pandemic.
 - India indirectly referred to the failure of the **United Nations Security Council** (UNSC) to issue a statement on the pandemic due **to sharp differences** between permanent UNSC members China and the USA.
 - The reference also included the **USA pulling out of the World Health Organisation (WHO)** after accusing it of acting on the behest of China – by declaring Covid-19 a pandemic late.
 - According to India the **big issue that confronts the world** after Covid-19 pandemic is not simply the state of the economy, but also **includes the damage to societies or the challenges to governance.**
 - The pandemic has also thrown a debate on the **future directions of global affairs and world order.**

- **Suggestions made by India:**

- It called upon the ASEAN countries to look beyond current practice in trade, politics and security to find solutions to the challenges posed by pandemic.
- India urged for **greater cooperation to counter challenges of pandemic** and called for **collective solutions**.
 - As part of that, India asked the countries to adopt the idea of **strategic autonomy** to be used in the context of global supply chains.
 - The reference was to countries looking to move production facilities out of China or at least reduce their dependence on them after the pandemic exposed the weaknesses of overdependence on China.
 - **Strategic autonomy** can be defined as ‘the ability of a state to pursue its national interests and adopt its preferred foreign policy without being constrained in any manner by other states.

Sources: TH
