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## News Analysis (07 Nov, 2020)

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### India-Italy Bilateral Summit

#### Why in News

Recently, a **virtual Bilateral Summit between India and Italy** has been held to comprehensively review the broad framework of the bilateral relationship and also strengthen cooperation against common global challenges, including the **Covid-19 pandemic**.



#### Key Points

- Both nations decided to adopt the **Action Plan for an enhanced Partnership between India and Italy (2020-2024)** to set up priorities, strategic goals and mechanisms of a bilateral partnership.

- **Economic Engagement:**

- **Agreed to coordinate closely at multilateral fora especially G-20.**
  - **Italy will assume the Presidency of G-20 in December 2021 followed by India in 2022.**
  - **Saudi Arabia is holding the current presidency of G20.**
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP), an Italian investment bank and National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF) to promote innovative financial schemes capable of supporting bilateral investments.**

Italy is **India's fifth-largest trading partner in the European Union (EU).**

- **Defence Cooperation:**

- Underscored the need to **further expand defence engagement** through greater two-way collaboration and technology cooperation, co-development and co-production.
- Recognised the opportunity to **consolidate defence relations with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of peacekeeping activities** within the framework of the **United Nations (UN).**

- **Cooperation During Covid-19 Pandemic:**

- **Italy thanked India for extending support during the pandemic** by supplying medicines and personal protection equipment (PPE).

The Indian community in Italy is the **second-largest community of Indians in Europe after the UK.**

- Reiterated that the pandemic calls for an inclusive multilateral approach to health protection, especially in the framework of the UN and the **World Health Organisation (WHO).**
- Welcomed the **World Health Summit**, which will be held in Italy in 2021, in cooperation with the **European Union (EU) Commission.**

The World Health Summit is **one of the world's leading strategic forums for global health** and is held in **October every year.**

- **Science, Technology and Research Collaboration:**

- Welcomed the progress made under **India-Italy Science and Technology Cooperation** and the **India-Italy Executive Programme of Cooperation.**
- Welcomed the **establishment of Thematic Working Groups** as a method of work between the **Italian Space Agency (ASI)** and the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** as well as the creation of the **first joint ASI-ISRO working group in heliophysics.**

**Heliophysics** is the study of the effects of the Sun on the Solar System.

- **Cooperation for Counter-Terrorism and Security:**

Pledged to strengthen cooperation in the **fight against terrorism and transnational crime** both at a bilateral level and in multilateral fora and also agreed to hold the next meeting of the **‘India-Italy Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism’** to further advance cooperation, exchange of expertise and capacity building in 2021.
- **Regional Cooperation and Connectivity:**

India and Italy acknowledged the potential of new international organisations such as the **Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructures** (CDRI) and the **International Solar Alliance** (ISA).

  - India welcomed Italy joining ISA after it coming into force of the universalisation of ISA.
  - India also welcomed Italy’s engagement in the **Indian Ocean Rim Association** (IORA) and **Italy’s new status as Development Partner of ASEAN**.
- **Multilateral Cooperation on Environment:**
  - Reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** (UNFCCC) and its **Paris Agreement** and their respective **nationally determined contributions** (NDCs).
  - Highlighted the **significance of cooperation in the run-up to the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP26)** of the UNFCCC, which will be **organised in 2021 by the UK** in partnership with Italy.

**Source: PIB**

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## **National Cancer Awareness Day**

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### **Why in News**

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National Cancer Awareness Day is observed on **7<sup>th</sup> November each** year in the country to spread awareness about the need of early cancer detection to fight the deadly disease timely.

### **Key Points**

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- **Cancer:**
  - It is a **large group of diseases** that can start in almost any organ or tissue of the body when **abnormal cells grow uncontrollably**, go beyond their usual boundaries to invade adjoining parts of the body and/or spread to other organs. The latter process is called **metastasizing** and is a major cause of death from cancer.
  - A **neoplasm** and **malignant tumor** are **other common names** for cancer.
  - Lung, prostate, colorectal, stomach and liver cancer are the **most common types of cancer in men**, while breast, colorectal, lung, cervical and thyroid cancer are the **most common among women**.
- **Cancer Burden:**
  - Cancer remains as **one of the leading causes of adult illness and death** due to chronic and **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD)** world-over including in India.
  - According to the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, cancer is the second leading cause of death globally and in 2018, there were approximately 18 million cases globally, of which 1.5 million were in India alone.
  - There were around **0.8 million cancer deaths in India** in 2018 against 9.5 million globally. The numbers of **new cases are estimated to double** in India by 2040.
- **Deaths due to Cancer can be Prevented:** Between 30% and 50% of cancer deaths could be prevented by modifying or avoiding the key risk factors. **Key risk factors** include tobacco use, alcohol use, diet, exposure to ultraviolet radiation, pollution, chronic infections, etc.
- **Treatment:** Options include surgery, cancer medicines and/or radiotherapy, administered alone or in combination.
  - **Palliative care**, which focuses on improving the quality of life of patients and their families, is an essential component of cancer care.
- **Global Initiative:** The **International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)** was created in **1965** by a resolution of the World Health Assembly, as the **specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization**.
  - **World Cancer Day** is observed on **4<sup>th</sup> February** every year.

- **Indian Initiatives:**

- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS)** is being implemented under **National Health Mission (NHM)** for up-to the district level activities.
- Under the ambit of **Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** is being implemented to reduce the financial burden for poor and vulnerable groups arising out of catastrophic hospital episodes and to provide access to quality health services.
- **National Cancer Grid (NCG)** is a network of major cancer centers, research institutes, patient groups and charitable institutions across India with the mandate of establishing uniform standards of patient care for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer, providing specialized training and education in oncology (study of cancer) and facilitating collaborative basic, translational and clinical research in cancer. It was **formed in August 2012**.
- **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)** had launched a **Pilot on Trade Margin Rationalisation** for 42 anti cancer drugs in february 2020 as a step towards making healthcare more affordable for the suffering patients. This led to **reduction in prices of drugs**.

**Source:PIB**

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## **Radio Burst in Milky Way**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration** (NASA) has spotted **fast Radio Burst** for the first time in the **Milky Way**.

### **Key Points**

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- **Fast Radio Burst:**
  - FRB are **bright bursts of radio waves** (radio waves can be produced by astronomical objects with changing magnetic fields) whose **durations lie in the millisecond-scale**, because of which it is **difficult to detect them** and determine their position in the sky.
  - It was **first discovered in 2007**.

- **Discovery of FRB in Milky Way:**

- **NASA** observed a **mix of X-ray and radio signals** never observed before in the Milky Way.
- The X-ray portion of the simultaneous bursts was detected by several satellites, including **NASA's Wind mission**.

**NASA's Wind** is a spin stabilized spacecraft launched on 1st November, 1994. After several orbits through the **magnetosphere**, Wind was placed in a halo orbit around the **L1 Lagrange point** in early 2004 to observe the unperturbed solar wind that is about to impact the magnetosphere of Earth.

- The **radio component** was discovered by the **Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment (CHIME)**, a radio telescope located at Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory in British Columbia, which is led by McGill University in Montreal, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Toronto.

**CHIME** is a novel radio telescope that has no moving parts. Originally conceived to map the most abundant element in the universe - hydrogen - over a good fraction of the observable universe, this unusual telescope is optimized to have a high "mapping speed".

- **Source of FRB in Milky Way:**

- The source of the FRB detected recently in the Milky Way is a very powerful **magnetic neutron star** referred to as a **magnetar**, called **SGR 1935+2154** or **SGR 1935**, which is located in the **constellation Vulpecula** and is estimated to be between 14,000-41,000 light-years away.
- The FRB was part of one of the magnetar's most prolific flare-ups, with the X-ray bursts lasting less than a second.
- The radio burst, on the other hand, lasted for a thousandth of a second and was thousands of times brighter than any other radio emissions from magnetars seen in the Milky Way previously.

It is possible that the FRB-associated burst was exceptional because it likely occurred at or close to the magnetar's magnetic pole.

- This flare-up, which lasted for hours, was picked up by **NASA's Fermi Gamma-ray Space telescope and NASA's Neutron star Interior Composition Explorer (NICER)**.
  - **The Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope**, formerly called the Gamma-ray Large Area Space Telescope (GLAST), is a space observatory being used to perform gamma-ray astronomy observations from low Earth orbit.
  - **NASA's Neutron star Interior Composition Explorer** is an **International Space Station (ISS)** payload devoted to the study of neutron stars through soft X-ray timing.

## Magnetar

- As per NASA, a **magnetar** is a neutron star, “the crushed, city-size remains of a star many times more massive than the Sun.”
- The **magnetic field of such a star is very powerful**, which can be over 10 trillion times stronger than a refrigerator magnet and up to a thousand times stronger than a typical **neutron star’s**.

**Neutron stars** are formed when the core of a massive star undergoes gravitational collapse when it reaches the end of its life. This results in the matter being so tightly packed that even a sugar-cube sized amount of material taken from such a star weighs more than 1 billion tons, which is about the same as the weight of Mount Everest, according to NASA.

- Magnetars are a subclass of these neutrons and occasionally release flares with more energy in a fraction of a second than the Sun is capable of emitting in tens of thousands of years.
- In the case of **SGR 1935**, for instance, the X-ray portion of the simultaneous bursts it released recently carried as much energy as the Sun produces in a month, assuming that the magnetar lies towards the nearer end of its distance range.

Source:IE

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## WhatsApp UPI and NPCI Regulations

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### Why in News

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Recently, **WhatsApp** (a unit of Facebook) has **introduced payments services in India** following approval by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

The NPCI approval also follows another recent **direction imposing a cap of 30% of the total volume of transactions processed in Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**, applicable to all third-party app providers, **effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021**.

UPI is a **single platform that merges various banking services and features** under one umbrella and turns **smartphones into a virtual debit card**, allowing **real-time bank-to-bank payments** to be made using a mobile number or virtual payment address (UPI ID).

### Key Points

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- **WhatsApp UPI in India:**
  - People can send **money on WhatsApp to anyone using a UPI supported app.**
  - India is **one of the biggest markets for WhatsApp**, which first started testing its UPI-based payments system in 2018 and would now **compete with existing players such as Paytm, Google Pay, Amazon Pay and PhonePe.**
  - It is **working with five leading banks in India** viz. ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, the State Bank of India, and Jio Payments Bank.
  - However, **not all users in India would be able to access** payment features because NPCI had mandated **expansion** of WhatsApp's UPI user base **in a graded manner** starting with a maximum registered user base of 20 million.
- **Imposition of 30% Cap:**
  - The guidelines stipulate **any entity not exceeding 30% of the total transaction volume to be in compliance.** However, **entities exceeding** the said market share have been given time **till 2023 to comply.**
  - The cap will be calculated on the **basis of total volume of transactions processed in UPI during the preceding three months on a rolling basis.**
  - Seeing the **recent growth in UPI transaction volumes**, NPCI analysed the **risks in the UPI ecosystem** and introduced the cap.
    - The idea for a 30% cap on UPI transaction volumes was **first brought up in a meeting of the NPCI's Steering Committee on UPI in 2019** after concerns of **rising dominance with non-bank third-party app providers** were raised.
    - As of **October 2019, Google Pay and PhonePe** together had around **80% of transaction volumes** in UPI on their platforms.
  - The NPCI is **yet to issue the risk assessment** of the UPI ecosystem on the basis of which the new norms were brought in and **the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** for the newly introduced restrictions on transaction volumes.
  - Another reason is **banks' concerns about the sudden rise in transaction volumes and the subsequent load** on their systems, especially after the introduction of WhatsApp UPI.
  - The move could **disincentivize platforms from on-boarding customers of a lower ticket size** and in effect, **could prevent the efforts to accelerate digital payments.**

## **National Payments Corporation of India**

- It is an **umbrella organisation for all retail payments systems** in India.



- It was set up with the guidance and support of the **Reserve Bank of India** (RBI) and **Indian Banks' Association** (IBA).
- **Objectives:**
  - To consolidate and integrate the existing multiple systems into a nation-wide uniform and standard business process for all retail payment systems.
  - To facilitate an affordable payment mechanism to benefit the common man across the country and propel financial inclusion.

## Way Forward

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- Digital payments in India is still in its development phase and any interventions at this point should be made with a view to accelerate consumer choice and innovation. A choice based and open model is key to drive this momentum.
- The 30% cap has implications for hundreds of millions of users who use UPI for their daily payments and it could impact the further adoption of UPI and the end goal of financial inclusion.

## Source: TH

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## Covid-19 and Tinnitus

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### Why in News

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New research has found that **Tinnitus** is being exacerbated by **Covid-19** and also by the measures being taken to fight the infection.

The research was led by Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in the UK, with support from the British Tinnitus Association and the American Tinnitus Association.

### Key Points

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- The research covered 3,103 people with tinnitus from 48 countries, mostly from the UK and the USA.
  - Tinnitus** is a common condition that **causes the perception of noise or ringing in the ears and head.**
- It found that 40% of those **displaying symptoms of Covid-19** simultaneously experience a **worsening of their tinnitus.**
- A small number of participants reported that **their tinnitus condition was initially triggered by developing Covid-19** symptoms. This suggests that **tinnitus could be a Covid symptom** in some cases.

- A large proportion of people believe their **tinnitus is being made worse by social distancing measures**.  
As many as 46% of UK respondents said that lifestyle changes had negatively impacted their tinnitus, compared to 29% in North America.
- In **another study** published in BMJ Case Reports, researchers stated **the possible ways through which Covid -19 can affect hearing**.
  - The presence of **ACE-2 human receptors** that **SARS-CoV-2** binds with.  
The receptor was recently found to be expressed in the epithelial cells in the middle ear of mice.
  - Another way that could affect hearing is through the immune **system response to the infection**. In this case, the **inflammatory responses and an increase in cytokines** due to infection could lead to hearing loss in case there is direct entry into the cochlea leading to inflammation and cell stress.
    - The **cochlea** contains the sensory organ of hearing.
    - **Cytokines** are inflammatory immunological proteins that are there to fight off infections and ward off cancers.
- Earlier, Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialists have noted a growing number of patients with **anosmia (the abrupt loss of smell)** and **ageusia (loss of sense of taste)**. Both **anosmia and ageusia could be signs of Covid-19** in people who otherwise appear well.

## Tinnitus

- Tinnitus is the perception of **noise or ringing in the ears**.
- Tinnitus **isn't a condition itself** — it's a symptom of an underlying condition, such as age-related hearing loss, ear injury or a circulatory system disorder.
- Tinnitus can significantly **affect quality of life**. One may experience fatigue, stress, sleep problems, trouble concentrating, memory problems, depression, anxiety and irritability, etc.
- Although it can worsen with age, for many people, tinnitus can improve with treatment. Treating an identified underlying cause sometimes helps. Other treatments reduce or mask the noise, making tinnitus less noticeable.
- **Treatments** may include **hearing aids, sound-masking devices, medicines, and ways to learn how to cope with the noise**.

## Source:IE

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## 300 Million Potentially Habitable Earths

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### Why in News

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New analysis of data from **Kepler Spacecraft** shows a large number of habitable

## Exoplanets.

An **exoplanet or extrasolar planet** is a **planet outside the Solar System**. The **first confirmation** of detection of exoplanets occurred in **1992**.

### Key Points

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- After analysing Kepler's data for two years, a team from **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** estimated that there are at least 100 billion stars in the Milky Way, of which about 4 billion are sunlike.
- If only 7% of those stars have habitable planets, a conservative estimate is that there could be **as many as 300 million potentially habitable Earths (exoplanets)** out there in the whole Milky Way alone.
- The team calculated that at least one third of stars similar in mass and brightness to the sun have rocks like earth in their habitable zone.

### Kepler Spacecraft

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- The Kepler mission was **named** in honor of 17<sup>th</sup>-century German astronomer Johannes Kepler, who discovered the laws of planetary motion.
  - The Kepler Mission was **launched in 2009** on a three-and-a-half year mission to monitor 1,50,000 stars in a patch of sky in the Milky Way.
  - It was **NASA's first planet-hunting mission**, it discovered more than 2,600 of around 3,800 exoplanets.
    - It looked for tiny dips in starlight caused by an exoplanet passing in front of its home star.
  - Kepler's **formal goal** was to measure a number called **eta-Earth**: the fraction of sunlike stars that have an Earth-size object orbiting them in the **"goldilocks" or habitable zone**, where it is warm enough for the surface to retain liquid water.
  - Kepler is succeeded by NASA's **Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite, or TESS**, which was launched in **April 2018**. TESS is the new planet hunter for NASA.
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## One Rank One Pension

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### Why in News

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The central government has disbursed more than Rs. 42,700 crore to 20.6 lakh retired defence personnel under the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme, which was notified 5 years ago in 2015.

### Key Points

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- OROP means the payment of the **same pension** to military officers **for the same rank for the same length of service**, irrespective of the date of retirement.  
Before OROP, ex-servicemen **used to get pensions as per the Pay Commission's recommendations of the time** when they had retired.
- **Uttar Pradesh** and **Punjab** have the highest number of OROP beneficiaries.
- Armed Forces Personnel who had retired till **30<sup>th</sup> June 2014** are covered under it.
- The implementation of the scheme was based on recommendation of the **Koshiyari committee**, a 10 member all-party parliamentary panel formed **under the chairmanship of Bhagat Singh Koshiyari**.

**Source: PIB**

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## **Kartarpur Sahib**

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### **Why in News**

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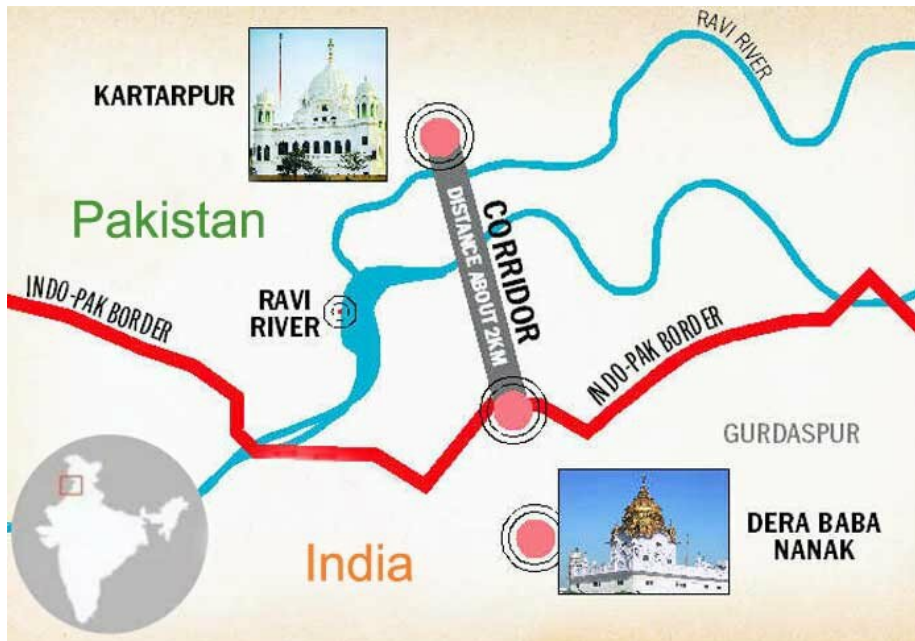
India has criticized Pakistan's decision to **transfer the management** of the **Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara** from a Sikh body to a separate trust.

### **Key Points**

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- Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib, also known as the **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib**, is located in Pakistan's Narowal district across river Ravi. It is one of the most significant historical and spiritual places for Sikhs.
- According to historians, the **first Sikh Guru** (Guru Nanak Dev) had arrived in Kartarpur between **1520 and 1522**, and **spent the last 18 years of his life there**.  
It was in Kartarpur where he laid the **foundations of a Sikh religion**.
- The **Kartarpur Corridor** was thrown open in 2019.

### **Kartarpur Corridor**



- The Kartarpur corridor **connects the Darbar Sahib Gurdwara in Narowal district of Pakistan** with the **Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Gurdaspur district Punjab, India**.
- The agreement facilitates **visa-free movement of Indian pilgrims** who would **only need a permit** to cross over to Pakistan.
- The corridor was built in 2019 to **commemorate the 550<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev**, founder of **Sikhism**.

**Source: IE**

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## Covid-19 Insurance to Green Soldiers: PTR

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### Why in News

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Recently, **Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR)** in **Arunachal Pradesh** has become the **first in the eight-State northeast** to provide insurance cover against **Covid-19** for “green soldiers”.

Eight-State northeast includes Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

### Key Points

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- 57 **frontline staff** (referred to as **green soldiers**) of the Park have been insured for nine months against health issues due to the infection by the Covid-19.  
The **forest guards are rightly the green soldiers** in the frontline of India’s wildlife, and the onus of wildlife conservation pretty much falls on them.

- The **Wildlife Trust of India** (WTI), an NGO, paid the insurance amount with support from Foundation Serge.

The NGO has been **supporting India's frontline forest staff with accident cover** for the last 20 years.

- The **insurance coverage is of Rs. 1 lakh each** but a few who would be **retiring** soon has been insured for **Rs. 50,000**.

## **Pakke Tiger Reserve**

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- PTR (declared in 1999-2000) lies in the foothills of the eastern Himalaya in the East Kameng district of **Arunachal Pradesh** and is **also known as Pakhui Tiger Reserve**.
- It falls within the **Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot**.
- It is home to over 2000 species of plants, 300 species of birds, 40 species of mammals, etc. Many species of the flora and fauna are globally threatened, and PTR is one of the last remaining strongholds left for these species.
- It is **known for its amazing sightings of four resident hornbill species**.  
The **great hornbill** is the state bird of Arunachal Pradesh and it is 'vulnerable' under the **IUCN Red List**.
- **Other Protected Areas in Arunachal Pradesh:**
  - Talle Wildlife Sanctuary.
  - **Dihang Dibang Biosphere Reserve**.
  - Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary.
  - **Namdapha Tiger Reserve**.
  - Mouling National Park.
  - Sessa Orchid Sanctuary.

**Source: TH**

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