



News Analysis (06 Jul, 2021)

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NIPUN Bharat Mission

Why in News

The **Ministry of Education** has launched **NIPUN (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) Bharat Scheme**.

It aims to cover the learning needs of children in the age group of 3 to 9 years.

Key Points

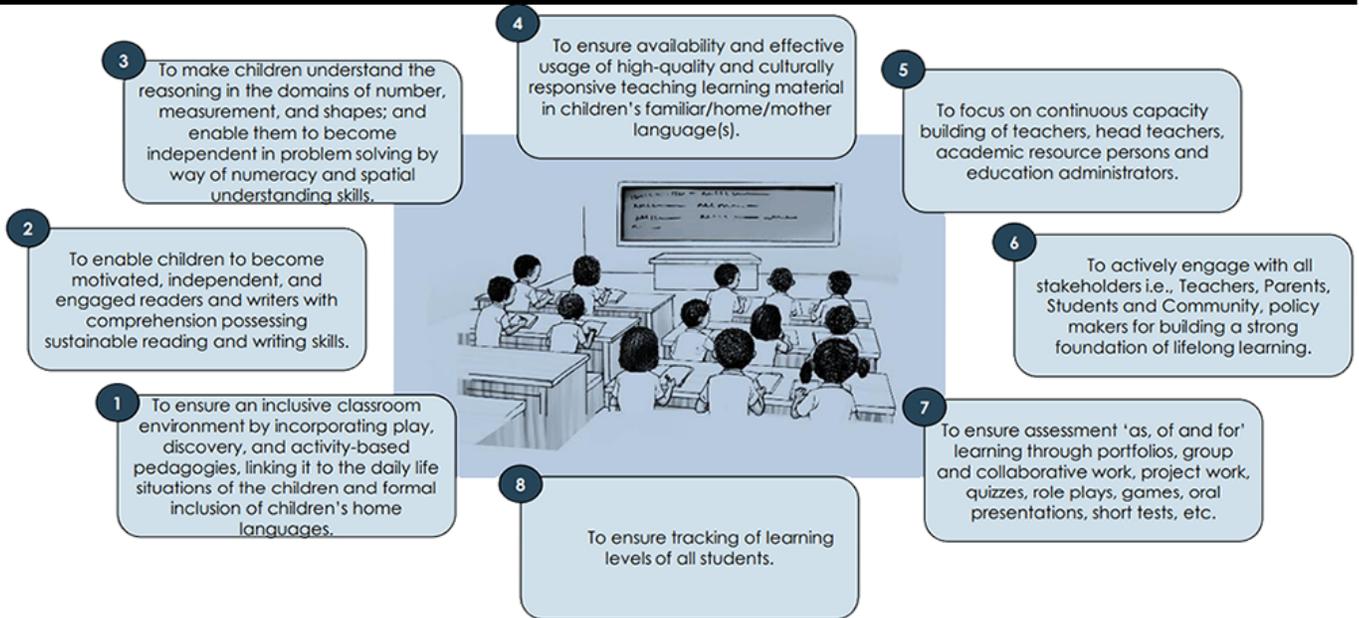
- **Part of NEP 2020:**
 - This initiative is being launched as a part of **NEP (National Education Policy) 2020**.
 - This policy aims to pave the way for **transformational reforms in school and higher education systems** in the country. This policy **replaced the 34 year old National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986**.
- **Objective:**

To create an enabling environment to **ensure universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy**, so that every child achieves the desired learning competencies in reading, writing and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, **by 2026-27**.
- **Focus Areas:**

It will focus on providing access and **retaining children in foundational years of schooling; teacher capacity building**; development of high quality and **diversified Student and Teacher Resources/Learning Materials**; and **tracking the progress of each child** in achieving learning outcomes.

- **Implementation:**
 - NIPUN Bharat **will be implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy.**
 - **A five-tier implementation mechanism** will be set up at the National- State- District- Block- School level in all States and UTs, under the **aegis of the centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha.**
 - ‘Samagra Shiksha’ programme was launched **subsuming three existing schemes:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
 - The aim of the scheme is **to treat school education holistically**, from pre-school to Class XII.
 - **A special package for foundational literacy and Numeracy (FLN) under NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement) is being developed by NCERT.**
 - Around **25 lakh teachers** teaching at pre-primary to primary grade **will be trained** this year on FLN.
 - **NISHTHA** is a capacity building programme for "Improving Quality of School Education through Integrated Teacher Training".
 - **Stage-wise targets** are being set in a continuum from the pre-primary or balvatika classes.
- **Expected Outcomes:**
 - Foundational skills enable to keep children in class thereby **reducing the dropouts and improve transition rate from primary to upper primary** and secondary stages.
 - Activity based learning and a conducive learning environment will **improve the quality of education.**
 - **Innovative pedagogies** such as toy-based and experiential learning will be used in classroom transactions thereby making learning a joyful and engaging activity.
 - **Intensive capacity building of teachers** will make them empowered and **provide greater autonomy for choosing the pedagogy.**
 - **Holistic development of the child** by focusing on different domains of development like physical and motor development, socio-emotional development, literacy and numeracy development, cognitive development, life skills etc. which are interrelated and interdependent, which will be reflected in a Holistic Progress Card.
 - Children to achieve a steeper learning trajectory which **may have positive impacts on later life outcomes and employment.**
 - Since almost every child attends early grades, therefore, focus at that stage **will also benefit the socio-economic disadvantaged group** thus ensuring access to equitable and inclusive quality education.

Objectives of the Mission



Education in India

- **Constitutional Provisions:**

- **Part IV of Indian Constitution**, Article 45 and Article 39 (f) of Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), has a provision for state-funded as well as equitable and accessible education.
- The **42nd Amendment to the Constitution in 1976** moved education from the State to the Concurrent List.

The education policies by the Central government provide a broad direction and state governments are expected to follow it. But it is not mandatory, for instance Tamil Nadu does not follow the three-language formula prescribed by the first education policy in 1968.

- The **86th Amendment in 2002 made education an enforceable right under Article 21-A.**

- **Related Laws:**

Right To Education (RTE) Act, 2009 aims to provide primary education to all children aged 6 to 14 years and enforces education as a Fundamental Right.

It mandates non-minority private unaided schools to keep aside at least 25% of their entry-level seats for children belonging to disadvantaged sections to create a more integrated and inclusive schooling system.

- **Government Initiatives:**

Source: TH

Child Soldier Recruiter List

Why in News

The **US has added Pakistan and 14 other countries to a Child Soldier Recruiter List** that identifies foreign governments having government-supported armed groups that **recruit or use child soldiers**.

Child Soldier refers to **any person below 18 years of age who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity.**

It **includes but is not limited to children, boys and girls** who are used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies or for sexual purposes (Paris Principles on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict 2007).

Key Points

- **About Child Soldier Recruiter List:**

- The US Child Soldiers Prevention Act -2008 (CSPA) requires the publication in the annual **Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report** a list of foreign governments that have recruited or used child soldiers.
- Some of the **countries which have been added to the list** are Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Yemen etc.
 - The **United Nations (UN)** verified that over 7,000 children had been recruited and used as soldiers in 2019 alone.
- The CSPA **prohibits the US government from providing military assistance**, including money, military education and training, or direct sales of military equipment, **to countries that recruit and use child soldiers.**

- **Related Global Conventions:**

- The **recruitment or use of children below the age of 15 as soldiers is prohibited** by both the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** and the **additional protocols to the Geneva Conventions**.
 - The **CRC** says childhood is separate from adulthood, and lasts until 18; it is a special, protected time, in which children must be allowed to grow, learn, play, develop and flourish with dignity.
 - The **Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols** form the core of international humanitarian law, which regulates the conduct of armed conflict and seeks to limit its effects. They protect people not taking part in hostilities and those who are no longer doing so.
- The **Optional Protocol to the CRC** on the involvement of children in armed conflict **further prohibits kids under the age 18** from being compulsorily recruited into state or non-state armed forces or **directly engaging in hostilities**.

Optional Protocols to human rights treaties are treaties in their own right, and are open to signature, accession or ratification by countries who are party to the main treaty.
- Recruiting Child Soldiers is also considered **a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)**.
- **Also, the United Nations** has identified the **recruitment and use of child soldiers** as among **six “grave violations”**. Other Five violations are:
 - Killing and maiming of children;
 - Sexual violence against children;
 - Abduction of children;
 - Attacks against schools or hospitals;
 - Denial of humanitarian access for children.

- **Issues with the CRC:**

- These treaties are **limited in scope and nature**, and they tend to be idealistic rather than practicable.
- The UN's mechanisms **only bind state** parties that ratify the treaties. It therefore has **no authority over countries** that are not parties to the convention or are non-state entities, such as rebel militias recruiting child soldiers.
- It also **relies on the signatories themselves** to implement its doctrines and prevent human rights abuses around the world.

Therefore, most of the responsibility in preventing such abuses lies with the individual countries themselves.
- While the UN views its treaties and conventions as binding on state parties, it has **no police power mechanism to enforce its decisions**.
- The CRC and its Optional Protocol are limited by the signatories' willingness to comply. Somalia, for example, is a **signatory but it hasn't ratified the convention**.

- **Indian Scenario:**

- Though not very common in India, child soldiers are seen among **non-state forces** such as **insurgent organizations in the NorthEast region** (mainly in Assam, Manipur, Nagaland) and militant factions in the Kashmir region.
- Also, they are hired in **maoist affected areas** of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra.
- Some global human rights organisations allege Indian security forces of using **children as spies and messengers**, although the Indian government denies this allegation.
- **National Cadet Corps (NCC)** which is run by the Ministry of Defence, **aims to motivate youth from age 13 to take up a career in the armed forces** (Army, Navy and Air Force) and Territorial Army.

They can not be equated with the child soldiers.

- **Steps Taken by Indian Government:**

- India is **party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and acceded to Optional Protocol** in November 2005.
 - The **Constitution encompasses most rights included in the CRC as Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy.**
 - **Article 39 (f)** states that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.
- The **Indian Penal Code criminalises the recruitment or use in hostilities of persons under-18 years** by state armed forces or non-state armed groups.
- Adults of age over 18 years are recruited in the **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF).**

Way Forward

- International treaties and instruments, such as the CRC and its Optional Protocol are valuable and necessary tools to ensure betterment of children but these must be implemented by all parties in its true spirit.
- In 2014, **UNICEF** launched the campaign “**Children, Not Soldiers**” to bring about a global consensus that child soldiers should not be used in conflict.
 - More such campaigns (Global as well as National) are needed to generate momentum, political will and international support.
- Also, the **reintegration of former child soldiers** must be a strong focus of our collective efforts.

Source: IE

Output Pact: OPEC+

Why in News

Recently, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) pushed back against a plan by the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+) Plus** group to **extend the global pact to cut oil production beyond April 2022.**

Key Points

- **The Output Pact & Fluctuating Oil Price:**

- The OPEC+ group of countries had, in April 2020, entered into a **two-year agreement (Output Pact), which entailed steep cuts in crude production to deal with a sharp fall in the price of oil** as a result of the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

The price of **Brent crude** hit an **18-year low of under USD 20 per barrel in April 2020** as economic activity around the world crashed as countries dealt with the pandemic.

- In **November 2020, the prices started rising** and in **July 2021, they were USD 76.5 per barrel** mainly due to the steady **rollout of vaccination programmes** around the world.
- OPEC+, however, **maintained lower levels of production** despite crude oil prices reaching pre-Covid levels, with Saudi Arabia, notably, announcing a further cut in production of 1 million barrels per day for the February-to-April period, which **helped boost rising prices even further**.

The OPEC+ group ran into **sharp criticism from developing economies, including India, for deliberately maintaining low supply levels to raise prices**.

- In April, OPEC+ agreed to gradually increase crude production, including a **phased end to Saudi Arabia's 1 million barrel per day cut in production by July**.

- **UAE's Objection:**

- UAE agreed that there was a need to increase crude oil production from August 2021, but did not agree to a condition by the **OPEC Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC)** that the **two-year production agreement be extended by six months**.

- The UAE's key objection to the existing agreement is the **reference output used to calculate the total production apportioned to each oil-exporting country**.

- The **baseline production level reference** used in the current agreement was **not reflective of the UAE's production capacity** and, therefore, led to the UAE being apportioned a lower share of total production of crude oil.
- UAE would be open to extending the agreement if baseline production levels were reviewed to be fair to all parties.

- **Impact of OPEC+ conflict on India:**

- **Delayed Relief:**

If the UAE and other OPEC+ nations do not reach an agreement to increase production in August, **expected relief in the form of lower crude oil prices could be delayed**.

- **High Domestic Prices:**

India is currently **facing record-high prices of petrol and diesel**. High crude prices have led to **Indian oil marketing companies hiking the price of petrol by about 19.3%** and that of diesel by about 21% since the beginning of 2021.

- **Slow Recovery:**

The high price of crude oil was **slowing down the economic recovery of developing economies post the pandemic**.

- **Inflation:**

The high prices might also increase the **Current Account Deficit** and put **inflationary pressure** on the Indian economy.

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

About:

- It is a **permanent, intergovernmental organization, created at the Baghdad Conference in 1960**, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.
- It aims **to manage the supply of oil in an effort to set the price of oil in the world market**, in order to avoid fluctuations that might affect the economies of both producing and purchasing countries.
- **Headquarter:**
Vienna, Austria.
- **Membership:**
 - OPEC membership is **open to any country** that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization.
 - **OPEC has a total of 13 Member Countries** viz. Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Angola and Venezuela are members of OPEC.

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus

It is a loosely affiliated entity consisting of the **OPEC members and 10 of the world's major non-OPEC oil-exporting nations which are:**

Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.

Source: IE

India Joins OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework Tax Deal

Why in News

India and the majority of the members of **OECD-G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)** have joined a new **two-pillar plan** to reform international taxation rules.

The two-pillar plan - **inclusive framework tax deal on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)**- seeks to **reform international tax rules** and ensure that multinational enterprises pay their fair share wherever they operate.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - The signatories of the plan amounted to **130 countries and jurisdictions**, representing more than **90% of global GDP**.
 - The new framework seeks to **address the tax challenges** arising from the **digitalisation of economies**.
 - It also seeks to **address concerns over cross-border profit shifting** and bring in subject-to-tax rule to stop **treaty shopping**.
Treaty shopping is an attempt by a person to indirectly access the benefits of a tax treaty between two countries without being a resident of any of those.

- **Two Pillar Plan:**
 - **Pillar One:**
 - It will **ensure a fairer distribution of profits and taxing rights** among countries with respect to the largest MNEs, including digital companies.
 - It would re-allocate some taxing rights over MNEs from their home countries to the markets where they have business activities and earn profits, regardless of whether firms have a physical presence there.
 - According to OECD, more than USD 100 billion of profit are expected to be reallocated to market jurisdictions each year.
 - **Pillar Two:** It is about **minimum tax and subject-to-tax rules** (All sources of income liable to tax without taking account of tax allowances).
 - It seeks to put a minimum standard tax rate among countries through a **global minimum corporate tax rate**, currently **proposed at 15%**.
 - This is **expected to generate an additional USD 150 billion** in tax revenues.
- **Significance:**
 - It will ensure that large multinational companies pay their fair share of tax everywhere.
 - The two-pillar package will provide much-needed support to governments needing to raise necessary revenues to repair their budgets and their balance sheets while investing in essential public services, infrastructure and the measures necessary to help optimise the strength and the quality of the post-Covid recovery.
- **India's Stand:**
 - **India will have to roll back the equalisation levy** that it imposes on companies such as Google, Amazon and Facebook when the global tax regime is implemented.
 - It is aimed at taxing foreign companies which have a significant local client base in India but are billing them through their offshore units, effectively escaping the country's tax system.
 - The levy at 6% has been in force since 2016 on payment exceeding Rs 1 lakh a year to a non-resident service provider for online advertisements.
 - India **favours a wider application of the law** to ensure that the **country won't collect less** under the proposed framework **than it gets through the equalisation levy**.
 - India is in favour of a consensus solution which is simple to implement and simple to comply with.
 - The solution should result in **allocation of meaningful and sustainable revenue** to market jurisdictions, particularly for developing and emerging economies.
 - The Two Pillar Plan **justifies India's stand** for a **greater share of profits for the markets** and consideration of **demand side factors in profit allocation**.

Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)

- BEPS is a term used to describe tax planning strategies that exploit mismatches and gaps that exist between the tax rules of different jurisdictions.
- It is done to **minimize the corporation tax** that is payable overall, by either making tax profits 'disappear' or **shift profits to low tax jurisdictions where there is little or no genuine activity**.
- In general BEPS strategies are **not illegal**; rather they take advantage of different tax rules operating in different jurisdictions.

- BEPS is of **major significance** for developing countries due to their heavy reliance on corporate income tax, particularly from multinational enterprises (MNEs).
- The BEPS initiative is an **OECD** initiative, approved by the **G20**, to identify ways of providing more standardised tax rules globally.
 - **OECD**: It is an intergovernmental economic organisation, founded to stimulate economic progress and world trade.
Most OECD members are high-income economies and are regarded as developed countries.
 - **G20**: It is the leading international forum for economic, financial and political cooperation of large economies.
 - India is a member of G20, however, not a member but a key partner of OECD
- The **OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework was established in 2016**.
India has ratified the Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting ("**Multilateral Instrument**" or "**MLI**") - outcome of the OECD/G20 Project to tackle BEPS.

Source: TH

Anti-Dumping Duty

Why in News

Recently, the government has decided **not to impose Anti-Dumping Duty (ADD) on imports of certain copper products, from China, Thailand, Korea and three other countries.**

Key Points

- **About:**
 - In April, **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)** recommended imposing the duty on "**copper and copper alloy flat-rolled products**" from China, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand, after conducting a probe.
 - However, the **Ministry of Finance takes the final call** to impose these duties and issues notification for the same.

- **Anti Dumping Duty (Concept):**
 - **Dumping:**
 - Dumping is said to occur **when the goods are exported by a country to another country at a price lower than the price it normally charges** in its own home market.
 - This is **an unfair trade practice** which can have a distortive effect on international trade.
 - **Objective:**
 - Imposition of Anti-dumping duty is **a measure to rectify the situation arising out of the dumping of goods** and its trade distortive effect.
In the long-term, anti-dumping duties **can reduce the international competition of domestic companies** producing similar goods.
 - It is **a protectionist tariff** that a domestic government imposes on foreign imports that it believes are priced below fair market value.
 - The use of anti-dumping measures as an instrument of fair competition is **permitted by the World Trade Organisation.**
 - **Different from Countervailing Duties:**
ADD is a customs duty on imports providing a protection against the dumping of goods at prices substantially lower than the normal value whereas **Countervailing duty is a customs duty on goods that have received government subsidies** in the originating or exporting country.
 - **WTO's Provisions Related to Anti-Dumping Duty:**
 - **Validity:** An anti-dumping duty **is valid for a period of five years** from the date of imposition unless revoked earlier.
 - **Sunset Review:** It **can be extended for a further period of five years** through a sunset or expiry review investigation.
 - A Sunset review/ expiry review is an evaluation of the need for the continued existence of a program or an agency. It allows for an assessment of the effectiveness and performance of the program or agency.
 - Such a review can be initiated suo moto or on the basis of a duly substantiated request received from or on behalf of the domestic industry.

Directorate General of Trade Remedies

- It is the **apex national authority under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry** for administering all trade remedial measures including anti-dumping, countervailing duties and safeguard measures.
- It **provides trade defence support to the domestic industry and exporters** in dealing with increasing instances of trade remedy investigations instituted against them by other countries.

Source: IE

Chief Minister

Why in News

Recently, **Pushkar Singh Dhami** was sworn in as the **11th Chief Minister (CM)** of Uttarakhand.

He takes over the position just a few months ahead of Assembly polls, due early in 2022.

Key Points

- **Appointment:**
 - **Article 164 of the Constitution** envisages that the **Chief Minister shall be appointed by the governor.**
 - **A leader of the party that has got the majority share of votes in the assembly elections**, is appointed as the Chief Minister of the state.
 - **The Governor is the nominal executive authority**, but **real executive authority rests with the Chief Minister.**
 - However, the **discretionary powers enjoyed by the governor reduces to some extent the power, authority, influence, prestige and role of the Chief Minister in the state administration.**
 - **A person who is not a member of the state legislature can be appointed as Chief Minister for six months**, within which time, he should be elected to the state legislature, failing which he ceases to be the Chief Minister.
- **Term of the CM:**
 - The **term of the Chief Minister is not fixed** and he **holds office during the pleasure of the governor.**
 - He **cannot be dismissed by the governor as long as he enjoys the majority support in the legislative assembly.**
 - The **State Legislative Assembly can also remove him by passing a vote of no-confidence** against him.

- **Powers and Functions:**
 - **With Respect to Council of Ministers:**
 - The **governor appoints only those persons as ministers** who are recommended by the Chief Minister.
 - He **allocates and reshuffles the portfolios among ministers.**
 - He **can bring about the collapse of the council of ministers** by resigning from office, since the Chief Minister is the head of the council of ministers.
 - **With Respect to Governor:**
 - **Under Article 167 of the Constitution, the Chief Minister acts as a link between the Governor and state council of ministers.**
 - CM **advises the Governor regarding the appointment of important officials** like advocate general, chairman and members of the **State Public Service Commission, State Election Commission**, etc.
 - **With Respect to State Legislature:**
 - All the **policies are announced by him on the floor of the house.**
 - He **recommends dissolution of legislative assembly** to the Governor.
 - **Other Functions:**
 - He is the **chairman of the State Planning Board.**
 - He **acts as a vice-chairman of the concerned zonal council** by rotation, holding office for a period of one year at a time.
 - He is a **member of the Inter-State Council and the Governing Council of NITI Aayog**, both headed by the prime minister.
 - He is the **chief spokesman of the state government.**
 - He is the **crisis manager-in-chief** at the political level during emergencies.
 - As a leader of the state, he **meets various sections of the people and receives memoranda from them regarding their problems**, and so on.
 - He is the **political head of the services.**

Source: TH

Discrete Auroras of Mars

Why in News

Recently, the **UAE's Hope spacecraft** has captured **images of glowing atmospheric lights in the Mars night sky, known as discrete auroras.**

The Hope Probe, the Arab world's first mission to Mars, took off from Earth in July 2020, and has been orbiting the Red Planet (Mars) since February 2021. It is expected to create the **first complete portrait of the planet's atmosphere.**



Key Points

- **Auroras:**
 - An Aurora is **a display of light in the sky predominantly seen in the high latitude regions** (Arctic and Antarctic). It is **also known as a Polar light**.
 - They commonly occur at high northern and southern latitudes, less frequent at mid-latitudes, and seldom seen near the equator.
 - While **usually a milky greenish color**, auroras can also show red, blue, violet, pink, and white. These colors appear in a variety of continuously changing shapes.
 - Auroras are **not just something that happens on Earth**. If a planet has an atmosphere and magnetic field, they probably have auroras.
- **Cause of Auroras on Earth:**
 - Auroras are caused **when charged particles ejected from the Sun's surface - called the solar wind - enter the Earth's atmosphere**.
 - The typical aurora is **caused by collisions between charged particles from space with the oxygen and nitrogen in Earth's upper atmosphere**.
 - The electrons - which come from the Earth's magnetosphere, the region of space controlled by Earth's magnetic field - transfer their energy to the oxygen and nitrogen atoms and molecules, making them "excited".
 - When a large number of electrons come from the magnetosphere to bombard the atmosphere, the **oxygen and nitrogen can emit enough light for the eye to detect, giving us beautiful auroral displays**.
 - In the **northern part of our globe**, the **polar lights are called aurora borealis or Northern Lights**, and are seen from the US (Alaska), Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.
 - In the **south**, they are called **aurora australis or southern lights**, and are visible from high latitudes in Antarctica, Chile, Argentina, New Zealand and Australia.
- **Discrete Auroras of Mars:**
 - Unlike auroras on Earth, which are seen only near the north and south poles, **Discrete Auroras (DA) on Mars are seen all around** the planet at night time.
 - These DAs are traced out where **energetic particles excite the atmosphere** after being funneled down by a patchy network of crustal **magnetic fields that originate from minerals** on the surface of Mars.

- **Martian Auroras are Different:**
 - Unlike Earth, which has a strong magnetic field, the **Martian magnetic field has largely died out**. This is because the molten iron at the interior of the planet - which produces magnetism - has cooled.
 - However, the **Martian crust**, which hardened billions of years ago when the magnetic field still existed, **retains some magnetism**.
 - So, in contrast with Earth, which acts like one single bar magnet, **magnetism on Mars is unevenly distributed**, with fields strewn across the planet and differing in direction and strength.
 - These **disjointed fields channel the solar wind to different parts of the Martian atmosphere**, creating “discrete” auroras over the entire surface of the planet as charged particles interact with atoms and molecules in the sky– as they do on Earth.
- **Significance:**
 - Studying Martian auroras is important for scientists, for it **can offer clues as to why the Red Planet lost its magnetic field and thick atmosphere**– among the essential requirements for sustaining life.
 - With the information gathered during the UAE’s Mars mission, scientists will have a **better understanding of the climate dynamics of different layers of Mars’ atmosphere**.

Other Mars Missions

- **NASA's Mars 2020 Mission (Perseverance Rover)**: The mission is designed to better understand the geology of Mars and seek signs of ancient life.
- **Tianwen-1: China's Mars Mission**: It was launched in 2019 to conduct scientific investigations into the planet’s soil, geological structure, environment, atmosphere and water.
- **India’s Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) or Mangalyaan**: It was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh by Indian Space Research Organisation in November 2013.

Source: IE

King Cobra in Tillari Reserve

Why in News

Recently, a **king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*)**, was sighted in the **recently declared conservation reserve, Tillari**, in Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra.

Key Points

- **King Cobra:**

- **About:**

- They are **one of the most venomous snakes on the planet and the longest of all**



venomous snakes.

- Their venom is not the most potent among venomous snakes, but **the amount of neurotoxin they can deliver in a single bite**—up to two-tenths of a fluid ounce—is **enough to kill 20 people, or even an elephant.**
 - They are **the only snakes in the world that build nests** for their eggs, which they guard ferociously until the hatchlings emerge.

- **Habitat:**

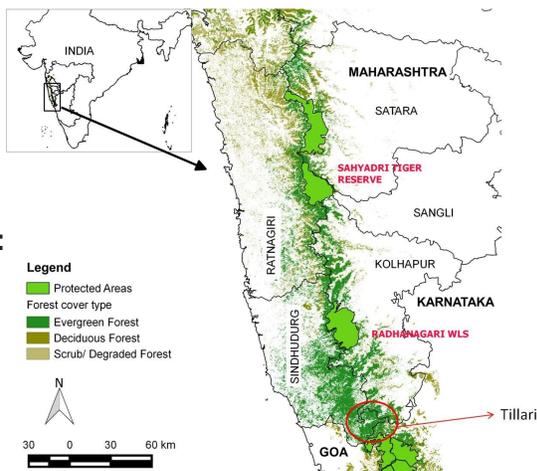
- They live mainly in the **rain forests and plains of India, southern China, and Southeast Asia.**
 - They are comfortable in a variety of habitats, including **forests, bamboo thickets, mangrove swamps, high-altitude grasslands, and in rivers.**

- **Threats:**

They face a variety of **threats stemming from human activities such as:**

- **Deforestation.**
 - **International pet trade.**
 - **Persecution by humans.**
 - **Used for skin, food, and medicinal purposes.**

- **Tillari Conservation Reserve:**



- Tillari is the **seventh wildlife corridor in the state to be declared as a ‘conservation reserve’**.
Tillari is a reserve in **western ghats**.
- The area **covering nine villages in the forest range** is known to serve as a corridor and even as a **habitat for the population of tigers and elephants** moving between the three states of Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra.
- It connects **Mhadei sanctuary in Goa** and Bhimgad in Karnataka.
- It has **semi-evergreen forest, tropical moist deciduous forests**, and a number of unique trees, butterflies, and flowers.

Conservation Reserves in India

- Conservation reserves and community reserves are terms denoting **protected areas of the country which typically act as buffer zones to or connectors and migration corridors** between established national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and reserved and protected forests.
- Such areas are designated as conservation areas if they are uninhabited and completely owned by the Government of India but **used for subsistence by communities and community areas if part of the lands are privately owned**.
- These protected area categories were first introduced in the **Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act of 2002 – the amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972**.
- These categories were **added because of reduced protection in and around existing or proposed protected areas** due to private ownership of land and land use.
- There are **97 existing Conservation Reserves in India** covering an area of **44483 km²**, which is **0.14% of the geographical area of the country** (National Wildlife Database, Dec. 2020).

Source: IE

Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair

Why in News

A biopic on **Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair** will be produced.

It will be **based on the book, ‘The case that shook the empire’** written by Raghu Palat and Pushpa Palat in 2019.



Key Points

- **Brief Profile:**
 - **Born in the year 1857** in **Mankara village** of **Malabar's Palakkad district**.
 - Known for being a **passionate advocate for social reforms** and a **firm believer in the self-determination of India**.
 - He was an **acclaimed lawyer and judge** in the Madras High Court.
- **Achievements:**
 - **President of INC:** He was one of the early builders of the **Indian National Congress (INC)**, formed in 1885.
 - In 1897, he became the **youngest president of the INC** in the history of the party till then, and the **only Malayali to hold the post ever**.
 - **Member of the Raleigh University Commission:** In 1902, **Lord Curzon** appointed him a member of the **Raleigh University Commission**.
 - **Knighthood:** In 1904, he was appointed as Companion of the Indian Empire by the King-Emperor and in 1912 he was knighted.
 - **Judge in Madras High Court:** He was appointed as a permanent judge in the Madras High Court in **1908**.
 - **Part of Viceroy Council:** In 1915, he became part of the Viceroy's Council, put in charge of the education portfolio.

- **Role in Freedom Movement:**

- As a fervent freedom fighter, he firmly believed in India's **right for self-government**.
- **Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms:** In 1919, **as part of the Viceroy's Executive Council**, he played an important role in the expansion of provisions in the **Montagu-Chelmsford reforms**.

It introduced a system of **dyarchy** in the provinces and **increased participation of Indians in the administration**.

- **Resignation from the Viceroy's Council:** When the massacre of **Jallianwala Bagh** (13th April, 1919) happened, he resigned from the Viceroy's Council in protest.
 - His resignation shook the British government. In the immediate aftermath, **press censorship in Punjab was lifted** and **martial law terminated**.
 - Further, a committee was set up under **Lord William Hunter** to examine the disturbances in Punjab.
- **Critical of Gandhian Methods:** In his book '**Gandhi and Anarchy**', he spelt out his critique of **Gandhi's methods**, especially those of **non-violence, civil disobedience** and **non-cooperation**.

He believed that any of these movements was destined to lead to riots and bloodshed.

- **Legal Battle against Michael O'Dwyer:**

- **Defamation Trial:** Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair accused **Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer** in his book, '**Gandhi and anarchy**' for being responsible for the atrocities at the **Jallianwala Bagh massacre**.

For this he faced a defamation trial filed by **Michael O'Dwyer** in England.

- **Impact of Trial:** Though Nair lost the case, the trial had a resounding impact on the British empire in India.
 - At a time when the nationalist movement was gaining momentum, Indians saw in the judgement a clear bias of the British government and an effort to shield those who committed atrocities against their own people.
 - The verdict was momentous in that it **strengthened the determination of the nationalists to fight for self-government**.

- **Social Reforms:**

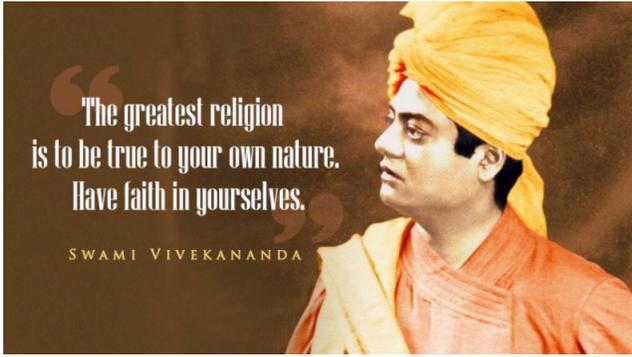
- As a Madras High Court judge, his best-known judgments clearly indicate his commitment to social reforms.
- In ***Budasna v Fatima (1914)***, he passed a radical judgement when he ruled that those who converted to Hinduism cannot be treated as outcasts.
- In a few other cases, he upheld inter-caste and inter-religious marriages.

Source: IE

Swami Vivekananda

Why in News

Every year, 4th July is observed as the death anniversary of **Swami Vivekananda**, who is regarded as a one of the finest spiritual leaders and intellects India has produced.



Key Points

- **Birth:** He was born as **Narendranath Datta** on **12th January, 1863**.
 - **National Youth Day** is held every year to observe the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.
 - In **1893**, upon the request of **Maharaja Ajit Singh of the Khetri State**, he took the name '**Vivekananda**.'
- **Contributions:**
 - Introduced the world to the Indian philosophies of **Vedanta and Yoga**.
He **preached 'neo-Vedanta'**, an interpretation of Hinduism through a Western lens, and believed in combining spirituality with material progress.
 - Laid the greatest emphasis on **education** for the **regeneration of our motherland**.
Advocated a **man-making character-building education**.
 - Best known for his **speech at the World Parliament of Religion in Chicago** in 1893.
 - Spelt out the **four pathways of attaining moksha** from the worldly pleasure and attachment in **his books** - Raja-yoga, Karma-yoga, Jnana-yoga and Bhakti-yoga.
 - **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose** had called **Vivekananda** the "**maker of modern India**."
- **Associated Organisations:**
 - He was the **chief disciple of the 19th-century mystic Ramakrishna Paramhansa** and established the **Ramakrishna Mission in 1897**.
Ramakrishna Mission is an organization which works in the area of value-based education, culture, health, women's empowerment, youth and tribal welfare and relief and rehabilitation.
 - In 1899, he **established the Belur Math**, which became his permanent abode.
- **Death:** He **died at Belur Math in 1902**. Belur Math, **located in West Bengal**, is the headquarters of Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission.

Source: HT
