



News Analysis (31 Jul, 2021)

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Severe Acute Malnutrition in India

Why in News

According to the **Women and Child Development Ministry**, **more than 9.2 lakh children** (from six months to six years) in India were '**severely acute malnourished**' till **November, 2020**.

It underscores concerns that the **Covid-19 pandemic** could exacerbate the health and nutrition crisis among the poorest of the poor.

Key Points

- **About Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) :**

WHO's Definition: The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** defines 'severe acute malnutrition' (SAM) by very **low weight-for-height** or a **mid-upper arm circumference less than 115 mm**, or by the presence of **nutritional oedema**.

- Children suffering from SAM are **nine times more likely to die** in case of diseases due to their weakened immune system.
- **Nutritional oedema: Abnormal fluid retention in the tissues** (oedema) resulting especially from lack of protein in states of starvation or malnutrition.
Oedema can, however, occur in starvation even if the blood levels of albumin are not lowered.

- **Related Findings:**

- **Number of SAM Children (National scenario):** An estimated 9,27,606 'severely acute malnourished' children from six months to six years were identified across the country till November 2020.
- **States with SAM Children:**
 - The **most in Uttar Pradesh (3,98,359) followed by Bihar (2,79,427)**.
Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are **also home to the highest number of children** in the country.
 - **Maharashtra (70,665) > Gujarat (45,749) > Chhattisgarh (37,249) > Odisha (15,595) > Tamil Nadu (12,489) > Jharkhand (12,059) > Andhra Pradesh (11,201) > Telangana (9,045) > Assam (7,218) > Karnataka (6,899) > Kerala (6,188) > Rajasthan (5,732)**.
- **States with No Severely Malnourished Children:** Ladakh, Lakshadweep, Nagaland, Manipur and Madhya Pradesh reported no severely malnourished children.

- **National Family Health Survey Findings:**

- The **National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4)**, 2015-16 suggests that prevalence of severe acute malnutrition among children was at 7.4%.
- **NFHS-5** suggests that **malnutrition** increased among children in 2019-20 from 2015-16 in 22 states and UTs.
 - **Stunted:** Around 13 states and UTs out of the 22 surveyed **recorded a rise in percentage of children under five years** who are stunted in comparison to 2015-16.

Stunting is when a child has a low height for their age, usually due to malnutrition, repeated infections, and/or poor social stimulation
 - **Wasted:** 12 states and UTs recorded **a rise in the percentage** of children under five years who are wasted.

Wasting is low weight for their height among children, reflecting acute undernutrition. It is a strong predictor of mortality among children under five years of age.
 - **Severely wasted and underweight:** 16 states and UTs **recorded a rise** in the percentage of children under five years who are severely wasted and underweight in 2019-20.

- **Impact of Covid-19:**

- Covid-19 is pushing millions into poverty, reducing incomes of many more and disproportionately affecting the economically disadvantaged, who are also most vulnerable to malnutrition and food insecurities.
- The pandemic-prompted lockdowns disrupted essential services, such as supplementary feeding under **Anganwadi centres, mid-day meals, immunisation, and micro-nutrient supplementation** which exacerbated malnutrition.

Steps Taken by Government

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** The government of India has launched the **National Nutrition Mission (NNM)** or **POSHAN Abhiyaan** to ensure a “**Malnutrition Free India**” by 2022.
- **Anemia Mukt Bharat Abhiyan:** Launched in 2018, the mission aims at accelerating the annual rate of **decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points**.
- **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme:** It aims to **improve nutritional levels among school children** which also has a direct and positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance in schools.
- **The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** It aims to ensure food and nutrition security for the most vulnerables through its associated schemes and programmes, making access to food a legal right.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Rs.6,000 is transferred directly to the bank accounts of pregnant women for availing better facilities for their delivery.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme:** It was launched in 1975 and the scheme aims at providing food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.

Note: The **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2: Zero hunger)** aims to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030, making sure all people – especially children – have access to sufficient and nutritious food all year round.

Way Forward

- **Home Based and Facility Based Care:** Covid-19 could further exacerbate the situation with **shrinking food diversity** and **low intake combined** with episodes of missing food at times. The solutions have to be both **home-based care** and **facility-based care**.
- **Build Linkages:** The severe Acute Malnutrition has a direct connection with food availability, utilisation and awareness, the immediate task is to appropriately **build linkages with the government systems** to ensure families receive not just ration/food, but required education and support.

- **Strengthen Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs):** The need to strengthen Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs) which are meant to treat SAM cases.
 - There are studies that suggest that NRCs have not been very effective.
 - In many cases, it has been seen that SAM cases have been discharged early because either the centre could not continue to keep the same case for a continued period, or the caregivers could not stay for a longer duration at the facility, or there was simply not enough supervision by the higher ups.
- **Designing Customised Menus:** There is the need for designing customised menus in consultation with experts for SAM cases and formulating guidelines.
- **Segregation of SAM Cases:** For administrative and operational convenience, as well as for better accountability, SAM cases could be segregated into smaller units.

The **responsibility to manage/coordinate and monitor smaller units** could be handed over to independent entities such as medical colleges, local NGOs, women's collectives – under the overall guidance of the District/Block health staff.
- **Role of Anganwadi Centres:** The identification of SAM children was done by over 10 lakh Anganwadi centres from across the country.

The anganwadis have to **become much more functional** and if the possibility of children reaching anganwadis is going to become hard because of lockdowns, then the anganwadis need to reach the children.

Source: TH

Creamy Layer: OBC

Why in News

Recently, some MPs have raised the issue of defining **Creamy Layer** in the ongoing **Monsoon Session** of Parliament.

Further, the **Justice Rohini committee** is considering the sub-categorization of OBC quota and if any particular community or group of communities are benefiting most from the OBC quota and how to iron out anomalies.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - Based on the recommendation of the **Second Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission)**, the government in August, 1990 had notified 27% reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs) in vacancies in civil posts and services that are to be filled on direct recruitment.
 - After this was challenged, the Supreme Court in November, 1992 (**Indira Sawhney case**) upheld 27% reservation for OBCs, subject to exclusion of the creamy layer.
- **Definition:**
 - It is a concept that sets a threshold within which OBC reservation benefits are applicable.
 - While there is a 27% quota for OBCs in government jobs and higher educational institutions, those falling within the “**creamy layer**” (various categories based on income and parents' rank) cannot get the benefits of this quota.
 - Other **than the income limit, the current definition of the creamy layer remains the same.**

- **Categories defined under Creamy Layer:**
 - **Income beyond 8 lakh:**
 - For those not in government, the current threshold is an income of Rs 8 lakh per year.
 - The income threshold is supposed to be raised every three years. It was last revised in 2017 (more than three years now).
 - **Parents' rank:** For children of government employees, the threshold is based on their parents' rank and not income.
 - For instance, an individual is considered to fall within the creamy layer if either of his or her parents is in a constitutional post; if either parent has been directly recruited in Group-A; or if both parents are in Group-B services.
 - If the parents enter Group-A through promotion before the age of 40, their children will be in the creamy layer.
 - Children of a Colonel or higher-ranked officer in the Army, and children of officers of similar ranks in the Navy and Air Force, too, come under the creamy layer. There are other criteria as well.
- **Government's Proposal:**
 - A draft Cabinet note has stated that the creamy layer will be determined on all income, including salary calculated for income tax, but not agriculture income.
 - The government is considering a consensus on Rs 12 lakh, whereas Parliament Committee has recommended to raise upto 15 lakh per year.

It also **recommended excluding salary and agricultural revenue** while calculating the annual income ceiling for the creamy layer category of OBCs

Source: IE

Menace of Manual Scavenging

Why in News

Recently, the centre has claimed that no deaths due to manual scavenging have been reported in the past five years.

- However, according to the **National Convener of the Safai Karmachari Andolan**, 472 manual scavenging deaths across the country were recorded between 2016 and 2020, and 26 so far in 2021.

Safai Karmachari Andolan is a **movement for elimination of manual scavenging**.
- **Article 21 of the Constitution** guarantees '**Right to Life**' and that also with **dignity**. This right is available to **both citizens and non-citizens**.

Key Points

- **Manual Scavenging:**

Manual scavenging is defined as "the removal of human excrement from public streets and dry latrines, cleaning septic tanks, gutters and sewers".

- **Reasons for the Prevalence:**

- **Indifferent Attitude:** A number of independent surveys have talked about the continued reluctance on the part of state governments to admit that the practice prevails under their watch.
- **Issues due to Outsourcing:** Many times local bodies outsource sewer cleaning tasks to private contractors. However, many of them fly-by-night operators, do not maintain proper rolls of sanitation workers.
 - In case after case of workers being asphyxiated to death, these contractors have denied any association with the deceased.
- **Social Issue:** The practice is **driven by caste, class and income divides**.
 - It is linked to India's caste system where so-called lower castes are expected to perform this job.
 - In **1993**, India **banned the employment of people as manual scavengers** (The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993), however, the stigma and discrimination associated with it still linger on.
 - This makes it difficult for liberated manual scavengers to secure alternative livelihoods.

- **Steps Taken:**

- **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (Amendment) Bill, 2020:**
 - It proposes to completely mechanise sewer cleaning, introduce ways for 'on-site' protection and provide compensation to manual scavengers in case of sewer deaths.
 - It will be an amendment to **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**.
 - It is **still awaiting cabinet approval**.
- **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013:**
 - Superseding the 1993 Act, the 2013 Act goes beyond prohibitions on dry latrines, and outlaws all manual excrement cleaning of insanitary latrines, open drains, or pits.
- **Prevention of Atrocities Act:**
 - In 1989, the **Prevention of Atrocities Act** became an integrated guard for sanitation workers; more than **90% people employed as manual scavengers belonged to the Scheduled Caste**. This became an important landmark to free manual scavengers from designated traditional occupations.
- **Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge:**
 - It was launched by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on World Toilet Day (19th November)** in 2020.
 - The Government launched this "challenge" for **all states to make sewer-cleaning mechanised by April 2021** — if any human needs to enter a sewer line in case of unavoidable emergency, proper gear and oxygen tanks, etc., are to be provided.
- **'Swachhta Abhiyan App':**
 - It has been developed to **identify and geotag the data of insanitary latrines and manual scavengers** so that the insanitary latrines can be replaced with sanitary latrines and rehabilitate all the manual scavengers to provide dignity of life to them.
- **SC Judgement:** In 2014, a **Supreme Court** order made it **mandatory** for the government to **identify all those who died in sewage work** since 1993 and provide **Rs. 10 lakh each** as compensation to their families.

Way Forward

- **Proper Identification:** States need to accurately enumerate the workers engaged in cleaning toxic sludge.

- **Empowering Local Administration:** With **Swachh Bharat Mission** identified as a top priority area by the **15th Finance Commission** and funds available for smart cities and urban development providing for a strong case to address the problem of manual scavenging.
- **Social Sensitisation:** To address the social sanction behind manual scavenging, it is required first to acknowledge and then understand how and why manual scavenging continues to be embedded in the caste system.
- **Need For a Stringent Law:** If a law creates a statutory obligation to provide sanitation services on the part of state agencies, it will create a situation in which the rights of these workers will not hang in the air.

Source: TH

Reforms Based and Results Linked Scheme: DISCOMs

Why in News

This Union cabinet has recently approved a **Reforms-based and Results-linked, Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme**.

- The scheme requires that DISCOMs (Power Distribution Companies) submit **detailed project reports (DPRs)** on how they plan to reduce their operational losses to avail of funding.
- Initially, the preliminary timeline given to discoms was 31st October 2021. It is now **extended to 31st December 2021**.

Key Points

- **Scheme Objectives:**
 - Reduction of **AT&C** (aggregate technical & commercial) losses to pan-India levels of **12-15%** by 2024-25.
 - Reduction of **ACS-ARR gap** (i.e. between the total cost of electricity and revenues generated from supplying power) to zero by 2024-25.
 - Developing **institutional capabilities** for modern discoms.
 - Improvement in the **quality, reliability, and affordability of power supply** to consumers through a financially sustainable and operationally efficient Distribution Sector.
 - Implementation of the Scheme would be based on the **action plan worked out for each state** rather than a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

- **Features:**

- **Conditional Financial Assistance:** The Scheme seeks to improve the **operational efficiencies and financial sustainability of all DISCOMs** (excluding Private Sector DISCOMs) by providing conditional financial assistance to DISCOMs for strengthening of supply infrastructure.
- **Subsuming of Various Schemes:** It is proposed that the currently ongoing approved projects under the following Schemes would be subsumed:
 - **Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS)**
 - **Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY)**
 - **Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY)**
 - **Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) 2015** for the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh.
- **Solarization of Agricultural Feeders:** The Scheme has a major focus on improving electricity supply for the farmers and for providing daytime electricity to them through solarization of agricultural feeders.

This Scheme converges with the **PM-KUSUM Scheme**, which aims to solarize all feeders, and provide avenues for additional income to farmers.
- **Smart Metering:** A key feature of the Scheme is to enable consumer empowerment by way of prepaid **Smart metering** to be implemented in **Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) mode**.
 - **Smart meters** would allow consumers to **monitor their electricity consumption on a routine basis** instead of monthly basis, which can help them in usage of electricity as per their own needs and in terms of the resources available.
 - It is proposed to install approximately **10 crore prepaid Smart Meters by December, 2023 in the first phase**.
- **Leveraging Technology: Artificial Intelligence** would be leveraged to prepare system generated energy accounting reports.

This will enable DISCOMs to take informed decisions on **loss reduction, demand forecasting, Time of Day (ToD) tariff, Renewable Energy (RE) Integration** and for other predictive analysis.

Source: IE

Credit Growth for MSMEs

Why in News

According to a report from **TransUnion Cibil and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)**, there has been a growth in the credit outstanding amount of **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME)** sector to Rs 20.21 lakh crore, with a **year-on-year growth rate of 6.6%**.

Even according to the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, credit growth to micro and small industries accelerated to **6.4% in June 2021**, compared to a contraction of **2.9% in 2020**.

Small Industries Development Bank of India

SIDBI set up in April 1990 under an Act of Indian Parliament, acts as the **Principal Financial Institution for Promotion, Financing and Development** of the MSME sector as well as for coordination of functions of institutions engaged in similar activities.

TransUnion CIBIL Limited

It is a **credit information company operating in India**. It maintains credit files on 600 million individuals and 32 million businesses.

Key Points

- **Loans to MSMEs:**

In **Financial Year (FY)** 2021, the country disbursed loans worth Rs 9.5 lakh crore to MSME sector, higher than preceding year of Rs 6.8 lakh crore in FY 2020.

- **Outstanding Credit:**

MSME credit outstanding has grown by 6.6% in March'21, with the **micro segment growing the fastest at 7.4%**

Micro segment was followed by the **small segment at 6.8% and medium segment at 5.8%**.

- **Sector Wise Analysis:**

- **Agriculture and Allied Activities:**

Credit to agriculture and allied activities continued to perform well, registering an **accelerated growth of 11.4% in June 2021**, compared to 2.4% in June 2020.

- **Industry:**

- Within industry, credit to food processing, gems & jewellery, glass & glassware, leather & leather products, mining & quarrying, paper & paper products, rubber, plastic & their products, and textiles registered **high growth in June 2021**.
- However, credit growth to all engineering, beverages & tobacco, basic metal & metal products, cement & cement products, chemicals & chemical products, construction, infrastructure, petroleum coal products & nuclear fuels and vehicles, vehicle parts & transport equipment **decelerated or contracted**.

- **Services:**

- Credit growth to the **services sector decelerated to 2.9% in June 2021**, from 10.7% in June 2020, mainly **due to contraction in credit growth to commercial real estate, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and tourism, hotels & restaurants**.
- Credit to **trade segment continued to perform well**, registering accelerated growth of 11.1% in June 2021 as compared to 8.1% a year ago.

- **Reason for Growth:**

The rise in credit offtake by MSMEs is due to a host of government initiatives like the **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)** to tackle the economic downturn created by the **Covid pandemic**.

- ECLGS scheme was launched as part of the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package** announced in May 2020 to mitigate the distress caused by coronavirus-induced lockdown, by providing credit to different sectors, especially MSMEs
- It's **objective** was to support small businesses struggling to meet their operational liabilities due to the imposition of a nationwide lockdown.
- Recently, the government has **widened its scope to new sectors**, including hospitality, travel and tourism.

- **Other Initiatives for MSMEs:**

- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation programme (PMEGP)**
- **Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)**
- **A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)**
- **Interest Subvention Scheme for Incremental Credit to MSMEs**
- **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises**
- **CHAMPIONS portal**
- **MSME Samadhan**

What's MSME

Revised Classification applicable w.e.f 1st July 2020			
Composite Criteria: Investment in Plant & Machinery/equipment and Annual Turnover			
Classification	Micro	Small	Medium
Manufacturing Enterprises and Enterprises rendering Services	Investment in Plant and Machinery or Equipment: Not more than Rs.1 crore and Annual Turnover ; not more than Rs. 5 crore	Investment in Plant and Machinery or Equipment: Not more than Rs.10 crore and Annual Turnover ; not more than Rs. 50 crore	Investment in Plant and Machinery or Equipment: Not more than Rs.50 crore and Annual Turnover ; not more than Rs. 250 crore

Source: IE

Operation Blue Freedom: Team CLAW

Why in News

Recently, the Government of India has accorded sanction to **Team CLAW** to lead a team of people with disabilities to scale **Siachen Glacier** and create a **new world record for the largest team of people with disabilities**.

- This is the land world record expedition part of '**Operation Blue Freedom Triple World Records**' being undertaken.
- Triple Elemental World Records is a series of world records being attempted by the team in 2021 of collectives of people with disabilities achieving great feats on land, in air and underwater.

Siachen Glacier

- The Siachen Glacier is located in the **Eastern Karakoram range** in the Himalayas, just northeast of Point NJ9842 where the Line of Control between India and Pakistan ends.
- It is the **Second-Longest glacier** in the World's Non-Polar areas.
Fedchenko Glacier, located in Yazgulem Range, Tajikistan is the **Longest glacier** in the World's Non-Polar areas.
- The Siachen Glacier lies immediately south of the great drainage divide that separates the Eurasian Plate from the Indian subcontinent in the extensively glaciated portion of the Karakoram sometimes called the **"Third Pole"**.
- The Siachen Glacier is part of Ladakh which has now been **converted into a Union Territory**.
- The Siachen Glacier is the world's highest battlefield.
- The entire Siachen Glacier has been under the administration of India since 1984 (**Operation Meghdoot**).



Key Points

- **About the Expedition:**

Initially, a team of **20 people with disabilities** would be selected to undergo training, after which the final expedition team shall be selected.

- Final expedition team (including a minimum of 6 people with disabilities), who will trek from the **Siachen Base Camp to Kumar Post**.
- Kumar post is located at an altitude of about **15,632 feet**.

- **Team CLAW and Operation Blue Freedom:**

- **Team CLAW:** Team CLAW (**Conquer Land Air Water**) is a team of ex-Indian Special Forces commandos.
 - Generally, all are either from **Indian Army Para Commandos** or the Naval **Marine Commandos, also known as the MARCOS**.
 - These veterans have **multiple specialisations** - not just in combat but also in other elite skills such as **skydiving, scuba diving, mountaineering, emergency medical response** and all-terrain survival amongst others.
 - The initiative was **taken by Major Vivek Jacob**, a Para (Special Forces) officer.
- **Operation Blue Freedom:** Operation Blue Freedom is a **social impact venture** aimed at **rehabilitating people with disabilities through adaptive adventure sports**.
 - It aims to **shatter the common perception of pity, charity and inability associated with people with disabilities** and recreate it to **one of dignity, freedom and ability**.
 - Further, their focus is to **'design and implement sustainable large-scale employment solutions'** for people with disabilities, especially in the **'Environment conservation and Sustainability' space**.
 - It was **launched in 2019 by Team CLAW**.
- **CLAW Global:** Team CLAW is in the process of **setting up centres across the globe where-in Special Forces Veterans** and People with Disabilities are merging in action for creating a better life experience, for not only persons with disability but the non-disabled as well.

- **The Disability Problem:**

- Disabilities is an **umbrella term**, covering **impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions**.
 - An impairment is a problem in body function or structure;
 - An activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action;
 - A participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.
- As per **Census 2011**, in India, out of the total population of 121 crore, **about 2.68 crore persons are 'Disabled'** (2.21% of the total population).
 - Out of 2.68 crore, 1.5 crore are males and 1.18 crore are females.
 - Majority (69%) of the disabled population resided in rural areas.
- Globally there are 1 billion people with disabilities, which is 15% of the global population.
- They face a lack of **holistic rehabilitation, inadequate skilling, lack of seamless mobility and lack of suitable employment**.
- These factors combined together largely confined persons with disabilities to their homes, leading to inaccurate awareness on their issues and wrong perceptions about their abilities.
- Thus, their **productive potential is largely untapped** leading to global exclusion from mainstream life.

Programmes/Initiatives for Disabled in India

- **Accessible India Campaign : Creation of Accessible Environment for PwDs**
- **DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme**
- **Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)**
- **National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities (RGMF)**
- **Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016**

Source: TH

Biotech-PRIDE

Why in News

Recently, **Biotech-PRIDE (Promotion of Research and Innovation through Data Exchange)** Guidelines was released by the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology**.

Further, a website of **Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC)** was also launched.

Key Points

- **Biotech-PRIDE Guidelines:**
 - These guidelines envisage to **bridge other existing biological datasets/data centres** with the IBDC, which will be called **Bio-Grid**.
 - This Bio-Grid will be a **National Repository for biological knowledge, information and data**.
 - Also, Bio-Grid will be responsible for **enabling its exchange**, developing measures for **safety, standards and quality for datasets** and establishing detailed **modalities for accessing data**.
 - These guidelines will be implemented through **Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC)**.
 - Currently, **India ranks number 4** amongst the top 20 countries contributing biological databases.

- **Need for Bio-Grid and its Advantages:**

- With a **large population** of over 135 crore and heterogeneous character of the country, India needs its **own exclusive database for Indian research and solutions**.
- This indigenous database will have a huge **enabling mechanism for exchange and adoption of data by young scientists** and researchers for the benefit of Indian citizens.
- Sharing a wide range of large scale data advances the **understanding of the molecular and biological processes**.
 - This will contribute to **human health, agriculture, animal husbandry**, fundamental research and thus will extend to societal benefits.
- Advances in **DNA sequencing** with a steep drop in DNA sequencing cost have enabled government agencies to fund research towards generation of large volumes of biological data in various sectors of **Biosciences**.

Source: PIB

Initiatives to Promote Tribal Culture

Why in News

The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** is administrating the **schemes of “Support of Tribal Research Institute” and “Tribal Festival, Research, Information and Mass Education”** under which various activities to promote tribal culture have been undertaken.

The schemes aim to ensure quality and uniformity in research works, evaluation studies, training, awareness generation among tribals, showcasing of rich tribal heritage including languages, habitats and cultivation and production practices.

Key Points

- **Key Highlights:**

- **Museum for Tribal Freedom Fighters:**
 - To acknowledge the heroic and patriotic deeds of tribal people, the Ministry has sanctioned setting up 10 Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum.
- **Documentation of Indigenous Practices:**
 - Research and documentation of Indigenous practices by tribal healers and medicinal plants, Adivasi Languages, agriculture system, dances and paintings etc.
- **Digital Repository:**
 - To preserve and promote rich tribal cultural heritage and also to create awareness among others, a searchable digital repository has been developed.
- **Funding for Tribal Festivals:**
 - The Ministry gives funding to **TRIFED** (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India) for organizing **Adi Mahotsav** festivals at National level and state level.

- **Other Initiatives Related to Tribals:**

- **Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools:** In the first phase, 250 EMRS schools have been adopted by Microsoft, out of which 50 EMRS schools will be given intensive training and 500 master trainers would be trained.
- **Development of PVTGs:** It covers **75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** for their comprehensive socio-economic development.
- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana:** It is a market-linked tribal entrepreneurship development program for forming clusters of tribal Self Help Groups (SHGs) and strengthening them into Tribal Producer Companies.

TRIFED

- It is a **national-level apex organization** functioning under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- TRIFED acts as a facilitator and service provider for tribes to sell their product.
- TRIFED aims to empower tribal people with knowledge, tools and pool of information so that they can undertake their operations in a more systematic and scientific manner.
- It organises **Tribal Artisan Melas (TAMs)** to identify new artisans and new products at the sourcing level in States/Districts/Villages for expanding the tribal producers base.
- It is also involved in **MSP** for **MFP** and **TRIFOOD** Schemes.

Source: PIB

Amargarh Fort: Rajasthan

Why in News

Amargarh Fort of Jaipur, Rajasthan is at the centre of a conflict between the tribal Meena community and local Hindu groups.

- Members of the **Meena community say the Amargarh Fort was built by a Meena ruler predating Rajput rule** in Jaipur, and has been their holy site for centuries.
- They accused Hindu groups of **trying to appropriate tribal symbols** into the Hindutva fold, and of changing the name of **Amba Mata to Ambika Bhawani**.

Meena Community

- The Meenas, also known as the Meos, or Mewati, are a **tribe and caste inhabiting parts of western and northern India**.
- According to Meena tradition, the **Meenas ruled most of what is now eastern Rajasthan, an area they referred to as "mind-esh"** (country of the Meenas). They **subsequently were replaced by Rajput clans**, the most recent being the Kachhwaha Rajputs who founded the state of Amber, later known as Jaipur.
- The community has substantial clout in Rajasthan. Of the 25 Assembly seats (out of 200) reserved for **Scheduled Tribes (ST)**, most are represented by Meena MLAs.
 - The community is also well represented in the bureaucracy. According to **Census** 2011, STs constitute **13.48% of the state's population**.
 - Due to a scattered population across the state, the **community can influence election outcomes in unreserved seats, too**.

Key Points

- **About:**

- The present form of the Amargarh Fort was given in the **18th century** by **Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II**, founder of Jaipur.
- It has always been believed that **there was some construction at the place before Jai Singh II built the fort.**
- Prior to **Rajput rule by the Kachhwaha dynasty**, Jaipur and its nearby regions were **ruled by Meenas**, who had political control.
- And as claimed by the Meena's the fort was built by a **Meena Sardar from the Nadla gotra, now known as Badgoti Meenas.**

Sardars from the Meena community ruled large parts of Rajasthan till around 1100 AD.

- **Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II (1693-1744):**

- He was a great warrior and astronomer. He came to power at the age of 11 on the death of his **father Maharaja Bishan Singh.**
- He was feudatory of the Mughals and **Aurangazab** conferred the title of Sawai to Jai Singh, meaning one and a quarter, a title that all of Jai Singh's descendants kept.
- He was trained by the best teachers and scholars in **art, science, philosophy and military affairs.**
- Jai Singh's lineage can be traced back to the **Kucchwaha Rajput clan who came to power in the 12th century.**
- He built **Astronomy Observatories** at Delhi, Jaipur, Varanasi, Ujjain and Mathura known as the **Jantar Mantar.**

Jaipur gets its name from him. Recently it has been **declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.**

Source: IE

36th India-Indonesia CORPAT

Why in News

The **36th edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol** (India-Indonesia CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and the Indonesian Navy is being conducted.



Key Points

- **Naval Exercise:**

- To reinforce maritime links, the two navies have been carrying out CORPAT along their **International Maritime Boundary Line since 2002.**
- **Indian Naval Ship (INS) Saryu**, an indigenously built Offshore Patrol Vessel is participating in the 36th edition along with Maritime Patrol Aircraft, to forge strong bonds of friendship across the **Indo Pacific.**

- **Aim:**

- Ensuring **safety and security of shipping and international trade** in the region.
- CORPATs **build up understanding and interoperability between navies** and facilitate institution of measures to prevent and suppress Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, drug trafficking, maritime terrorism, armed robbery and piracy.

- **In Line with SAGAR:**

As part of Government of India's vision of **SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region)**, the Indian Navy has been proactively engaging with countries in the Indian Ocean Region for coordinated patrols, cooperation in **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** surveillance, **passage exercises** and bilateral/multilateral exercises.

The main **objective** is towards enhancing regional maritime security.

- **Other Military Exercises with Indonesia:**

Source: PIB
