Prelim Bits 02-12-2021 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report

- In 2021, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced the Business Responsibility & Sustainability Report (BRSR).
    - BRSR will replace Business Responsibility Reporting (BRR).
- BRSR is a standardised reporting format that will give a **baseline to draw comparison** between Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) goals across companies and sectors.
- BRSR is framed around three aspirations:
    1. Adapting to and mitigating climate change impact,
    2. Inclusive growth and
    3. Transitioning to a sustainable economy.
- BRSR seeks disclosures from **listed entities** on their performance against the 9 principles of the 'National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGBRCs).'
- Disclosures under BRSR have been segregated into 3 sections consisting of 9 principles in total):
    1. General disclosures,
    2. Management disclosures and
    3. Principle-wise performance disclosures.
- The reporting under each principle is divided into
    1. Essential indicators (to be reported on a mandatory basis),
    2. Leadership indicators (to be reported on a voluntary basis).
- **Applicability** - Filing of BRSR is voluntary for the financial year 2021-22 for the top 1000 listed companies (by market capitalization).
- But filing of BRSR shall be mandatory from the FY 2022-2023.

Importance of Disclosure

- Investors as well as other stakeholders place the non-financial disclosures paramount to the financial disclosures of an industry.
- While financial disclosures are mandatory in nature, non-financial ones are reported voluntarily and on increased demand by stakeholders.
- Several reporting standards are accepted internationally for reporting non-financial parameters. These include,
    1. Global Reporting Initiative (GRI),
    2. Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB),
    3. Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), among others.
- Such disclosures help entities identify risks, opportunities and possible trajectories for sustainable and inclusive growth.
- These disclosures may help 'strengthen the climate commitments, accelerate decarbonisation and attract green investment' for businesses.

Reference

1. https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/climate-change/brsr-disclosure-pathway-to-green-compa

nies-indian-industry-lobby-at-cop26-80251
2. https://www.sebi.gov.in/legal/circulars/may-2021/business-responsibility-and-sustainability-reporting-by-listed-entities_50096.html

Cervical Cancer

On Day of Action for Cervical Cancer Elimination, the WHO said that 9 out of 10 women who die of cervical cancer live in low- & middle-income countries.

> These countries also have low rates of vaccination against the human papilloma virus (HPV), which causes the cancer.

- Cervical cancer develops in a woman's cervix (the entrance to the uterus from the vagina).
- It is **preventable and curable**, as long as it is detected early and managed effectively. Yet it is the fourth most common cancer in women.
- **Causes** - Almost all cervical cancer cases (99%) are caused due to high-risk HPV, a highly common virus transmitted through sexual contact.
- Other risk factors include many sexual partners, early sexual activity, other sexually transmitted infections, a weakened immune system, smoking, exposure to miscarriage prevention drug, etc.
- **Symptoms -** Vaginal bleeding after intercourse, between periods or after menopause, and pelvic pain or pain during intercourse
- Watery, bloody vaginal discharge that may be heavy and have a foul odor
- **Prevention** - Effective primary (HPV vaccination) and secondary prevention approaches (screening for, and treating precancerous lesions) will prevent most cervical cancer cases.

Global Strategy for Cervical Cancer Elimination

- In 2020, the WHO adopted this strategy in order to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem.
- To eliminate cervical cancer, all countries must reach and maintain an incidence rate of below four per 100 000 women.
- Achieving that goal rests on 3 key pillars and their corresponding targets:
    1. Vaccination: 90% of girls fully vaccinated with the HPV vaccine by the age of 15;
    2. Screening: 70% of women screened using a high-performance test by the age of 35, and again by the age of 45;
    3. Treatment: 90% of women with pre-cancer treated and 90% of women with invasive cancer managed.
- Each country should meet the **90-70-90 targets by 2030** to get on the path to eliminate cervical cancer within the next century.

Reference

1. https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/cervical-cancer-90-deaths-in-low-and-middle-income-countries-with-least-access-to-hpv-vaccine-screening-80248
2. https://www.who.int/health-topics/cervical-cancer
3. https://www.who.int/initiatives/cervical-cancer-elimination-initiative
4. https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cervical-cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-20352501

Mid-Year Trends Report 2021

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released the Mid-Year Trends Report 2021.

> '**Forcibly displaced populations**' encompass refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people and Venezuelans displaced abroad.
>
> It includes refugees and other displaced people not covered by UNHCR's mandate and excludes other categories such as returnees and non-displaced stateless people.
>
> **Internally displaced person** is someone who is forced to leave their home but who remains within their country's borders.
>
> They don't fall under the legal definitions of a refugee.

- According to the report, 50.9 people were internally displaced across 33 countries due to conflict and violence in the first 6 months of 2021.
- The trend of rising forced displacement continued from 2020 into 2021, with global numbers now exceeding 84 million, an increase from 82.4 million at the end of 2020.
    - This resulted largely from internal displacement.
- Much of the new internal displacement was in Africa.
- **Causes** - Violence, persecution and human rights violations, effects of climate change, COVID-19, poverty, food insecurity, etc
- The lethal mix of the above factors has compounded the humanitarian plight of the displaced, most of whom are hosted in developing regions.
- **Returning** - Returning home in safety and dignity based on a free and informed choice is the preferred solution for the world's refugees.
- While the number of returnees did increase compared to the same period of 2020, it remained well below pre-COVID-19 levels during the same period of 2019.

Reference

1. https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/africa/nearly-51-million-internally-displaced-in-33-countries-in-first-half-of-2021-un-80198
2. https://www.unhcr.org/mid-year-trends.html

Kyhytysuka sachicarum

An international team of researchers has discovered a new marine reptile named Kyhytysuka sachicarum.

- It is a new species of Cretaceous hyper-carnivorous ichthyosaur.
- It evolved a unique dentition that allowed it to eat large prey; where as other ichthyosaurs had small teeth for feeding on small prey.
    - The dentary is the longest bone of the species.
- This species was mostly found in shallow waters.
- It was named as Kyhytysuka which translates to 'the one that cuts with something sharp' in an indigenous language from the region in central Colombia where the fossil was found.
- It was named so as to honour the ancient Muisca culture that existed in that region for

millennia.

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/what-is-kyhytysuka-sachicarum-7649998/
2. http://www.sci-news.com/paleontology/kyhytysuka-sachicarum-10319.html

Update on Global Fuel Economy Initiative

The International Energy Agency's (IEA) has given an update on the Global Fuel Economy Initiative (GFEI) 2021.

Fuel economy measures the distance a vehicle can travel per unit of a particular fuel, such as kilometre per litre.

It is a key indicator of greenhouse gas and pollutant emissions from the use of cars.

- GFEI 2021 report presents the latest update to the Global Fuel Economy Initiative's biannual benchmarking report on light-duty vehicle sales.
- The report tracks the progress of fuel economy of new light-duty vehicles from 2005 to 2019.
- According to GFEI 2021, the global goal to halve the fuel consumption of new light-duty vehicles by 2030 from 2005 levels is stalling.
- The average rated fuel consumption of new light-duty vehicles fell by only 0.9% between 2017 and 2019.
- The 3 major car markets - China, the European Union and the US - accounted for 60% of global sales of light-duty vehicles in 2019, which totalled 90 million, down 7% from 2017.
- Total improvements are lower than the 2.8% yearly fuel economy improvements needed to meet the target.
- A number of factors were responsible for the slowing pace of improvement between 2017 and 2019. These included,
    a. Stagnating fuel economy standards in the US and the EU up to 2019
    b. The rising market share of SUVs, which can use almost one-third more fuel than a medium-sized car
    c. The rising cost of squeezing out further efficiency gains from mature technologies
    d. The slow adoption of electric cars to compensate for larger vehicles
- The report says that for internal combustion engine cars, most emissions occur at their tailpipe ('tank to wheel'), while less than 20% of overall emissions are related to the production of their fuels ('well to tank').
- By contrast, for battery electric and fuel cell electric vehicles, almost all the emissions are incurred in producing and delivering the electricity or hydrogen on which they run.
- **Battery electric vehicles had the lowest emissions** in 2019, followed by plug-in hybrids and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles.
- Hybrid vehicles have the lowest well-to-wheel emissions among vehicles with internal combustion engines using gasoline, diesel or compressed natural gas.
- Fuel consumption should fall 4.3% per year on average from 2019 to 2030, to halve the fuel consumption of new light-duty vehicles.
    - This is triple the average annual pace of improvement since 2005.

Global Fuel Economy Initiative

- The Global Fuel Economy Initiative is collaboration between the UNEP, IEA, the University of California, International Council on Clean Transportation, International Transport Forum and the FIA Foundation.
- GFEI promotes fuel efficiency in cars and light duty vans, through the adoption of the cost effective fuel efficiency technologies.
- The objective of the GFEI is to help stabilize greenhouse gas emissions from the global light duty vehicle fleet through a **50% improvement of vehicle fuel efficiency worldwide by 2050**.
- GFEI promotes the introduction of cleaner, more energy efficient vehicles in developing and transitional countries.
- It offers support to governments to develop fuel economy policies.

Reference

1. https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/pollution/target-to-halve-global-fuel-consumption-by-2030-is-stalling-iea-report-80098
2. https://www.globalfueleconomy.org/about-gfei
3. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=7519
4. https://www.iea.org/reports/global-fuel-economy-initiative-2021

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