Prelim Bits 09-08-2018

World Network of Biosphere Reserves

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- The Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in Sikkim has been included in the UNESCO designated World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).
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- The decision was taken at the 30th Session of International Coordinating Council (ICC) of Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO held at Palembang, Indonesia.
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- It has become the 11th Biosphere Reserve from India to be included in WNBR.
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- The core zone of Khangchendzonga National Park was designated a World Heritage Site in 2016 under the ‘mixed’ category.
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- The biosphere reserve is one of the highest ecosystems in the world, reaching elevations of 1, 220 metres above sea-level.
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n\ **State** \n	n\ **List Of Biosphere Reserves** \n
n\ Himachal Pradesh \n	n\ Cold Desert \n
n\ **Uttrakhand** \n	n\ **Nanda Devi *** \n
n\ **Sikkim** \n	n\ **Khangchendzonga *** \n
n\ Arunachal Pradesh \n	n\ Dehang-Debang \n

n\ Assam \n	n\ Manas \n
n\ Assam \n	n\ Dibru-Saikhowa \n
n\ **Meghalaya** \n	n\ **Nokrek *** \n
n\ Madhya Pradesh \n	n\ Panna \n
n\ **Madhya Pradesh** \n	n\ **Pachmarhi *** \n
n\ **Madhya Pradesh-Chattisgarh** \n	n\ **Achanakmar-Amarkantak *** \n
n\ Gujarat \n	n\ Kachchh \n
n\ **Odisha** \n	n\ **Similipal *** \n
n\ **West Bengal** \n	n\ **Sundarban *** \n
n\ Andhra Pradesh \n	n\ Seshachalam \n
n\ **Karnataka-Tamil Nadu-Kerala** \n	n\ **Agasthyamala *** \n
n\ **Tamil Nadu-Kerala** \n	n\ **Nilgiri *** \n
n\ **Tamil Nadu** \n	n\ **Gulf of Mannar *** \n
n\ **Andaman & Nicobar Island** \n	n\ **Great Nicobar *** \n

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* *Highlighted ones are included in World Network of Biosphere Reserves*

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Biosphere Reserves

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- Biosphere Reserve is an international designation by UNESCO for representative parts of natural and cultural landscapes extending over large area of terrestrial or coastal/ marine ecosystems or a combination thereof.
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- They are living examples of how human beings and nature can co-exist while respecting each other’s needs.
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- India is a signatory to the landscape approach supported by UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme.
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- Biosphere Reserve Programme is being implemented by Government of India since 1986.
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- The financial assistance under the programme is given in 90:10 ratio to the North Eastern Region States and 3 Himalayan states and in the ratio of 60:40 to other states.
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- The State Government prepares the Management Action Plan which is approved and monitored by Central MAB Committee.
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Niryat Mitra

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- It is a mobile app launched by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
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- It provides wide range of information required to undertake international trade.
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- The information includes policy provisions for export and import, applicable GST rate, available export incentives, tariff, preferential tariff.
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- ITC (HS) code refers to Indian Trade Clarification (ITC) and are based on Harmonized System (HS) of Coding.
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- It was adopted in India for import-export operations.
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- This app works internally to map the ITC HS code of other countries with

that of India and provides all the required data without the users bothering about the HS code of any country.
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Ease of Living Index

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- It is an initiative of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to help cities assess their liveability vis-à-vis global and national benchmarks.
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- It ranks 111 cities based on four pillars namely Institutional, Social, Economic and Physical.
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- It is based on Ease of Living assessment standards which are closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
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- It encourage cities to move towards an ‘outcome-based’ approach to urban planning and management.
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- It is going to be launched as part of Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) and Swachh Survekshan 2019.
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Swachh Manch

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- It is a web-based platform which aims to bring together every stakeholder contributing to the Swachh Bharat Mission under a common platform.
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- It will allow stakeholders to create/invite/participate in volunteering opportunities around neighborhoods.
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- It will enable uploads of pictorial evidence of citizens and organizations participating in the initiatives as acknowledgement of their efforts and contributions to the cause of ‘swachhata’.
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- It will also be integrated with the existing Swachhata App to act as a citizens’ grievance redressal platform.
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- It is going to be launched as part of Swachh Survekshan 2019.

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Maize Pest

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- An invasive agricultural pest Fall Armyworm (Spodoptera frugiperda) was discovered in Karnataka by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research.
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- It is a major maize pest in North America and it arrived in Africa in 2016.
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- It has spread to Central and Western Africa in 2016 and has proved very hard to control.
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- It prefers Maize, but can feed on 80 species of plants, including rice, sorghum, millet, sugarcane and cotton.
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- The recent attack in Karnataka is the first report of the pest in Asia. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are at immediate risk.
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- India's tropical climate could allow the pest to thrive.
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- It can be controlled with insecticides, through natural enemies or by inter-cropping.
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NRI and RTI

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- The central government has recently informed the Lok Sabha that NRI cannot file RTI applications to seek governance-related information from the Central government departments.
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- Click here to know more about RTI.
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Source: The Hindu, PIB

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