Prelim Bits 10-01-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Aspirational Block Programme

The Prime Minister launched the Aspirational Block Programme at 2nd National Conference of Chief Secretaries.

- The Aspirational Blocks Programme is on the lines of the Aspirational District Programme (ADP).
- The ADP was launched in 2018 and covers 112 districts across the country.
- The ADP was aimed at developing backward districts across the nation.
- The Aspirational District model will now be taken up to the block level in the form of Aspirational Block Programme.

The Centre had announced its intention to launch Aspirational Block initiative in the Union Budget 2022-23.

- The Aspirational Block Programme (ABP) is aimed at improving performance of blocks lagging on various development parameters.
- The programme will cover 500 districts across 31 states and Union Territories initially.
- Over half of these blocks are in 6 states -

1. Uttar Pradesh (68 blocks)
2. Bihar (61)
3. Madhya Pradesh (42)
4. Jharkhand (34)
5. Odisha (29)
6. West Bengal (29)

- ABP will enable holistic development in those areas that require added assistance.
- The focus area will also be more specific thus ensuring greater attention to detail.

References

1. PIB - PM addresses 2nd National Conference of Chief Secretaries
2. Indian Express - PM launches Aspirational Block Programme

Floatovoltaics

5-megawatt plant is set to foray into Singareni Thermal Power Plant, the floating solar power system established in the reservoir at Pegadapalli in Mancherial district, Telangana.

- Floating solar plants or floating photovoltaics (FPV) are called floatovoltaics.

- Floatovoltaics are panel structures that are installed on water bodies like lakes, basins, and reservoirs instead of on solid structures like a roof or terraces.

Covering 10% of the world's hydropower reservoirs with 'floatovoltaics' would install electrical capacity equivalent to that provided by all electricity-generating fossil fuel plants in operation worldwide.

Benefits

- They do not take up much land which can be used for other purposes.
- The water's cooling effect makes them more efficient than land-based ones.
- They don't interfere with desert ecosystems.
- They keep precious water from evaporating.
- They reduce algal blooming.

References

1. The Hindu - Floating solar power can help generate more electricity
2. Economic Times - Are floatovoltaics the future of solar power?

Ganga Vilas

The privately-operated luxurious three-deck cruise ship MV Ganga Vilas is the World's longest river cruise.

- MV Ganga Vilas is the world's longest river cruise from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh to Dibrugarh in Assam via Bangladesh.
- **Ship** - The MV Ganga Vilas vessel is 62 meters in length, 12 meters in width and comfortably sails with a draft of 1.4 meters.
- It has three decks, 18 suites on board with a capacity of 36 tourists, with all the amenities for the tourists.
- It is equipped with pollution-free mechanisms and noise control technologies for sustainability.
- **Cruise** - The luxury cruise will cover a distance of more than 3,200 km across 27 river systems.
- The cruise will pass through 5 states in India (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Assam) and Bangladesh.
- The 52 day cruise will cover 50 tourist spots including the World Heritage Sights, National Parks, river Ghats, and major cities like Patna, Kolkata, Dhaka and Guwahati.
- **Significance** - It is a part of the plan to rejuvenate inland waterways.
- It unlocks the untapped potential of river tourism in the country.
- The sector would generate employment opportunities in the hinterland.

In India, 8 river cruise vessels are operational between Kolkata and Varanasi while cruise movement is also operation on National Waterways 2 (Brahmaputra).

References

1. PIB - World's longest river cruise 'Ganga Vilas'
2. The Hindu - World's longest river cruise from Varanasi to Dibrugarh
3. Indian Express - PM Modi to flag off MV Ganga Vilas

Cyber threat predictions Report 2023

Security solutions firm Barracuda has shared its cyber threat predictions for 2023.

- In 2023, organisations need to be ready to be targeted by every kind of cyber threat, regardless of their size or industry sector.
- Against the backdrop of geopolitical conflicts, some of the top cyber threat trends that organisations need to be ready for in 2023 are
    - Ransomware
    - Zero-Day Vulnerability
    - Supply Chain attacks
    - Credential theft
    - Exploitation of vulnerabilities in IoTs
    - Exploitation of authentication methods
- **Attack Surfaces -** The increase in the adoption of cloud-based and software-as-a-service offerings with remote work continuing, will increase the number of potential attack surfaces.
- **Ransomware** – Organisations will experience an increased frequency of ransomware attacks with new tactics and with increased use of wiperware.
- Targeted ransomware against individuals from their social media account will also increase.
- Ransomware-as-a-service business models are taking off and a new generation of smaller and smarter gangs are likely to become more prevalent.
- Wiperware attacks emanating from Russia will likely spill over into other countries with continued geopolitical tensions.

  Wiperware is a ransomware which ensures data destruction upon completion of the task.

- **Zero-Day Vulnerabilities -** More zero-day vulnerabilities are also expected to take place with close to 21,000 Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVEs) being registered in 2022.
- While many of these were classed as "critical" and many were actively exploited by attackers.
- **Credential Theft -** These credentials open the door for remote access, email and corporate web applications storing customer data.
- **Authentication Methods** - Multifactor authentication (MFA) and TOTP (time-based one-time passwords) are increasingly susceptible to social engineering cyberattacks.

- Impersonation techniques, spear phishing attacks and multifactor authentication (MFA) fatigue attacks
- **MFA fatigue attack** - A multi-factor authentication (MFA) fatigue attack is also known as MFA Bombing or MFA Spamming.
- MFA fatigue attack is a social engineering cyberattack strategy where attackers repeatedly push second-factor authentication requests to the target victim's email, phone, or registered devices.

References

1. The Hindu - Increase in ransomware top cyber threats for 2023

Oppana

A huge enthusiastic audience gathered to watch Oppana, a big crowd-puller of the Kerala School Kalolsavam.

- Oppana is a traditional song and dance performance popular among the Mappila community of Malabar.
- It is commonly performed at various festive occasions like weddings, ceremonies held to herald puberty and so on.
- It is also performed on the occasion of a Maarkkakalyanam, a Vayassariyikkal, and a Naalppathukali.

The word Oppana is believed to have originated from the Arabic word 'Afna'.

- **Types** - Although there are separate types of Oppana for both men and women, the female version is the most popular.
- **Styles** - There are two styles of singing in the Oppana -
    - Oppana chaayal
    - Oppana murukkam
- In the Oppana chaayal, the singers do not clap their hands to the beat of the song whereas in the parts of the song which incorporates the murukkam, clapping accompanies the singing.
- Usually, an Oppana performance starts and ends with chaayal.
- **Performance** - The bride, dressed in traditional colourful attire would be seated in the middle, and around her dancers sing and dance teasing her about the impending nuptial bliss.
- Harmonium, tambourine, ilathalam (cymbals) and tabla are the instrumental accompaniments.

References

1. The Hindu - Oppana: Kerala School Kalolsavam 2023
2. Kerala Culture - Oppana



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