Prelim Bits 15-05-2018

Bengal florican

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- The critically endangered Bengal florican use not just protected grasslands but agricultural fields, too.
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- It is also called as Bengal Bustard.
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- Bengal floricans which are fewer than 1,000 adult remain in the world in two very fragmented populations.
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- One of them is in the grasslands of the terai, the fertile foothills of the Himalayas.
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- The other area is around Cambodia and Vietnam.
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- It inhabits lowland dry, or seasonally inundated natural and semi-natural grasslands.
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- The grasslands are often interspersed with scattered scrub or patchy open forest.
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- It is under the CITES appendix 1.
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Merchandise Export from India Scheme

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- The Director General of Foreign Trade has said that the rates enhanced under the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) would continue.
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- It seeks to promote export of notified goods manufactured/ produced in India.
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- MEIS is a major export promotion scheme of GOI implemented by the

Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
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- The Five different schemes for rewarding merchandise exports with different kinds of duty scrip that were merged under this scheme are
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1. Focus Product Scheme (FPS)
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2. Focus Market Scheme (FMS)
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3. Market Linked Focus Product Scheme (MLFPS)
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4. Agri. Infrastructure incentive scheme
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5. Vishesh Krishi Gramin Upaj Yojna (VKGUY)
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- MEIS under Foreign Trade Policy of India (FTP 2015-20) is one of the two schemes introduced in Foreign Trade Policy of India 2015-20.
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- The other being the SEIS, Service Exports from India Scheme.
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Space Gardening

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- NASA has turned to professional botanists and novice gardeners, even high school students, to help them practice space gardening as it will be crucial for the next generation of space explorers.
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- Necessary nutrients, like vitamins C and K, break down over time in freeze-dried foods which are used in space exploration.
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- Astronauts are increasingly vulnerable to infections, poor blood clotting, cancer and heart disease without these necessary vitamins.
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- The first portable growing box for space, equipped with LED lights, called Veggie, was tested at the orbiting outpost in 2014.
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- Also NASA has enlisted 15,000 student botanists from 150 schools to grow plants in space-like conditions in their own classrooms.
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- Using trays rigged with lights that mimic the grow boxes used in space; students must tend to the plants and record data on their progress, which eventually gets shared with NASA.
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Green Skill Development Program

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- The Union Environment Ministry launched its full fledged Green Skill Development Program (GSDP).
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- The Ministry has taken up an initiative for skill development in the environment and forest sector.
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- It is to enable India's youth to get gainful employment and/or self employment and the program is called the Green Skill Development Program (GSDP).
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- It aims to train over 5.5 lakh workers in environment and forest sectors in the country through 30 courses by 2021.
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- The pilot project of GSDP was launched in 2017 for skilling Biodiversity Conservationists and Para-taxonomists spread over 9 bio-geographic regions of the country.
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- MoEF&CC is utilizing the vast network and expertise of Environmental Information System (ENVIS) hubs and Resource Partners (RPs).
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- The program endeavors to develop green skilled workers having technical knowledge and commitment to sustainable development.
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- It will help in the attainment of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs).
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Mountaineering Expedition to Mt. Bhagirathi-II

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- Indian Army Women Officers' Mountaineering Expedition to Mt. Bhagirathi-II (6512 metres) consisting of nine women officers, was flagged off recently.
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- The expedition aims at encouraging women in the field of adventure where dauntless courage, will-power and determination is put to test.
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- The team also plans to set a new world record of practicing Yoga at 21000 ft on the occasion of Yoga Day 2018.
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- Mt. Bhagirathi-II is located in the Garhwal Himalayas in Gangotri National Park.
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- The peak rises right above the Gangotri glacier.
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- The summit is challenging owing to its technical requirements, vertical ascents, inclement and unpredictable weather conditions.
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Gender bias caused 'excess' deaths of girls under 5

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- A Lancet Study state that there have been 2, 39,000 "excess deaths" per year of girls under the age of five in India.
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- Around 22% of the overall mortality burden of under-five females is therefore due to gender bias.
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- Excess mortality is the difference between observed and expected mortality rates in both genders.
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- This study focuses on mortality after birth whereas most of the studies of India's skewed sex ratios have focused on pre-natal mortality.
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- The worst affected areas were all rural, agricultural areas with lower levels of education, high population densities, low socio-economic development and high levels of fertility.
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- Many deaths of females under five were partly due to unwanted child bearing and subsequent neglect.
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Source: PIB, The Hindu

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