Prelim Bits 18-04-2019

Indo-Pacific Division

- Ministry of External Affairs has setup Indo-Pacific division to integrate the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), ASEAN region and the Quad to the Indo-Pacific table.
- Countries falling in the direct hinterland of the vast Indian and Pacific oceanic expanse are termed 'Indo-Pacific countries'.
- It is a multipolar region, contributing more than half of the world's GDP and population.
- It has several important regional trading blocs, many of which have implemented free trade agreements (FTAs) in goods and services and some of which have even been elevated to the Customs Union.
- This move will give a coherent architecture to the policy articulated at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018.
- Shangri-La Dialogue is an annual security dialogue that brings together defence ministers and military chiefs from 28 Asia-Pacific countries to talk about security in the region.

Tiger census

- Tiger census in India is conducted every four years by the National Tiger Conservation Authorities (NTCA).
- The first all India tiger census was conducted in 2006.
- Wildlife Institute of India (WII), a Union Environment Ministry funded body, is coordinating agency for the tiger estimation exercise.
- NTCA uses an android app named MSTrIPES (Monitoring system for Tigers – Intensive Protection and Ecological Status), for the proper location data feeding and filling the record more accurately.
- The app will capture the forest team's route throughout the forest and assist them in uploading geotagged images into the database
- According to the last survey conducted in 2014, the tiger count was 2,226.

Microplastics

- Microplastics are a type of plastic fragment that is less than five millimetres in length, which are atmospheric pollutants.

- Microplastics includes fragments, fibres and sheet-like pieces of film.
- According to recent reports, microplastics are carried away by winds and being deposited in a remote, high-altitude mountain location far from any major city. Causing microplastic pollution.

Zinc Deficiency

- According to recent research, it is found that inadequate zinc intake has been rising in India for decades, causing tens of millions of people to become newly deficient in it.
- Rising carbon dioxide levels can accelerate zinc deficiency in crops and thus in human consumption.
- The highest rate of inadequate zinc intake was concentrated mainly in the southern and northeastern States with rice-dominated diets: Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya.

Salt Tolerant Rice

- Researchers have developed a new salt-tolerant transgenic rice plant by over-expressing a gene from wild rice called Porteresia coarctata into the commonly used IR 64 indicia rice variety.
- Porteresia coarctata is a native of India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar and is grown mainly in saline estuaries.
- The new crop can withstand salt concentration of up to 200 micromoles per litre or about half as saline as seawater without affecting normal growth and grain yield under greenhouse conditions.

Source: PIB, the Hindu, Down to Earth

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