Prelim Bits 29-08-2019

Shagun

- Union HRD Ministry launched Integrated Online junction for School Education **'Shagun'.**
- It is one of world's largest system of its kind to improve school education,
  - by creating a junction for all online portals and websites relating to various activities of the Department of School Education and all States and Union Territories.
- The word 'Shagun' is coined from two different words,
  - 'Shala' meaning Schools and
  - 'Gunvatta' meaning Quality
- Websites of Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, other CBSE affiliated schools, SCERTs, among others are integrated with 'Shagun'.
- The portal seeks to connect approximately 92 lakh teachers and 26 crores, students.
- Common people can directly give their feedback about schools which will further increase public participation.
- 'Integrated National School Education Treasury' **(INSET)** is to be set up,

1. It envisages a fully integrated, instantly accessible and seamless information network for all parameters relating to the students, teachers, and schools in the country.

- The main focus areas will be,

1. Reinforcing and cleaning the data of the Integrated Online Junction through feedback from Stakeholders.
2. Ensuring full inter-operability among the websites, portals and applications which are already hosted in the junction.
3. Creating high-quality e-contents, including quizzes and puzzles to enhance learning.
4. Using artificial intelligence and deep machine learning in a variety of ways to enhance the quality of school education.

H1N1 Influenza Outbreak

- In 2009, the first case of 'Influenza A' **H1N1** was reported in Mexico, later the infection spread to a total of 214 countries.
- 10 years since H1N1 outbreaks in India, saw as many as 1.58 lakh persons being infected and over 10,000 succumbing to it.
- **H1N1 (Swine Flu)** is an infection caused by a virus, a subtype of Influenza A virus (a communicable viral disease).
- It is a common infection in 'pigs' worldwide and it can potentially infect the respiratory tract of pigs.
- Sometimes, people who are closely associated with pigs or in the proximity of pigs have developed swine flu.
- Since the virus is contagious, it can spread from human to human.
- Respiratory transmission occurs mainly by droplets disseminated by unprotected coughs and sneezes.
- Hand contamination and direct inoculation of the virus is another possible source of transmission.
- An analysis in India shows that 'Maharashtra' has reported the highest number of cases and deaths since the influenza outbreak.



- In the temperate countries, peak influenza activity is recorded in winters.
- In the tropical and sub-tropical countries like in India, the primary peak of influenza activity is during the monsoon.
- Overcrowding leads to increased transmission of airborne infection in India.
- Infection cases are reported mainly from western parts of India, localised to Pune in Maharashtra and Jaipur in Rajasthan.
- North-eastern states like Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, which had never reported H1N1 in the past, notified 44 cases in 2017.
- According to researchers, observations require further probe to understand the changing ecological and transmission dynamics.

Coprolite

- Coprolites are fossilised faeces belonging to animals that lived millions of years ago.
- Scientists have found the oldest parasite DNA ever recorded.
- The discovery was made in the Coprolite of a prehistoric puma in Argentina.
- With the help of carbon dating, it is estimated that the age of the coprolite is between 16,500-17,000 years ago.
- Using ancient mitochondrial DNA analysis, it was confirmed that the coprolite came out of a puma.
- This led to the identification of the oldest parasite DNA found yet dated back to a few thousand years ago.

CoP18 of CITES

- The Indian star tortoise was upgraded to CITES Appendix I (threatened with extinction).
- It got the highest level of international protection from commercial trade.

- The Indian star tortoise is an **IUCN**-listed 'Vulnerable' species.
- It is being illegally trafficked despite restrictions on its trade.
- To combat the stress (largely from trading), range states like Sri Lanka and India, submitted a proposal to CITES summit.
- It is to move the star tortoise from Appendix II to Appendix I, it was passed with a majority by nations participating in CITES.
- Now it prohibits international trade of these species except when the purpose of the import is for scientific research.
- They are native to India and found only in Sri Lanka, some parts of India and adjoining Pakistan.
- **'Sharks'** gets special protection -

1. 18 species of sharks and rays, threatened by the scale of international trade in their fins and meat, were included in Appendix II of the Convention.
2. This will limits the trade to sustainable levels.

- No more trade in **'African elephants'** -

1. Parties vote to restrict trade from Zimbabwe and Botswana.
2. They can no longer be shipped to zoos and circuses worldwide
3. This will save an untold number of baby elephants from being torn from their mothers, beaten during capture and conscripted into a lifetime of captivity.
4. Zimbabwe made $2.7 million by selling 97 live elephants to China and the United Arab Emirates between 2012 and 2018.

- **'Giraffes'** accorded protection from trade for the first time -

1. The giraffe has been placed in Appendix II of CITES.
2. This places prohibitions on uncontrolled trade.
3. They have been listed as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN list.
4. 40% decline of African giraffe has been recorded over the last 30 years.

Source: PIB, The Indian Express



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