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### Swachhta Saarthi Fellowships

- The Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India launched the “Swachhta Saarthi Fellowship”.
- This fellowship comes under the “Waste to Wealth” Mission - One of the nine national missions of the PM’s Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC).
- There are **three categories** of awards under this fellowship - School students from 9th to 12th standards, College students (UG, PG, Research students) and Citizens working in the community.
- This fellowship recognizes people engaged in tackling the challenge of waste management, scientifically and sustainably.
- It will empower young students and innovators as Swachhta Saarthis and implement actions to reduce waste for a greener planet.

### PM’s Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council

- It facilitates the PSA Office to assess the status in specific science and technology domains, comprehend challenges in hand, formulate specific interventions, develop a futuristic roadmap and advise the PM.
- The Office of the PSA coordinates to facilitate and ensure the implementation of significant interventions by concerned government departments, agencies, and ministries.
- The PM-STIAC Secretariat is based at Invest India.
- It provides support to the Office of the PSA on project management and monitoring of the aforesaid interventions and national missions.

### Land Ports Authority of India

- The Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) celebrated its 9th Foundation Day at its headquarters in New Delhi.
- LPAI is a statutory body established under Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010.
- It develops, sanitizes and manages the facilities for **cross-border movement** of passengers and goods at designated points along the international borders of India.
- LPAI may put in place systems, which address security imperatives at the

Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) on the border.

- It has power to manage various activities like infrastructure facilities, communication, security, etc., at an ICP.
- It can regulate and control the movement of vehicles, people and goods at the ICP with due regard to the law, security and protocol of the Government of India.
- It can develop and provide consultancy, construction or management services, and undertake operations in India and abroad regarding ICP.

### **World's Forgotten Fishes Report**

- According to this report by 16 global conservation organisations, nearly a third of all freshwater fish are threatened with extinction.
- Of the 80 freshwater species declared extinct, as many as 16 freshwater fish species were declared extinct in 2020 alone.
- The population of migratory freshwater fish fell 76% since 1970; that of mega-fish by 94%
- Pressures on global freshwater fish populations - Habitat degradation, poorly planned dams, overfishing, pollution, invasive species, wildlife crime, climate change, releasing wastewater and draining wetlands.
- The WWF has called on all governments to back the implementation of a global Emergency Recovery Plan for freshwater biodiversity.

### **Malaria Elimination Certificate**

- El Salvador has become the first country in Central America to get the malaria-free certificate from the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Malaria elimination certificate is awarded to a country when the chain of indigenous transmission of the disease has been disrupted nationwide for at least **three consecutive years**.
- Countries that eliminated malaria - Algeria, Paraguay, Argentina, Morocco, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka.
- Half the global malaria-related deaths (2019) were in 6 African countries - Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Niger.
- World Malaria Report 2020 - In India, malaria infections fell by 14.4 million (2000-2019), the largest reduction in South-East Asia.
- In 2019, India accounted for 86% of all malaria deaths in the region.

### **GMO Threshold**

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had ordered that the food crops imported into India would need a 'non-GM-origin-cum-GM-

free certificate' issued by a competent authority.

- The FSSAI has set 1% threshold for Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in 24 imported food crops.
- The 'Coalition for a GM-Free India' said that this threshold is unacceptably high.
- It wants to limit the threshold for presence of GMO in imported food products to 0.01% as Indian labs can detect as little as 0.01%.
- It also urged the health ministry to extend similar regulations to fish, cotton, seeds and animal feed.
- The task of regulating GMO levels in imported consumables was initially with Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), Environment ministry.
- Its role in this was diluted with the enactment of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and FSSAI was asked to take over approvals of imported goods.

### **Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020**

- The government finalised a draft 'Fifth Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, 2020'.
- **STI (Science, Technology and Innovation) Development Bank** will direct long-term investments in select strategic areas.
- For large-scale mission-mode programmes, rules of lending will be modified for an easier flow of finance.
- **Strategic Technology Development Fund** is to be set up to home-grow strategic technologies in areas such as nuclear science, space, cyber technology and biotechnology.
- This fund is managed by a Strategic Technology Development Board.
- It will also provide finance to the private sector and higher education institutions for research with specific goals.
- An **engagement portal** exclusively to bring together Indian scientists and technocrats worldwide and to engage with Indian researchers is being planned.
- **Science diplomacy** - Role of S&T in defining foreign policy priorities will be vitalized. Apart from 'S&T for diplomatic benefits', 'diplomacy for S&T development' is to be promoted.

**Source: PIB, Down To Earth, Business Line**



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