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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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