UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 04-01-2021

Digital Payments Index

- The Reserve Bank of India has constructed a Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across India.
- The RBI-DPI comprises of 5 broad parameters that enable measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different time periods. These parameters are –
    1. Payment Enablers (weight 25%),
    2. Payment Infrastructure – Demand-side factors (10%),
    3. Payment Infrastructure – Supply-side factors (15%),
    4. Payment Performance (45%) and
    5. Consumer Centricity (5%).
- Each of these parameters has sub-parameters which consist of various measurable indicators.
- The RBI-DPI has been constructed with March 2018 as the base period, i.e. DPI score for March 2018 is set at 100.

Eco-sensitive Zone in Gujarat

- Tribals have been protesting against a notification of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- This notification had classified 121 villages around the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary in Narmada district, Gujarat as eco-sensitive zones.
- Tribals feel that the simultaneous implementation of this notification and the formation of SoUTA could dilute the power vested with villagers under the Panchayat (Extension of Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.
- [SoUTA - The Statue of Unity Area Development and Tourism Governance Authority, or Statue of Unity Tourism Authority.]
- To know more about the Panchayat (Extension of Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, click here.

Statue of Unity Tourism Authority

- This Authority was established by Statue of Unity Area Development and Tourism Governance Authority Act of the Gujarat government.
- It has powers ranging from acquiring land for any development project to

taking punitive action against those violating of encroaching it.
- It will define the limits of the tourism development area.
- It can be empowered to acquire immovable property under the Right to Fair Compensation & Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

Shoolpaneshwar Wild Life Sanctuary

- It was created in 1982 as ‘Dumkhal Sanctuary’ - home for sloth bears.
- It is found at the congregation of Vindhyan-Satpura hill ranges.
- The sanctuary derives its name "Shoolpaneshwar" from a temple of Lord Shiva, which once existed in this region on the banks of river Narmada.
- The area is predominantly tribal with 'Vasavas' as the main tribe.

Woolly Rhino

- A well-preserved Ice Age woolly rhino has been recovered from permafrost in Russia's extreme north.
- The carcass has most of its soft tissues still intact, including part of the intestines, thick hair and a lump of fat. Its horn was found next to it.
- It is dated to be anywhere from 20,000- to 50,000-years-old.
- It was found on the Tirekhtyakh river bank, close to the area where another young woolly rhino (Sasha) was recovered in 2014.
- Recent years have seen major discoveries of mammoths, woolly rhinos, Ice Age foal, and cave lion cubs as the permafrost increasingly melts across vast areas of Siberia because of global warming.

Diamond-studded Meteorite

- A US study has analysed the diamond-studded meteorite that exploded over Sudan in 2008.
- The meteorite was part of a giant asteroid in our solar system, which was the same size as the dwarf planet Ceres.
- [Ceres is the largest celestial object in the asteroid belt.]
- It had a unique mineral makeup, including ‘amphibole’ which requires prolonged exposure to water in order to develop.
- This mineral appeared only once on Allende meteorite that fell in Mexico.
- The meteorite belongs to the category of 4.6% of meteorites that have been found on Earth, which are known as Almahata Sitta (AhS).
- These black rocks are made of a material called carbonaceous chondrite.
- They contain organic compounds and a variety of minerals, and water.

SolarWinds Hack

- It is a cyber attack, which was first discovered by the US cyber security company FireEye.
- [FireEye helps with security management of several big private companies and federal government agencies.]
- Named as Campaign UNC2452, this attack had targeted various public and private organisations around the world.
- It has emerged as one of the biggest ever targeted against the US government, its agencies and several other private companies.
- The kind of attack on the US government agencies and companies is called a 'Supply Chain' attack.
- This means that instead of directly attacking the federal government or a private organisation's network, the hackers target a third-party vendor, which supplies software to them.
- In this case, the target was an IT management software called Orion, supplied by the Texas-based company SolarWinds.

Tampon Tax Abolition

- The United Kingdom abolished 5% Value Added Tax (VAT) on women's sanitary products, often referred to as the tampon tax.
- It now joins the list of countries which have already eliminated this tax, which includes India, Australia and Canada.
- Until December 31, the UK was a part of the EU, where period products like sanitary napkins and tampons are classified as non-essential, and member states are required to levy a 5% tax on them.
- As the UK is out of the EU, it is not bound by its directives.
- In the Republic of Ireland, however, there is no VAT on such products despite the country being an EU member.
- This is because Ireland's tax rates were in place before the EU imposed its own tax laws.
- In 2020, Scotland became the first country in the world to make period products free of cost to those who need them.

Source: PIB, The Indian Express, The Hindu

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