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Survey of River Ganga

- Survey of Ganga River was initiated by Wildlife Institute of India (WII) on behalf of the National Mission for Clean Ganga.
- This is the first study ever done in the country on the entire river, and the first also of all its biodiversity.
- The institute has been tracking biodiversity through some key aquatic and semi-aquatic species such as the Gangetic Dolphins, gharials, otters, turtles and various species of water birds.
- Highlights of the Survey findings are as follows

1. Ganga river (main river without its tributaries), has found that 49% of the river has high biodiversity.
2. 10% of the high biodiversity areas fall alongside national parks and sanctuaries such as Rajaji national park in Uttarakhand, Hastinapur wildlife sanctuary in UP and Vikramshila gangetic Dolphin sanctuary in Bihar.
3. Increased biodiversity sightings, including of the Gangetic Dolphin and Otters, indicates reduced pollution levels and a healthier state of the river.
4. Many species that used to be found in the main stem and had disappeared, are now coming back, Few such sightings are as follows

a. Nesting colonies of the Indian Skimmer found.
b. Seibold's, a species of water snake, disappeared 80 years ago and has now resurfaced.
c. New distributions of the puffer fish found.

5. Many other species have started travelling back from tributaries to the main stem of the river indicating improving water quality and increasing Biodiversity.

Saffron Cultivation in North East

- Saffron is a plant whose dried stigmas (thread-like parts of the flower) are used to make saffron spice.
- India cultivates about 6 to 7 tonne of saffron while the demand is 100 tonne.

- To meet the growing demand of saffron the MoS&T through the Department of Science and Technology (DST), is now looking at extending its cultivation to some states in the Northeast.
- This is because there is a huge similarity of climate and geographical conditions between Kashmir and few regions of Northeast.
- Sikkim was first to implement the pilot project, and later it will be extended to Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh.
- North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) is an autonomous body under the DST.
- NECTAR in collaboration with the Botany and Horticulture departments of Sikkim Central University implemented a pilot project in Yangyang village of South Sikkim.
- The Yangyang pilot project of saffron cultivation has yielded successful results, which produced its first crop of saffron recently.

Ideal Conditions for Saffron Cultivation

- In India, saffron Corms (seeds) are cultivated during the months of June and July and at some places in August and September, It starts flowering in October.
- Saffron grows well at an altitude of 2000 meters above sea level.
- It needs a photoperiod (sunlight) of 12 hours.
- It grows in many different soil types but thrives best in calcareous (soil that has calcium carbonate in abundance), humus-rich and well-drained soil with a pH between 6 and 8.
- For saffron cultivation, we need an explicit climatological summer and winter with temperatures ranging from no more than 35 or 40 degree Celsius in summer to about –15 or –20 degree Celsius in winter.
- It also requires adequate rainfall that is 1000-1500 mm per annum.

Pampore Saffron

- Saffron production has long been restricted to a limited geographical area in the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Pampore region, commonly known as Saffron bowl of Kashmir, is the main contributor to saffron production.
- Pampore Saffron Heritage of Kashmir is one of the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage systems (GIAHS) recognised sites in India.

Dobra-Chanthi Bridge

- Recently, the Dobra-Chanthi suspension bridge has been dedicated to

public in Tehri-Garhwal district.
- Dobra Chanti bridge is India's longest motorable single lane suspension bridge which is 440-metre long.
- It is built over Tehri Lake, it will cut travel time between Tehri and Pratapnagar districts from 5.5 to 1.5 hours.

Warli Art

- Warli is a traditional art form of Maharashtra, Its roots can be traced to as early as the 10th century A.D.
- It is drawn by Warli Tribe, who are an indigenous tribe living in the Mountainous as well as coastal areas of Maharashtra-Gujarat border and surrounding areas.
- They speak an unwritten Varli language which belongs to the southern zone of the Indo-Aryan languages.
- Warli paintings are mainly dominated by basic geometric shapes like circles, triangles and squares.
- In warli paintings the circles represent the sun and moon, the triangles represent the mountains and the squares are considered as the central motifs of the painting.
- People and animals are represented by two inverted triangles joined together, where the upper triangle is the torso and the lower triangle is the pelvis.
- The central theme of the paintings are scenes portraying hunting, fishing, farming, festival and dances, trees and animals are used to surround the central theme.

National Legal Services Day

- National Legal Services Day (NLSD) is celebrated on 9th November every year.
- It aims to spread awareness for ensuring reasonable fair and justice procedure for all citizens.
- It was first started by the Supreme Court of India in 1995 to provide help and support to poor and weaker sections of the society.
- Free legal services are provided in matters before Civil, Criminal and Revenue Courts, Tribunals or any other authority exercising judicial or quasi-judicial functions.
- Following are the Institutions that provide free legal services

1. **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) -** It was constituted under

the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, the Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief.
2. **High Court Legal Services Committee**
3. **Supreme Court Legal Services Committee**
4. **State Legal Services Authority** - It is headed by the Chief Justice of the State High Court who is its Patron-in-Chief.
5. **District Legal Services Authority -** The District Judge of the District is its ex-officio Chairman.
6. **Taluka/ Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committee -** It is headed by a senior Civil Judge.

Constitutional Provisions on Legal Services

- **Article 39A -** It provides that State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way.
- Also to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disability.
- **Articles 14 and 22(1)** also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law and a legal system which promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity to all.

15th Finance Commission

- Recently Fifteenth Finance Commission (XVFC) led by Chairman N K Singh, submitted its Report for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26 to the President of India.
- As per the terms of reference (ToR), the Commission was mandated to give its recommendations for five years from 2021-22 to 2025-26 by 30 October, 2020.
- The Report will be available in the public domain once it is tabled in the Parliament by the Union Government.
- The Commission was asked to give its recommendations on many unique and wide-ranging issues in its terms of reference.
- Apart from the vertical and horizontal tax devolution, local government grants, disaster management grant, the Commission was also asked to examine and recommend performance incentives for States in many areas like power sector, adoption of DBT, solid waste management etc.
- The Commission was also asked to examine whether a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security ought to be set up

and if so how such a mechanism could be operationalised.

- Highlights of the Report are as follows

1. Its main recommendations are for the devolution of funds between the Centre and the States for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.
2. The Commission has also addressed all its unique terms of reference such as considering a new non-lapsable fund for financing national security and defence spending, and offering performance incentives for States that deliver on reforms.
3. Apart from the main report uniquely titled “Finance Commission in Covid Times” which depicts a set of scales on its cover to denote balance between the Union and the States.
4. The panel has come up with State-specific considerations to address the key challenges that individual States face.

Source: PIB, the Hindu, Indian Express

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