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Muraingrass

- Ischaemum Janarthanam, a new species of Indian Muraingrasses have been spotted in the Western Ghats of Goa.
- This Species has adapted to survive harsh conditions, low nutrient availability, and blossoms every monsoon.
- This species grows on low altitude lateritic outcrops in the outskirts of Bhagwan Mahavir National Park, Goa.
- [Lateritic outcrops - Habitats where portions of freely exposed bedrocks protrude above the soil level due to natural reasons.]
- Western Ghats have 40 species with the highest concentration of the genus Ischaemum.
- These grasses are known for their ecological & economic importance.

FinTech & Digitisation

- Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) hosted a Peer Exchange with leaders from States and Union Territories across India.
- This is co-organized with the Better Than Cash Alliance.
- This Peer Exchange is about the role of FinTech in enabling digitization in sectors of national importance.
- The Government of India is keen to promote public service use cases of technologies like Blockchain, Machine Learning, etc., by all levels of Government to enable delivery of Financial and other Services.

Better Than Cash Alliance

- This UN-based Alliance is a partnership of over 75 governments, companies and international organizations.
- It is committed to accelerate the transition from cash to digital payments to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.
- India became its member in 2015 to digitize payments to achieve financial inclusion and to share success stories from Jan Dhan Yojana, the world's largest financial inclusion program.
- Alliance is working with many state governments to build knowledge and programs where people, governments, and businesses can make and receive digital payments.

Death penalty for Crimes against Women & Children

- Maharashtra cabinet approved two draft bills that propose death penalty for heinous cases of rape, acid attack and child abuse.
- Once the bills are cleared by both Houses of the legislature, they will be sent to the Centre for approval.
- The bills seek to amend relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Criminal Procedural Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.
- They have provisions to cover new categories of crimes, and propose a mechanism for speedy trials.
- The media is not allowed to report the name of a rape victim.
- The proposed Acts will provide similar protection to victims of molestation and even acid attack.
- It would amend IPC Section 376 (rape) to increase the punishment to life term or death penalty in heinous cases where there's adequate conclusive evidence or exemplary punishment is warranted.

Koilwar Bridge

- This bridge, also named as Abdul Bari Bridge, is located in Bihar.
- Three lanes of the newly-built Koilwar bridge on river Son was inaugurated. Three more lanes would be ready by May 2021.
- The bridge will be named after Vashishtha Narayan Singh, a famous mathematician from the state.
- The 1.5 km-long bridge has been built parallel to the 138-year-old rail-cum-road bridge constructed during the British era.

Jammu & Kashmir DDC

- The District Development Council (DDC) elections are held in Jammu & Kashmir for the first time after the revocation of Article 370.
- J&K amended the J&K Panchayati Raj Act, 1989, that replaced the erstwhile District Development Board of the J&K state with the DDC.
- Now every district in J&K will have a DDC having jurisdiction over the entire district, excluding municipal areas.
- Every DDC will have 14 directly-elected members, the chairpersons of all Block Development Councils and MLAs from the district.
- The DDC will be responsible for the formulation of development programmes of the area under its authority.
- Five standing committees (for finance, development, public works, health and education, and welfare) will be constituted in every DDC.

Droughts in Non-El Niño Years

- In an El Niño year, abnormally warm equatorial Pacific waters pull moisture-laden clouds away from the subcontinent, causing droughts.
- But a study shows that in non-El Nino years, droughts are a consequence of a sudden and steep drop in rainfall in late August.
- A non-El Nino-year drought will see rainfall that would weaken in mid-June.
- From mid-July to mid-August, the monsoon will appear to recover.
- However, around August third week, there was a sudden steep decline in rainfall, resulting in drought conditions.
- **Reason** - Winds in the upper atmosphere are interacting with a deep cyclonic circulation above the abnormally cold North Atlantic waters.
- The resulting wave of air currents (**Rossby wave**) curved down from the North Atlantic squeezed in by the Tibetan plateau.
- These waves hit the subcontinent around mid-August, suppressing rainfall and throwing off the monsoon.
- The wave's usual course is to go from west to east, but not towards the equator.
- Thus beyond looking at the Pacific Ocean, it is important to consider other influences on the Indian monsoon from outside the tropics.

Source: PIB, Economic Times, Times of India

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