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Apple Scab Attack

- Kashmir's apple output this season may be hit by scab disease, caused by fungus Venturia inaequalis, as fallout of climatic factors.
- Early, intense snowfall in November 2019 was followed by an extremely wet monsoon, which aided the fungal growth.
- This fungal infection is usually noticed on leaves and fruits.
- Scab can also infect flower stems and cause flowers to drop.
- Infected fruit may crack, allowing entry of secondary organisms.
- Suitable temperatures and moisture promote the release of V. inaequalis ascospores.
- This cycle of secondary infections continues throughout the summer, until the leaves and fruit fall from the tree at the onset of winter.

Himalayan Serow

- A Himalayan serow (Capricornis sumatraensis thar) has been sighted for the first time in the Spiti cold desert region, Himachal Pradesh.
- It is a subspecies of the mainland serow (C. sumatraensis).
- It is found at altitudes between 2,000 and 4,000 m, which is restricted to the Himalayan region.
- They are known to be found in eastern, central, and western Himalayas, but not in the Trans Himalayan region.
- It has previously been spotted in the Great Himalayan National Park in Kullu; Rupi Bhaba Wildlife Sanctuary, and in higher reaches of Chamba.
- It has been categorised as '**vulnerable'** in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.
- It is listed under **Schedule I** of The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which provides absolute protection.

Merging of Black Holes

- The NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory has shared images of two super massive black holes merging.
- These black holes are located in Galaxy NGC 6240.
- They are 3,000 light-years apart and will drift together to form a larger black hole millions of years from now.

- The merging process, which began some 30 million years ago, may be the most powerful sources of gravitational waves in the Universe.

Chandra X-ray Observatory

- It is a telescope designed to detect X-ray emissions from very hot regions of the universe such as exploded stars, clusters of galaxies, and matter around black holes.
- Orbiting at 139,000 km in space, the telescope was launched aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia during STS-93 by NASA in 1999.

State of the Education Report for India 2020

- The second edition of this report was launched by UNESCO New Delhi.
- This edition focuses on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
- It aims to support the Government of India which has announced skill development as a key national priority under the Skill India Mission.
- In order to achieve evidence-based results to achieve the TVET vision in the country, the report outlines certain recommendations.

Geminids Meteor Shower

- It is believed to be the strongest of the year.
- They are unique because their origin does not lie in a comet, but what is believed to be an asteroid or an extinct comet named as 3200 Phaethon.
- Soon after the Geminids, viewers in the northern hemisphere can expect to see the Ursids meteor shower.
- However, the rate of Ursids is much less than Geminids.

Source: The Indian Express, UNESCO, Down To Earth

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