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Institutionalizing Snake Handlers

- Kerala becomes the first to institutionalize snake handling in the country.
- Kerala Forest Department has framed guidelines for rescuing snakes from human dominated places and releasing them in uninhabited areas.
- Highlights of the move are as follows

1. The guidelines make it mandatory for snake handlers, aged between 21 and 65 years, to seek certification.
2. The applications will be screened by the Assistant Conservators of Forest (ACF, Social Forestry) to prepare lists of snake handlers in each district.
3. Those short-listed will be required to undergo a mandatory training on safe and scientific handling of snakes.
4. While the certification will be valid for five years, the respective ACFs can withdraw or cancel the same if the snake handler is found to be involved in any illegal or unethical practices.
5. Rescued snakes will also have to be released in the presence of forest officials at the earliest.
6. If found injured, the snake can be released only after ascertaining its fitness.
7. Non-native species, however, cannot be released and have to be handed over to the Forest Department.

Human Capital Index (HCI)

- Recently, the World Bank released the Human Capital Index (HCI) report for 2020.
- The index benchmarks key components of human capital across countries.
- It consists of the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate over their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society.
- Highlights of the Index are as follows

1. The HCI 2020 includes health and education data of children for 174 countries up to March 2020.
2. The HCI 2020 shows that pre-pandemic, most countries had made steady

progress in building human capital of children, with the biggest strides made in low-income countries.

3. However, despite this progress, a child born in a typical country could expect to achieve just 56% of their potential human capital, relative to a benchmark of complete education and full health.
4. The pandemic puts at risk the decade's progress in building human capital, including the improvements in health, survival rates, school enrollment, and reduced stunting.
5. More than 1 billion children have been out of school and could lose out, on average, half a year of schooling.
6. It has created significant disruptions to essential health services for women and children, with many children missing out on crucial vaccinations.
7. It has increased income inequality, its economic impact has been particularly deep for women and for the most disadvantaged families, leaving many vulnerable to food insecurity and poverty.
8. India has been ranked at the 116th position in the HCI 2020.

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement

- The USA is looking forward to India signing the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial cooperation (BECA)
- BECA will allow India to use the geospatial maps of the USA to get pinpoint military accuracy of automated hardware systems and weapons such as cruise and ballistic missiles.
- BECA is an important precursor to India acquiring armed unmanned aerial vehicles such as the Predator-B from the USA.
- Predator-B uses spatial data for accurate strikes on enemy targets.
- BECA is one of the four foundational military communication agreements between the two countries.
- The other three being GSOMIA, LEMOA, CISMOA.
- Initially, India had reservations to geospatial mapping on the grounds of national security, but they were later addressed by mutual dialogue and discussion between the two countries.

General Security of Military Information Agreement

- GSOMIA allows militaries to share the intelligence gathered by them.
- Signed by India in 2002.
- An extension to the GSOMIA, the Industrial Security Annex (ISA), was signed at the 2+2 dialogue in 2019.

- ISA provides a framework for exchange and protection of classified military information between the USA and Indian defence industries.

IN-SPACe

- Recently, the Government of India has created the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACe), an independent nodal agency under the Department of Space.
- This move is a part of the reforms announced under the economic stimulus packages.
- IN-SPACe is to be established as a single-window nodal agency, with its own cadre, which will permit and oversee the activities of private companies.
- This is part of reforms aimed at giving a boost to the private sector participating in space-related activities or using India's space resources.
- Currently, there are more than 500 private companies which partner with the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) in carrying out various space activities.
- They provide materials used in manufacturing, mechanical fabrication, electronic fabrication, system development, integration, etc.
- Under the new system

1. The government will allow utilizing those infrastructures of ISRO which are otherwise not available elsewhere in India.
2. Permit establishment of facilities, within ISRO premises, based on safety norms and feasibility assessment.
3. The decision of IN-SPACe shall be final and binding on all stakeholders including ISRO and private players will not be required to seek separate permission from ISRO.

Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act

- Inter-State Migrant Workmen (ISMW) Act, 1979 is meant to protect vulnerable workers who leave their own home State for employment.
- It applies to every establishment and contractor who has five or more migrants on their rolls and prohibits their employment without a certificate of registration.
- According to the Act, each registered worker must be issued a pass book with details of employment, wages and benefits.
- Recently the Labour Ministry told the Lok Sabha that it had no data on the migrant workers who lost their jobs or lives during the lockdown.
- However, it claimed that over one crore migrant workers returned to their

home States during the lockdown.

IBSA Dialogue Forum

- India- Brazil- South Africa It was formed in 2003 by the Brasilia declaration and is purely a South-South grouping of like-minded countries.
- Cooperation is on 3 fronts

1. Reform of global institutions of political Governance.
2. Economic governance.
3. Collaboration on projects for the common benefit of countries.

- IBSA Fund provides financial support for South-owned, South-led, demand-driven and transformational projects across developing world, with a focus on Least Developed Countries

Source: PIB, Indian Express, the Hindu

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