UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 20-04-2021

Startup India Seed Fund Scheme

- The Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) was launched to provide financial assistance to startups for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry, and commercialization.
- It was announced in the 'Prarambh: StartupIndia International Summit' that marks the five-year anniversary of the Startup India initiative.
- Rs. 945 Crore corpus will be divided over the next 4 years for providing seed funding to eligible startups through eligible incubators across India.
- The SISFS will **S**ecure seed funding, **I**nspire innovation, **Support** transformative ideas, **F**acilitate implementation, and **S**tart startup revolution.
- It will create a robust startup ecosystem, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns of India, which are often deprived of adequate funding.
- Online portal created for the scheme by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will allow incubators to apply it.
- Grants of up to Rs 5 Crores shall be provided to the eligible incubators selected by the Experts Advisory Committee (EAC), which has been created by DPIIT to execute and monitor the Fund.
    1. The selected incubators shall provide grants of up to Rs 20 lakhs for validation of Proof of Concept, or prototype development, or product trials to startups.
    2. Investments of up to Rs 50 lakhs shall be provided to the startups for market entry, commercialization, or scaling up through convertible debentures or debt-linked instruments.

Hospet-Vasco Da Gama Project

- This was cleared by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), despite warnings by a committee appointed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- This project aims to double a railway track of the the Hospet-Hubballi-Londa-Vasco Da Gama railway line by the Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd (RVNL) in Karnataka and Goa passing through the Western Ghats.
- [The Western Ghats is one of the world's eight 'hottest hotspots' of biological diversity.]
- The project is divided into two phases,

1. Phase I covering the Hospet-Tinaighat stretch that is being funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and
2. Phase II covering the Tinaighat-Vasco stretch. It diverts forest land in the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary (Karnataka) and the Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park (in Goa).

Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary

- The Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary s located in Uttara Kannada, Karnataka and is located on the banks of River Kali.
- It is part of the Kali Tiger Reserve (earlier called the Dandeli Anshi Tiger Reserve). [The Kali Tiger Reserve has two protected areas - Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary and Anshi National Park]
- Species found - Crocodiles, barking deer, bison, Indian Mongolian, black panther, sambhar, tiger, leopard, elephant, flying squirrel and the Malabar giant squirrel, king cobra, or giant iguana.

Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park

- It is a protected area located in the Western Ghats in Goa, along the eastern border with Karnataka. It is situated near the town of Molem.
- It was first known as Mollem Game Sanctuary. It was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1969 and renamed as Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary.
- National Highway 4A divides it into two parts and the Mormugao - Londa railway line passes through the area.
- It contains several important temples dating to the Kadambas of Goa, and home to waterfalls, such as Dudhsagar Falls and Tambdi Falls.
- It is home to a community of nomadic buffalo herders called Dhangar.

Cross-border Electricity Trading in IEX

- Indian Energy Exchange Ltd (IEX) announced the launch of cross-border electricity trading on its platform.
- NTPC Vidyut Vypar Nigam Ltd, the trading arm of the public-sector power generator, has secured approval from the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) for Nepal’s participation in the market of IEX.
- The new development follows the notification of Cross Border Trade of Electricity Regulations by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission in 2019 and more recently of additional rules in March by the CEA.
- Currently, cross-border trade with neighbouring countries for India stands at about 18 BU conducted through the medium to long-term bilateral contracts.
- India imports 8.7 BU from Bhutan and exports 2.37 BU and 7 BU to Nepal and Bangladesh, respectively.

- To know more about the Indian Energy Exchange, click here.

India-China Border Dispute

- During the discussions between India and China to resolve the over 11-month long standoff in eastern Ladakh China has refused to vacate from two of the four original friction points.
- The two points are Patrolling Point 15 (PP15) in Hot Springs, and PP17A near Gogra Post in the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.
- Previously, the other points of friction were PP14 in Galwan Valley and the north bank of Pangong Tso.
- **Patrolling Points** are certain locations along the LAC where the Indian Army troops patrol the area to assert their control over the territory.
- They are decided by the China Study Group (CSG). CSG was set-up in 1976, and is the apex decision-making body on China.
- Both PP15 and PP17A are in an area where India and China largely agree on the alignment of the LAC.

PP15 and PP17A

- PP15 and PP17A are among the 65 Patrolling Points in Ladakh.
- While Hot Springs is north of the River Chang Chenmo in the Galwan sub-sector, Gogra Post is east of the point where the river takes a hairpin bend coming southeast from Galwan Valley and turning southwest.
- The area is north of the Karakoram Range of mountains, which lies north of the Pangong Tso lake, and south east of Galwan Valley.
- The area lies close to Kongka Pass, one of the main passes, which China claims to marks the boundary between India and China.
- India's claim of the international boundary lies significantly east, as it includes the entire Aksai Chin area as well.
- LAC comes southeast from Galwan Valley, turns down at Konga La and moves towards Ann Pass before reaching the north bank of Pangong Tso.

Ingenuity

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that the Ingenuity helicopter had performed its first flight on Mars. Now, it will attempt up to four flights within a 31-Earth-day window.
- [The word 'Ingenuity' means the skill of thinking, performing, or using things in new ways, esp. to solve problems.]
- Ingenuity, the first powered aircraft to fly on Mars, was carried by NASA's rover called Perseverance that was launched in July 2020.

- It flies using counter-rotating blades that spin at 2,400 rpm. It is solar-powered, charge on its own. It has a wireless communication system. It and is equipped with computers, navigation sensors, and two cameras.
- The helicopter's mission is experimental in nature and completely independent of the rover's science mission. Its main task is to carry out a technology demonstration to test the first powered flight on Mars.
- It will help collect samples from the surface from locations where the rover cannot reach.

Perseverance

- Perseverance landed at the Jezero Crater of Mars in February 2021. It will remain on Mars for 2 years looking for finding signs of ancient life.
- It will collect samples of rock and sediment in tubes that might be sent back to Earth during future missions and test new technology that might benefit future robotic and human missions to the planet.

Technology Demonstrations

- Other technology demonstrations of the same kind as that of Ingenuity are,
    1. Mars Pathfinder rover Sojourner (1996) and
    2. Mars Cube One CubeSats that flew by Mars in 2018.

European Union Strategy for Indo-Pacific Cooperation

- The Council of the European Union (EU) approved the Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific to reinforce its strategic focus, presence and actions in the region.
- Aim of the strategy is to contribute to regional stability, security, prosperity and sustainable development, at a time of rising challenges and tensions in technological, political and security areas in the region.
- The Council tasked the High Representative and the Commission with putting forward a Joint Communication on cooperation in the Indo-Pacific by September 2021.
- The renewed EU commitment to the Indo-Pacific will have a long-term focus and will be based on upholding democracy, human rights, the rule of law and respect for international law.
- The EU will promote effective rules-based multilateralism, reiterating its support for ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) centrality.
- It will work to mitigate the economic and human effects of the Covid-19 and work towards ensuring a sustainable socio-economic recovery.
- It has decided to extend the geographic scope of its Critical Maritime Routes (CRIMARIO) II activities from the Indian Ocean into South and Southeast

Asia.

Source: PIB, The Indian Express, Down To Earth, Business Line

