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VTS/ VTMS

- Union Ministry for Shipping has e-launched the development of Indigenous Software solution for Vessel traffic services (VTS) and Vessels Traffic Monitoring Systems (VTMS).
- VTS and VTMS is a software which determines vessel positions, position of other traffic or meteorological hazard warnings and extensive management of traffic within a port or waterway.
- Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) contribute to the following

1. Safety of life at sea,
2. Safety and efficiency of navigation,
3. Protection of the marine environment, Adjacent shore areas, Work sites and offshore installations from possible adverse effects of maritime traffic.

- The VTMS traffic image is compiled and collected by means of advanced sensors such as radar, AIS, direction finding, CCTV and VHF or other co-operative systems and services.
- A modern VTMS integrates all of the information into a single operator working environment for ease of use and in order to allow for effective traffic organization and communication.

- VTMS is mandatory under IMO Convention SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea).
- Implementation of National Maritime Domain Awareness programme shall become feasible with Indian VTS software at low cost.
- Ministry of Shipping has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 10 Crore to IIT, Chennai for development of indigenous VTS software.

Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)

- The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) is an international maritime treaty which sets minimum safety standards in the construction, equipment and operation of merchant ships.
- SOLAS is administered by International Maritime Organization
- The convention requires signatory flag states to ensure that ships flagged by them comply with at least these standards.
- The first version of SOLAS Treaty was passed in 1914 in response to the

sinking of the RMS Titanic, which prescribed numbers of lifeboats and other emergency equipment along with safety procedures, including continuous radio watches.
- The 1914 treaty never entered into force due to the outbreak of the First World War.
- Further versions were adopted in 1929 and 1948.
- SOLAS in its successive forms is generally regarded as the most important of all international treaties concerning the safety of merchant ships.

National Maritime Domain Awareness programme

- Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could impact the security, safety, economy or environment of the nation.
- The NMDA project was launched in accordance with the vision of Prime Minister on SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) and Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) are two centres under the National Maritime Domain Awareness (NMDA) Project.

Enhancement of Election Expenditure

- Under Rule 90 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, a candidate contesting Lok Sabha polls can spend up to Rs 70 lakh and up to Rs 28 lakh in an assembly election depending on the state in which he is contesting polls.
- Under Section 77 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, every candidate shall keep a separate and correct account of all expenditure incurred between the date on which he has been nominated and the date of declaration of the result.
- All candidates are required to submit their expenditure statement to the ECI within 30 days of the completion of the elections.
- An incorrect account or expenditure beyond the cap can lead to disqualification of the candidate by the ECI for up to three years, under Section 10A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- It can be noted that there is no cap on a political party's expenditure, which is often exploited by candidates of the party.
- However, all registered political parties have to submit a statement of their election expenditure to the ECI within 90 days of the completion of the elections.
- Recently the poll spending limit for candidates contesting Lok Sabha and

Assembly elections has been enhanced by 10 percent.

- Centre has approved this based on the recommendation of the Election Commission that contestants be allowed to spend more on campaigning keeping in mind difficulties they may face due to COVID-19 curbs.
- By the maximum expenditure a candidate can incur for campaigning in Lok Sabha polls is now Rs. 77 lakh.
- The last time the expenditure ceiling was enhanced was ahead of the Lok Sabha polls in 2014.
- For Assembly election, it has been hiked from Rs. 28 lakh to Rs. 30.80 Lakh.

Ayushman Sahakar

- Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has launched Ayushman Sahakar, a scheme to assist cooperatives in creation of healthcare infrastructure in the country.
- It is formulated by National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC).
- Under the initiatives NCDC would extend term loans to prospective cooperatives to the tune of Rs.10,000 crore in the coming years.
- Any Cooperative Society with suitable provision in its byelaws to undertake healthcare related activities would be able to access the NCDC fund.
- The scheme covers establishment, modernization, expansion, repairs, renovation of hospital and healthcare and education infrastructure.
- NCDC assistance will flow either through the State Governments/ UT Administrations or directly to the eligible cooperatives.
- The scheme also provides working capital and margin money to meet operational requirements.
- Further, the scheme provides interest subvention of 1% to women majority cooperatives.

Soil-Transmitted Helminthiases (STH)

- Soil-Transmitted Helminthiases (STH), also known as parasitic intestinal worm infection.
- It is known to have detrimental effects on children’s physical growth and well-being and can cause anaemia and under-nutrition.
- As per WHO Report on STH published in 2012, in India there were an estimated 64% children in the age group (1-14 years) at risk of STH.
- The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) completed the baseline

STH mapping across the country by the end of 2016.

- The data showed varied prevalence ranging from 12.5 % in Madhya Pradesh to 85% in Tamil Nadu.
- Regular deworming as advised by the World Health Organization eliminates worm infestation among children and adolescents living in areas with high STH burden.
- According to recent reports 14 States have shown reduction in the Soil-Transmitted Helminthiases (STH) and 9 states have shown substantial reduction in STH follow up prevalence survey.

Ghar Tak Fiber

- 'Ghar Tak Fibre' scheme in Bihar, aims to connect all 45,945 villages of Bihar with high-speed optical fibre internet by 31st March 2021.
- Under the scheme, Bihar has to provide at least five fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) connections per village and at least one WiFi hotspot per village.
- The Scheme will be implemented by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- The Scheme will lead the following

1. Digital services including e-Education,
2. E-Agriculture,
3. Tele-Medicine,
4. Tele-law and other social security schemes in Bihar ensuring easy access to all state natives.

- It is also likely to boost the local employment generation with the implementation of Bharat Net initiative which will be done by recruiting local workers.

Bharat Net Project

- Bharat Net, a special purpose vehicle envisaged in 2011, was an ambitious plan to connect all the 2,50,000 gram panchayats through a high-speed optical network.
- Initially it was launched as National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN), it was renamed as BharatNet Project in 2015.
- Under the BharatNet Project a village or a gram panchayat (GP) is considered 'lit up' when it consistently has internet connection and users at the end to verify the same.

Heeng Cultivation Project

- Recently CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bio resource Technology (IHBT), has initiated a mission to grow Heeng (asafoetida) in the Indian Himalayas.
- Heeng is not cultivated in India, India imports about 1,200 tonnes of raw heeng worth Rs. 600 crore from Iran, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.
- In 2017, IHBT approached the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) with an experimental project idea to cultivate heeng in the Indian Himalayas.
- In June 2020, the IHBT inked a Memorandum of Understanding with the agriculture ministry of Himachal Pradesh to jointly cultivate the heeng.
- The agriculture ministry has identified four locations in the Lahul-Spiti valley and has distributed heeng seeds to seven farmers in the region.
- However, the challenge for the scientists is that heeng seeds remain under a prolonged dormant phase and the rate of seed germination is just 1%.

Heeng

- Heeng is a herbaceous plant of the umbelliferae family.
- It is a perennial plant whose oleo gum resin is extracted from its thick roots and rhizome.
- The plant stores most of its nutrients inside its deep fleshy roots.
- It is endemic to Iran and Afghanistan, which are also the main global suppliers of it.
- It is very popular in India and is used in cooking.
- It thrives in dry and cold desert conditions, during extreme weather, the plant can get dormant.
- The plant can withstand a maximum temperature between 35 and 40 degree, whereas during winters, it can survive in temperatures up to minus 4 degree.
- Regions with sandy soil, very little moisture and annual rainfall of not more than 200mm are considered conducive for heeng cultivation.
- It has medicinal properties, including relief for digestive, spasmodic and stomach disorders, asthma and bronchitis.
- The herb is used to help with painful or excessive bleeding during menstruation and premature labour.

Source: PIB, the Hindu, Air News



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