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Directorate General of Foreign Trade

- 'COVID-19 Helpdesk' was set up by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), as trade is facing difficulties due to Covid-19 case surge.
- The Helpdesk would look into issues related to import and export licensing, customs-clearance delays, banking matters, etc.
- The DGFT, an arm of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is the "promoter and facilitator" of exports/imports (EXIM).
- Right from its inception till 1991, the DGFT has been essentially involved in the regulation and promotion of foreign trade through regulation.
- It is the main governing body in matters related to EXIM Policy. It is responsible for formulating and implementing the Foreign Trade Policy with the main objective of promoting India's exports.
- The DGFT also issues scrips/authorization to exporters and monitors their corresponding obligations through a network of 24 regional offices.

Supply Chain Resilience Initiative

- The Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) was formally launched in a Trilateral Ministerial Meeting between India, Japan and Australia.
- The SCRI aims to create a virtuous cycle of enhancing supply chain resilience with a view to eventually attaining strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth in the region.
- Possible policy measures to strengthen supply chains may include,
    1. Supporting the enhanced utilization of digital technology; and
    2. Supporting trade and investment diversification.
- The following would be implemented as initial projects of SCRI,
    1. Sharing of best practices on supply chain resilience; and
    2. Holding investment promotion events and buyer-seller matching events to provide opportunities for stakeholders to explore the possibility of diversification of their supply chains.
- The expansion of the SCRI may be considered based on consensus, if needed, in due course.
- To quickly take forward the initiative, the Ministers explored convening the Trilateral Ministerial Meeting, once in four months.
- To know more about the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, click here.

Project DANTAK

- Project DANTAK - a project that constructed important infrastructure in Bhutan - is commemorating its Diamond Jubilee in Bhutan.
- It was established in 1961 as a result of the visionary leadership of the Third King of Bhutan and then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.
- It is one of the oldest Projects of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- It completed the road connecting Samdrup Jongkhar to Trashigang in 1968. Also, Thimphu was connected to Phuentsholing.
- DANTAK was tasked to construct the pioneering motorable roads there.
- Other notable projects executed by DANTAK - Construction of Paro Airport, Yonphula Airfield, Thimphu-Trashigang Highway, Telecommunication & Hydro Power Infrastructure, etc.
- The medical and education facilities established by DANTAK in far flung areas were often the first in those locations.

Border Roads Organisation

- It was conceptualized by the first Prime Minister of India in 1960. It comes under the control of the Ministry of Defence.
- It primarily meets the strategic needs of the Armed Forces and the country towards **infrastructure development of remote Border areas** of North & North East states.
- The infrastructure development includes Roads, Bridges, Highways, Airports, Tunnels, Buildings and other structures.
- BRO is upgrading and maintaining 26 National Highways spread across the North, North Eastern and Central part of India.

Traditional Organic Areas

- Areas under Car Nicobar and Nancowry group of islands in UT of A&N Islands have been certified as Traditional Organic Areas by Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW).
- They became the first large contiguous territory to be conferred with organic certification under the Large Area Certification (LAC) scheme of the PGS-India (Participatory Guarantee System) certification program.
- After a committee verifies the area’s organic status and recommends for declaration of the area as certified organic under the PGS-India certification programme, the Government of India declares them.
- The administration has banned the sale, purchase and usage of any chemical inputs of GMO seeds in these islands.
- DAC&FW in consultation with states is working to identify more Traditional Organic Areas to transform them into certified organic production hubs.

- DAC&FW will also facilitate the marketing of area-specific niche products through branding and labelling.

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana

- To bring isolated individual farmers to the certified organic fold, DAC&FW has launched an organic certification support scheme under Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).
- Individual farmers can avail financial assistance for certification under any of the prevailing certification systems of NPOP or PGS-India.
- Assistance will be available as reimbursement of certification cost directly to certification agencies through the states.
- DAC&FW under its flagship scheme of PKVY has launched a unique quick certification programme "Large Area Certification" (LAC) to harness the traditional/ default organic areas in hills, tribal districts, etc.
- LAC is a quick, cost-effective certification process and farmers don't have to wait for 2-3 years for marketing PGS organic certified products.
- Under LAC, each village in the area is considered as one cluster/group. Documentations are simple and maintained village-wise.
- All farmers with their farmland and livestock need to adhere to the standard requirements and on being verified get certified en-mass without the need to go under conversion period of 2-3 years.
- Certification is renewed on annual basis through annual verification by a process of peer appraisals as per the process of PGS-India.

Aditya-L1 Support Cell

- Aditya-L1 Support Cell (AL1SC), a community service centre, has been set up to **bring all science data on board Aditya-L1** to a single web-based interface. This will maximize utilization of data from Aditya-L1.
- [Aditya-L1 is India's first dedicated solar space mission.]
- AL1SC is a joint effort of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Aryabhatta Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology.
- It is set up at the transit campus of ARIES at Haldwani, Uttarakhand.
- AL1SC will act as conduit between the users (student and faculty members from research Institutes/ Universities etc.) and payload teams of Aditya-L1 and solar astronomy research community at large.
- It will develop specific tools to assist guest observers/researchers in analyzing the data and to prepare proposals for Aditya-L1 observations.
- It will assist ISRO with the design and development of the required analysis software for handling scientific data.
- It will provide the co-aligned data from other global observatories that can

complement the data obtained from Aditya-L1 to build a solar features event knowledgebase.
- This knowledgebase will be the compendium of different solar features seen on the surface of the Sun and in the heliosphere.
- In addition, AL1SC will build capacity by establishing periodic training of the national user community on data analysis and proposal preparation.

SIPRI Data

- The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which tracks military expenditure and arms trade globally, has published the latest military expenditure database.
- Military spending as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), reached a global average of 2.4% in 2020, up from 2.2% in 2019.
- **Largest Military Spender** - The US, China, India, Russia and the UK together accounted for 62% of global military expenditure in 2020. Other top spenders are Saudi Arabia, Germany and France.
- Of the money spent on military globally, the US, China and India accounted for 39%, 13% and 3.7% of the global share respectively.
- While India's spending since 2019 grew by 2.1%, the increase for China was at 1.9%. The US's spending grew by 4.4% since 2019.
- From 2011 to 2020, American military expenditure dropped by 10%, but China saw a 76% growth while India's military spending grew by 34%.
- **Asia and Oceania** - Military spending was 2.5% higher in 2020 than in 2019 and 47% higher than in 2011, continuing an uninterrupted upward trend since 1989.
- It attributed the rise primarily to increases in spending by China and India, which together accounted for 62% of total military expenditure in the region in 2020.
- **Europe** - Military spending rose by 4.0% in 2020.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa** - Military expenditure increased by 3.4% in 2020.
- **Middle Eastern Countries** - The combined military spending of the 11 Middle Eastern countries decreased by 6.5% in 2020.
- **Military Burden** - The 2.6% increase in world military spending came in a year when the global GDP shrank by 4.4%, largely due to the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- As a result, military spending as a share of GDP - the military burden - reached a global average of 2.4% in 2020, up from 2.2% in 2019.
- This was the biggest year-on-year rise in the military burden since the global financial and economic crisis in 2009.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express, Down To Earth

