UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 28-05-2020

Risk Free Status

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to allow banks to assign zero risk weight for loans that will be extended to the micro, medium and small enterprises (MSMEs) under the Atmanirbar Bharat package.
- Zero risk would mean that banks will not have to set aside additional capital for these loans.
- The move is aimed at encouraging lenders to extend credit, as banks have turned risk averse and have been reluctant to lend.
- The Finance Ministry had requested the central bank to make these loans risk free, following an interaction with banks.
- As a part of the package, a ₹3 lakh crore loan for the MSME sector was announced.
- This will be guaranteed by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) in the form of a Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL) facility.
- However, such loans would attract a risk weight of a minimum 20% since these don't come with direct government guarantee.
- This facility is similar to the loans that are guaranteed by the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).
- After banks highlighted the issue with the government, the Finance Ministry asked the RBI to waive the requirement of assigning a risk weight to the loans.
- The RBI is likely to waive the requirement of risk weight, the Finance Ministry is expected to issue detailed guidelines on this credit guarantee loan issues.

Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL) facility

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for MSMEs and MUDRA borrowers.
- Under the Scheme, 100% guarantee coverage to be provided by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) for additional funding of up to Rs. 3 lakh crore to eligible MSMEs and interested MUDRA borrowers.

- The credit will be provided in the form of a Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL) facility.
- The scheme will be applicable till October 31, or till an amount of ₹3 lakh crore is sanctioned, whichever is earlier.
- Tenor of the loan under Scheme shall be four years with a moratorium period of one year on the principal amount.
- No Guarantee Fee shall be charged by NCGTC from the Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) under the Scheme.
- Interest rates under the Scheme shall be capped at 9.25% for banks and FIs, and at 14% for NBFCs.

National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC)

- National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC) is a private limited company incorporated under the Companies Act 1956.
- In 2014 it was established by the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, as a wholly owned company of the Government of India, to act as a common trustee company for multiple credit guarantee funds.
- Credit guarantee programmes are designed to share the lending risk of the lenders and in turn, facilitate access to finance for the prospective borrowers.
- The common architecture of NCGTC has been designed to handle multiple guarantee programmes under a single umbrella organization.
- This is with a view to achieve operational efficiencies and economies of scale through sharing of resources such as Technology, premises, manpower, risk management solutions and other support services.
- The intent of NCGTC is therefore, to manage multiple guarantee schemes as part of a larger financial inclusion programme of the government covering different cross-sections and segments of the economy like students, micro entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, SMEs, skill and vocational training needs, etc.
- Presently, there are five dedicated credit guarantee Trusts under the Management of NCGTC viz.

1. Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Educational Loans (CGFEL),
2. Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Skill Development (CGFSD),
3. Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Factoring (CGFF),
4. Credit Guarantee Fund for Micro Units (CGFMU).
5. Credit Guarantee Fund for Stand up India (CGFSI).

- Cumulatively, these five Trusts have a committed credit guarantee corpus of ₹ 13,000 crore.

Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)

- Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGS) was launched by the Government of India (GoI) to make available collateral-free credit to the micro and small enterprise sector.
- Both the existing and the new enterprises are eligible to be covered under the scheme.
- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, GoI and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), established a Trust named Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) to implement the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises.
- The scheme was formally launched in 2000.
- The corpus of CGTMSE is being contributed by the GoI and SIDBI in the ratio of 4:1 respectively.

Charru mussel

- Charru mussel is an invasive mussel native to the South and Central American coasts.
- Externally, the Charru mussel resembles the green and brown mussels (kallummekka in Malayalam), but is much smaller in size.
- Its colour varies from black to brown, purple or dark green.
- It is spreading quickly in the backwaters of Kerala, elbowing out other mussel and clam species and threatening the livelihoods of fishermen engaged in molluscan fisheries.
- The rapid spread of the Charru mussel (Mytella strigata) may have been triggered by Cyclone Ockhi which struck the region in 2017.
- In all probability, the mussel reached the Indian shores attached to ship hulls or as larval forms in ballast water discharges.
- Surveys show the presence of the Charru mussel in the Kadinamkulam, Paravur, Edava-Nadayara, Ashtamudi, Kayamkulam, Vembanad, Chettuva and Ponnani estuaries/backwaters.
- Ashtamudi Lake, a Ramsar site in Kollam district, remains the worst-hit.
- The short-necked clam fisheries in the lake had obtained an eco label from the Marine Stewardship Council and about 3,000 people are dependent on fisheries there.

- With a population as high as 11,384 per sq metre here, it has replaced the Asian green mussel (Perna viridis) and the edible oyster Magallana bilineata (known locally as muringa).

Marine Stewardship council

- The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an independent non-profit organization which sets a standard for sustainable fishing.
- Fisheries that wish to demonstrate they are well-managed and sustainable compared to the science-based MSC standard are assessed by a team of experts who are independent of both the fishery and the MSC.
- Seafood products can display the blue MSC ecolabel only if that seafood can be traced back through the supply chain to a fishery that has been certified against the MSC standard.
- The mission of the MSC is to use its ecolabel, for which the MSC receives royalties for licensing it to products, and fishery certification program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognizing and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood, and working with partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis.
- Another organization, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, promotes and certifies sustainable aquaculture.

Gangetic Dolphins

- The South Asian river dolphin, an endangered freshwater or river dolphin found in the region of Indian subcontinent, which is split into two subspecies,

1. The Ganges river dolphin ~3,500 individuals
2. Indus river dolphin ~1,500 individuals.

- The Ganges river dolphin is primarily found in the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers and their tributaries in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal
- The Ganges river dolphin has been recognized by the government of India as its National Aquatic Animal, this decision was taken in the first meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) chaired by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in 2009.
- It is also an official animal of the Indian city of Guwahati.

Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary

- Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary is located in Bhagalpur District of Bihar, India.
- The sanctuary is a 60 km stretch of the Ganges River from Sultanganj to Kahalgaon in Bhagalpur District.
- Designated in 1991, it is protected area for the endangered Gangetic dolphins in Asia.
- According to the latest estimate, there were nearly 170 dolphins in the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary.
- The last survey of Bihar's dolphin population was conducted in 2018.
- It was found that there were 1,363 dolphins in the rivers in the state.
- Going by this number, Bihar is home to around half of the estimated 2,500-3,000 Gangetic dolphins in India.

India's first Dolphin Observatory

- Bihar government is setting up India's first observatory for the mammals in Bhagalpur district at the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS).
- The structural design of the observatory is such that it will promote eco-tourism.
- The observatory is being built on the Sultanganj-Aguwani Ghat bridge over the Ganga, it will be in the middle of the river, where bridge's width will be nearly 100 feet.
- The four-storey observatory will be 40 feet high, with the bridge passing through its middle.
- The observatory building will be transparent, with glass from all sides to ensure people can watch the dolphins.
- It will give people an incentive to visit the place and see dolphins in the sanctuary without disturbing them.
- There would be no bad or adverse impact on the river's ecology as the observatory is being constructed on a bridge over the Ganga.
- There are also suggestions to build another dolphin observatory at the confluence of the Ganga and Punpun rivers near Fatuha in Patna, about 5-15 dolphins are visible at the site at all times of the year.

World Dugong Day

- 'World Dugong Day' is celebrated on May 28, 2020.
- Dugongs are an endangered marine species like sea turtles, seahorses, sea cucumbers and others.
- Dugongs are an important part of the marine ecosystem and their

depletion will have effects all the way up the food chain.

- Dugongs are mammals, which means they give birth to live young and then produce milk and nurse them.
- Once the female is pregnant, she will carry the unborn baby, called a foetus for 12-14 months before giving birth.
- Female dugongs give birth underwater to a single calf at three to seven-year intervals.
- Dugongs graze on seagrass, especially young shoots and roots in shallow coastal waters.
- They can consume up to 40 kilograms of seagrass in a day.
- They are protected in India under Schedule I of the Wild (Life) Protection Act, 1972.
- There were just 250 dugongs in the Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat according to the 2013 survey report of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI).
- Hundreds of dugongs inhabited waters off the Odisha, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh coasts two centuries back, but they are extinct in these areas now.
- Seagrass in Odisha's Chilika lake is a proper habitat for dugongs. However, there is not extant population in Chilika.
- Human activities such as the destruction and modification of habitat, pollution, rampant illegal fishing activities, vessel strikes, unsustainable hunting or poaching and unplanned tourism are the main threats to dugongs.
- The loss of seagrass beds due to ocean floor trawling was the most important factor behind dwindling dugong populations in many parts of the world.

Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme.
- The Government of India is a signatory to the CMS since 1983.
- India has signed non-legally binding Memorandums of Understanding with CMS on the conservation and management of

1. Siberian Cranes (1998),
2. Marine Turtles (2007),
3. Dugongs (2008) and

4. Raptors (2016)

- The 13th Conference of Parties (CoP) of CMS was hosted by India in February 2020 at Gandhinagar in Gujarat.

Europe's First COVID-19 Free Country

- Montenegro is the first country in Europe to declare itself coronavirus-free.
- Montenegro is a Balkan country with rugged mountains, medieval villages and a narrow strip of beaches along its Adriatic coastline.
- 1,300m-deep Tara River Canyon encompasses the country.
- Tourism operators have already seized the opportunity to brand Montenegro as "Europe's First COVID-19 Free Country".
- To prevent any backsliding on the health front, Montenegro will only allow visitors from countries that have kept coronavirus cases low at under 25 patients per 100,000 people.
- In picturesque coastal city Kotor there have been no reported cases of coronavirus.
- Montenegro's size has certainly been of aid in its fight against the virus: the country is one of the smallest in the world with only about 630,000 people.

Balkan Countries

- The Balkans also known as the Balkan Peninsula, is a geographic area in Southeast Europe with various definitions and meanings, including geopolitical and historical.
- The region takes its name from the Balkan Mountains that stretch throughout the whole of Bulgaria from the Serbian–Bulgarian border to the Black Sea coast.
- The Balkan Peninsula is bordered by the Adriatic Sea in the northwest, the Ionian Sea in the southwest, the Aegean Sea in the south, the Turkish Straits in the east, and the Black Sea in the northeast.
- The definition of the Balkan Peninsula's natural borders do not coincide with the technical definition of a peninsula and hence modern geographers reject the idea of a Balkan peninsula, while scholars usually discuss the Balkans as a region.
- The term has acquired a stigmatized and pejorative meaning related to the process of Balkanization, and hence the preferred alternative term used for the region is Southeast Europe.

Source: The Hindu, Down to Earth, Times of India