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Falling Rupee Reserves of Iran

Why in News

Recently, Indian merchants have almost entirely stopped signing new **export contracts** with Iranian buyers due to caution about **Iran's falling rupee reserves** with Indian banks.

- Earlier in 2020, the Ministry of External Affairs informed that **India is no longer involved in the Farzad-B gas field project of Iran.** The reasons included **policy changes by the Iranian government, Iran's uncertain finances, and the USA sanctions situation.**
- In 2020, Iran also passed a bill allowing the government to slash four zeros from the Rial and authorizing its replacement with **another basic unit of currency called the toman (redenomination).**



Key Points

- **Falling Reserves:**

Iran's rupee reserves in India's **UCO and IDBI Bank**, the two lenders **authorised to facilitate rupee trade**, have depleted significantly.

- **Reasons:**

- Under the **USA sanctions**, **Iran is unable to use US dollars** to transact oil sales.
- Iran previously had a deal to sell oil to India in exchange for rupees, which it used to import critical goods, including agricultural commodities, but **India stopped buying Tehran's oil in May 2019 after a US sanctions waiver expired.**
- Iran **continued using its rupees to buy goods** from India, but **after 22 months of no crude sales, Iran's rupee reserves have fallen.**

Iran's reserves have reduced significantly and will be over soon probably because trade has stopped.

- **Implications:**

- **Apprehension of Exporters:**

Exporters are **not sure whether they would be paid on time** for new shipments and they are avoiding dealing with Iran since payments are getting delayed.

- **Falling Indian Exports:**

- India's overall exports to Iran **fell 42% in 2020** from a year ago to USD 2.2 billion, the **lowest in over a decade**.
- The **fall is continuing in 2021** and in January this year exports more than halved from a year ago to **USD 100.20 million**.

- **Growing Influence of China:**

Recently signed deals between Iran and China will **vastly expand Chinese presence** in banking, telecommunications, ports, railways and dozens of other projects.

- **Saving India's Interests:**

The **China Iran strategic partnership** fructifying USD 400 billion deal may be an impediment for Indian entry routes into Afghanistan through **Chabahar** and further connectivity to **International North South Transportation Corridor (INSTC)**, although Iran has not given any signals of disruption of these projects.

- **India's Role in the Region:**

Maintaining ties with Iran even as it forges a new relationship with Saudi Arabia and Israel is critical for **its balancing policy in West Asia**.

- **Avoiding Sectarian Tension:**

Since **India is home to sizable populations of both Shia and Sunni Muslims** and seeks to isolate itself from any **sectarian tensions** in the region, India should do well to neither completely break off ties with Iran nor go against the United States outright.

- **India's Energy security:**

India has stopped purchasing Iranian oil, which accounts for around **90% of its imports from the Islamic nation**.

India was Iran's **leading oil client** after China until **mid-2018**.

- **Peaceful Afghanistan:**

- India, having made significant investments in Afghanistan, will always hope for an Afghan elected, Afghan led, Afghan owned peace and reconciliation process and a popular democratic government in Afghanistan.
- However, India has to be watchful of **Iran - Pakistan- China axis** developing in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan, with tentacles in the form of terror groups inside it.

- **Pakistan's Influence:**

Pakistan is very active in the Middle-east. Using the platform of **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** and making connections with the particular Arab countries, Pakistan is trying to get support on the **Kashmir issue.**

Way Forward

- In 2019, New Delhi seems to have weighed in favor of Indo-USA ties by deciding to halt oil imports from Iran. However, it will have to find a way, either by persuading Washington to grant an exemption or by circumventing USA sanctions like it did in 2012-13, to continue its relationship with Iran in order to **secure its energy supply** and its regional foreign policy objectives.
- India is very **reliant upon Middle East oil and gas** and must maintain cordial relations with most of the major suppliers, including **Iran**, UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, as well as Iraq.

Source:TH

India - Sweden Virtual Summit

Why in News

Indian Prime Minister held a **Virtual Summit** with the Prime Minister of Sweden to discuss bilateral issues and other regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

The Summit provided an opportunity to discuss the international situation and response to the **Covid-19 pandemic** as well as regional and global issues of mutual importance including climate action, sustainable development, gender equality, counter-terrorism and disaster resilient infrastructure, among others.



Key Points

- **Highlights of the Summit:**

- **Economic Cooperation:**

- Welcomed the **launch of a second joint industrial R&D call on Smart and Sustainable Cities**, Transport Systems, Clean Technologies and Digitalization and Internet of Things under **India-Sweden Collaborative Industrial Research & Development Programme**.
- Confirmed the ambition to scale up bilateral research and innovation on **Circular Economy** including the themes of Health and Life Sciences and Waste to Wealth during 2021.

- **Cooperation in Other Sectors:**

- Welcomed the creation of a **Sweden-India Health Hub at AIIMS-Jodhpur**.
- **Noted advances in hydrogen research and their possible applications**, i.e. in the Energy and other key industries.

- **Cooperation at Multilateral Forums:**

- Welcomed Sweden's decision to join the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**.
- Sweden **congratulated India on its eighth term as an elected member of the UN Security Council for 2021-2022**.
- Reaffirmed the **importance of the urgent reform of the UN Security Council**, including its expansion not only to sustain credibility of multilateralism but also to deliver on the several serious common challenges facing humanity.
- India **thanked Sweden for its support to India's permanent membership of a reformed and expanded UN Security Council**.
- India **congratulated Sweden on assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe)**.

- **Climate Action:**

- Welcomed the USA re-entry into the **Paris agreement** which gives new momentum to global climate action ahead of **COP 26** to be held in **Glasgow, UK**.
- Agreed to continue their outreach to expand the membership of the **Leadership Group on Industry Transition (LeadIT)**.
- Agreed further to intensify their collaboration within the framework of the **Arctic Council** to address global environmental protection and combating climate change.

- **Security:**
 - Welcomed the finalization of the **General Security Agreement in 2019** on the exchange and mutual protection of classified information, enabling a comprehensive partnership in all defence sectors.
 - Indian Prime Minister **invited Swedish defence firms to participate in the "Make in India programme", especially in the two Defence Production Corridors** in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.
- **India - Sweden Relations:**
 - **Political Relations:** The first **India-Nordic Summit** took place in the year 2018.
 - The King and Queen of Sweden gave a Royal Visit to India in December, 2019.
 - **Economic and Commercial relations:** The bilateral trade between two countries presently stands around USD 2 billion. After China and Japan, India is Sweden's third largest trade partner in Asia.
 - The main items of **Indian exports to Sweden** are articles of apparel, clothing accessories; textiles yarn, fabrics, made-ups; manufactures of metals; road vehicles; general industrial machinery and equipment.
 - The main items of **Indian imports from Sweden** are pulp and waste paper; road vehicles; paper and paper board, general industrial machinery and equipment etc.
 - Being a member of **European Union**, Sweden can play an important role in India's partnership with the European Union and EU countries.
 - The close relations will **further the values of democracy**, rule of law, pluralism, equality, freedom of speech, and respect for human rights.

First India-Nordic Summit

- It was held in April, 2018.
- **India** and five Nordic countries - **Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark** held the summit to deepen cooperation.
- **Significance of Nordic for India:**
 - Discussion of key issues of **security, economic growth and climate change**.
 - India can imitate the **Nordic approach** to innovation systems, characterised by a strong collaboration between public sector, private sector and academia.
 - In areas like **clean technologies, maritime solutions, port modernisation, food processing, health, life-sciences and agriculture**, Nordic solutions can be useful.

Leadership Group on Industry Transition

- The Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT) gathers countries and companies that are committed to action to achieve the **Paris Agreement**.

- It was launched by the **governments of Sweden and India at the UN Climate Action Summit** in September 2019 and is supported by the **World Economic Forum**.
- LeadIT members subscribe to the notion that energy-intensive industry can and must progress on low-carbon pathways, aiming to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Source: PIB

Road to Gender Equality: UNDP

Why in News

Recently, the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** in its latest report named “**Protecting Women's Livelihoods in Times of Pandemic: Temporary Basic Income and the Road to Gender Equality**” has proposed a **Temporary Basic Income (TBI)** for poor women in developing countries.

The proposal comes ahead of the **International Women’s Day (8th march)** celebrations.

Key Points

- **Gender Inequality:**

- **Unpaid Labor:**

- On an average, **women spend 2.4 more hours per day than men on unpaid care and domestic work.**
 - Among people who participate in the paid economy, **women spend an average of four hours more per day** than men on paid and unpaid work combined.

- **Discriminative Policies:**

- Beyond complex gendered norms, some of the economic vulnerability imposed on women also comes from **policy and political decisions** that have persistently **deprived them of compensation in the form of equal pay, paid maternity leave, universal health, unemployment and care benefits.**

- **Effect of Covid:**

- Women have been hit harder than men by the **pandemic**, losing income and leaving the labour market at a greater rate.

- This vulnerability is due to **gender inequality**.

- Women are 25% more likely than men to live in extreme poverty.
 - Only one in ten countries and territories, however, have policies addressing women's economic security needs, according to the **Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker**.

- Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker is an initiative of **UNDP** and **UN Women** which shows that social protection and jobs response to the pandemic has largely overlooked women's needs.

- **Major Proposals:**

- **Temporary Basic Income:**

- A TBI for millions of the world's poorest women, **to help them cope with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic** and alleviate the economic pressures they face every day.
 - A monthly investment of **0.07-0.31%** of a developing countries' **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** could **provide reliable financial security to 613 million working-aged women living in poverty.**
 - The benefits of such a meaningful investment could not only help women and their families absorb the shock of the pandemic, but also **empower women to make independent decisions about money, livelihoods and life choices.**

- **Policies Favouring Women:**

- A set of policies should be aimed at recognising the needs of all workers, men and women, to **reconcile their household obligations with paid work** and allow for a more even distribution of care and domestic work by institutionally acknowledging it as a shared responsibility.
 - Such policies include **guaranteed paid maternity leave, extended paternity leave** and the enforcement of its take-up.
 - Establishing flexible arrangements such as **part-time work** or the provision of **breastfeeding facilities** in the workplace that allow parents to return to the workforce shortly after having a child should also be encouraged.

- **Reform Labour Market:**

Beyond reconciling paid work and family responsibilities, governments must address other sources of the gender pay gap such as **horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market.** The response should include **anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action initiatives.**

- **Horizontal segregation** can be broadly defined as the concentration of men and women in **different kinds of jobs.**
 - **Vertical segregation** denotes the situation whereby **opportunities** for career progression for a particular gender within a company or sector are limited.

- **Related Initiatives of Other Countries:**
 - **Philippines:**
Expanded Breastfeeding Promotion Act, 2009.
 - **Mexico:**
Introduced reforms to its **Social Security Law allowing men to access childcare services.**
 - **Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bolivia:**
They have allowed parents to reduce work hours for Covid-19 family care.
 - **Cape Verde, North Macedonia and Trinidad and Tobago:**
They have enabled employees with care responsibilities to perform their work remotely.
- **Indian Provisions to Promote Gender Equality:**
 - **Ministry of Women & Child Development:**
A separate ministry was established in 2006 to boost employability of Women.
 - **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017:**
 - It allows for pregnant women to take leave for a total of 26 weeks out of which up to 8 weeks can be claimed before delivery.
 - The woman is also supposed to get paid a benefit at the rate of her daily wage for three months before she goes on maternity leave.
 - **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013:**
It has been enacted covering all the women, in spite of their age and employment status, and protects them from sexual harassment at workplaces, in both the public and private sectors of the industry where the women are employed.
 - **Social Security Code, Code on Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Code, and Industrial Relations Code, 2020:**
Under the new codes, women have to be permitted to work in every sector at night, but it has to be ensured that provision for their security is made by the employer and consent of women is taken before they work at night.

Source: DTE

QS World Subject Rankings 2021

Why in News

25 programmes offered by higher education institutions in India **ranked among the top 100 in the world** in their respective subject categories, according to the **latest edition (11th) of the QS World University Rankings by Subject.**

Key Points

- **About the QS World Subject Rankings:**

- **Quacquarelli Symonds (QS):** It is a leading global career and education network for ambitious professionals looking to further their personal and professional development.

QS develops and successfully implements methods of comparative data collection and analysis used to highlight institutions' strengths.

- **QS World University Rankings:** It is **an annual publication** of university rankings which **comprises the global overall and subject rankings.**

Six parameters and their weightage for the evaluation:

- Academic Reputation (40%)
 - Employer Reputation (10%)
 - Faculty/Student Ratio (20%)
 - Citations per faculty (20%)
 - International Faculty Ratio (5%)
 - International Student Ratio (5%)
- **QS World University Rankings by Subject:** It calculates performance based on **four parameters** — academic reputation, employer reputation, research impact (citations per paper) and the productivity of an institution's research faculty.

- **Top Performers:**

Globally **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT -USA)** and **Harvard (USA)** are among top performers, **Russia and China** record best-ever performances.

- **India's Performance:**

- The 2021 QS's global university performance comparison offered independent **data on the performance of 253 programs at 52 Indian higher education institutions, across 51 academic disciplines.**
- The **number of Indian universities/institutes in the top 100 subject rankings** has **increased from 8 to 12 this year.**
 - **12 Indian institutions** that have made it to the top 100 of the world - IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi, IIT Madras, IIT Kharagpur, IISC Bangalore, IIT Guwahati, IIM Bangalore, IIM Ahmedabad, JNU, Anna University, University of Delhi and OP Jindal University.
 - **IIT-Bombay has cornered more top 100 positions** than any other Indian institution.
- **Except one, all the 25 programmes are in institutions run by either the state or union government.** However, **last year, this number stood at 26.**
 - **17 of the 25** globally ranked Indian programmes are in **engineering.** **IIT-Madras's Petroleum Engineering programme registered the best performance among Indian institutes - 30th** in the world.
- The **government-run Institutions of Eminence (IoE) remains significantly better-represented in the rankings** than the private ones.
 - **OP Jindal Global University** has entered the global top-100 for law (76th). This is the **only top-100 result achieved by a private IoE.**
 - **IoE:** It is a government's scheme to provide the regulatory architecture for setting up or upgrading of 20 Institutions (10 from public sector and 10 from the private sector) as world-class teaching and research institutions.
- The **All India Institute of Medical Sciences remained the only institution in the top 300 in the area of life sciences and medicine,** but also dropped more than 10 places.

- **Analysis:**
 - One of the biggest **challenges faced by India is providing high-quality tertiary education** in the face of exploding demand - this much was recognized by last year's **National Education Policy (NEP)**, which set the ambitious target of a 50% gross enrolment ratio by 2035.
 - It should therefore be **small cause for concern that the number of Indian programs featuring across 51 subject rankings has actually decreased over the last year** – from 235 to 233.
 - While this is a minor decrease, it is indicative of the fact that **expanding provision in a way that does not sacrifice quality** remains a highly-challenging task.
 - **A number of programs at India's privately-run prospective Institutions of Eminence have made progress** this year, demonstrating the positive role that well-regulated private provision can have in enhancing India's higher education sector.
 - **India remains at the forefront of global environmental science research.** Data indicates that **India ranks 5th in terms of its research footprint** in this field – behind only Germany, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
 - **Commonalities between nations** that are improving and nations that are not **(three factors):**
 - First, **an international outlook** – both in terms of faculty body and research relationships– correlates strongly with improved performance.
 - Second, rising universities have received **strong targeted investment from governments** over a decade or more– particularly in China, Russia, and Singapore.
 - Third, **improving relationships with industry** is correlated with better employment, research, and innovation outcomes.

National Institutional Ranking Framework

- The **Ministry of Human Resource Development (now Ministry of Education)** established the **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) in September 2015.**
- This framework **outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country** according to parameters covering: Teaching, Learning and Resources; Research and Professional Practice; Graduation Outcomes; Outreach and Inclusivity; and Perception.

Source: IE

CSIR Floriculture Mission

Why in News

Recently, **CSIR Floriculture Mission** has been approved for implementation in 21 States and Union Territories of India.

CSIR's Societal Portal has also been launched along with the Android App.

Key Points

- **About the MISSION:**

- **Floriculture is a branch of horticulture that deals with the cultivation, processing and marketing of ornamental plants** vis-à-vis landscaping of small or large areas, and **maintenance of gardens** so that the surroundings may appear aesthetically pleasant.
- The mission will **focus on commercial floral crops, seasonal/annual crops, wild ornaments and cultivation of flower crops for honey bee rearing.**

Some of the popular crops include Gladiolus, Canna, Carnation, Chrysanthemum, Gerbera, Liliium, Marigold, Rose, Tuberosa etc.

- In the mission, available knowledge base in **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** Institutes will be utilized and leveraged to help Indian farmers and industry.

The Indian floriculture market was worth Rs. 15,700 crore in 2018. The market is projected to reach Rs. 47,200 crore by 2024 during 2019-24.

- Along with **CSIR, other implementing agencies** involved are:

- **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**,
- **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)**,
- **APEDA and TRIFED**,
- Fragrance and Flavour Development Centre (FFDC), Kannauj, and
- **Ministry of Commerce** and **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)**.

- **Significance of the Mission:**

- **Raising Income:** Floriculture has the potential to **provide employment** to a large number of people through nursery raising, floriculture farming, **entrepreneurship development** for nursery trade, value addition and export.
- **Agro Climatic diversity:** India has diverse agro-climatic and edaphic conditions (physical, chemical, and biological properties of soil), and rich plant diversity, still it shares only 0.6% of the global floriculture market.
- **Import Substitution: At least 1200 million USD worth of floriculture products are being imported by India every year** from different countries.
- The **convergence** of Floriculture with **Apiculture (beekeeping)** as envisaged in the mission will yield even greater benefits.

- **Other Related Initiative (Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture):**

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.

- **About CSIR's Societal Portal:**

- This Portal has been developed by CSIR Team with the help of **MyGov Team**.
- The Portal is to **facilitate the public to submit the societal problems** that can be resolved using S&T interventions.
- This is the first step in terms of seeking inputs on challenges and problems being faced by different stakeholders in society.

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research

- It was established by the Government of India in September 1942 as an autonomous body. It comes under the **Ministry of Science & Technology**.
- It is known for its cutting edge research and development knowledge base in diverse science and technology areas.
- It has been **ranked first in the Nature Ranking Index-2020**.

The Nature Index provides close to a real-time proxy of high-quality research output and collaboration at the institutional, national and regional level.

Source: PIB

Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet Technology

Why in News

The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has successfully conducted the test of the **Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) technology**, which is crucial for the indigenous development of long range air-to-air missiles.

Key Points

- **Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) Technology:**
 - SFDR technology is a missile propulsion system based on the concept of **Ramjet Engine** principle.
 - The system utilises a **solid fuelled** air-breathing ramjet engine.
 - Unlike solid-propellant rockets, the Ramjet takes up oxygen from the atmosphere during flight. Thus, it is light in weight and can carry more fuel.
 - DRDO began developing SFDR first in 2017 and had conducted successful tests in 2018 and 2019 as well.

- **Significance:**
 - Successful demonstration of SFDR technology will enable DRDO to **develop indigenous long range air-to-air missiles.**
 - At present, such technology is available only with a **handful of countries in the world.**
 - Air-to-air missiles which use SFDR technology can **achieve longer ranges** as they **do not require oxidisers** (take oxygen from the atmosphere).
 - The missile based on SFDR **fly at supersonic speeds and high manoeuvrability ensures** the target aircraft cannot get away.
- **Defence Research and Development Organisation:**
 - Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) works under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Defence, Government of India.**
 - It is working to establish a world class science and technology base for India and provides Defence Services decisive edge by equipping them with internationally competitive systems and solutions.
 - It was established in 1958 after combining **Technical Development Establishment (TDEs) of the Indian Army** and the **Directorate of Technical Development & Production (DTDP)** with the **Defence Science Organisation (DSO).**
 - It is responsible for carrying out **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).**

Ramjet

- A ramjet is a form of air-breathing jet engine that uses the vehicle's forward motion to compress incoming air for combustion without a rotating compressor.
- Ramjets work most efficiently at supersonic speeds but they are not efficient at hypersonic speeds.

Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme

- IGMDP was the brainchild of renowned scientist **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.**
- It was intended to **attain self-sufficiency** in the field of missile technology.
- After keeping in mind the requirements of various types of missiles by the defense forces, the program recognized the need to develop five missile systems.
- The IGMDP formally got the approval of Indian government on 26th July, 1983.
- The missiles developed under IGMDP are:
 - Short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile – **Prithvi**
 - Intermediate-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile – **Agni**
 - Short-range low-level surface-to-air missile – **Trishul**
 - Medium-range surface-to-air missile – **Akash**
 - Third generation anti-tank missile – **Nag**

Source: PIB

Dumping Inert Waste in Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary

Why in News

The Supreme Court-mandated **Ridge Management Board** has decided to constitute an expert committee to look into the proposal of dumping **inert (non-reactive) waste** in the mines of **Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary** (Delhi).

Key Points

- **Inert Waste:**

- Inert waste is waste which is **neither biologically nor chemically reactive** and is waste which **will not decompose** or decompose very slowly.
- Inert waste includes, but is not limited to: **construction and demolition material** such as metal, wood, bricks, masonry and cement concrete; **asphalt concrete; metal; tree branches;** bottom **ash from coal fired boilers;** and waste **coal fines** from air pollution control equipment.
- These wastes **usually don't pose a threat to the environment, or the health of animals or other people** and will **not endanger the quality of watercourses.**
- However, when there is a large amount of this type of waste, it can become an issue as it **begins to take up a lot of space.**

- **Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary:**

- Asola-Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary covering 32.71 sq km area lies on the Southern Delhi Ridge of **Aravalli hill range**, one of the oldest mountain systems of the world, on Delhi-Haryana border.
- An area of 1km around the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary in Gurugram and Faridabad is an **Eco-sensitive zone.**
 - Activities such as commercial mining, setting up of industries, and establishment of major hydro-electric projects are prohibited.
- The Asola wildlife sanctuary has **both floral and faunal diversity** in form of
 - Wide variety of trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses.
 - Large numbers of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and dragonflies.
- Sanctuary comprises around 200 species of **resident and migratory birds.**
- Wildlife habitats inside the sanctuary act as **a water recharge zone** for Delhi, Faridabad and Gurugram.

ASOLA BHATTI WILDLIFE

SANCTUARY is spread over 32.71 square kilometres and is at the end of an important wildlife corridor that starts from Sariska National Park in Alwar, Rajasthan, and passes through Mewat, Gurgaon and Faridabad in Haryana



Eco-sensitive zone

The Union government has notified an area of up to 1km around the boundary of the sanctuary in Faridabad and Gurgaon as eco-sensitive zone

Villages in eco-sensitive zone

Lakadpur (Surajkund), Pali, Mangar, Bandhwari, Gwal Pahari, Balola, GGothda Mohbtabad, Badkhal, Ankhir, Mewla Mahrajpur, Anangpur

These are banned

Commercial mining, stone quarrying and crushing units, polluting industries, discharge of untreated effluent, saw mills, brick kilns

Regulated activities

Hotels and resorts, construction, small scale non-polluting industries, felling of trees, civic infrastructure, commercial extraction of water

These are allowed

Rainwater harvesting, organic farming, cottage industries, use of renewable energy and fuels, agro-forestry, use of eco-friendly transport

Ridge Management Board:

- **Background:** The **Supreme Court** mandated the Delhi Government to constitute a **Ridge Management Board for protection of the Delhi Ridge** through their orders in the **M.C. Mehta case 1987**.
 - The **Delhi Ridge is the northern extension of the Aravalli Range** covering a distance of about 35km.
 - The Delhi Ridge acts as the **green lungs of the capital** and, through various government orders over the years, all construction has been banned in the Ridge in an effort to preserve it.
- **Date of Establishment:** 6th October 1995.
- **Members:** The Chairman of the board is Chief Secretary of Delhi and Head of the Forest Department of Delhi Government is its Member Secretary. The Board also has members from the **Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)**.

Source: IE

Pench Tiger Reserve: Maharashtra

Why in News

Recently, a female cub of 'man-eater' tigress Avni has been released into the wild in the **Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) of Maharashtra**.

Key Points

- **About:**

- It is located in **Nagpur District of Maharashtra** and named after the pristine **Pench River**.
 - The Pench river flows right through the middle of the park.
 - It descends from north to south, thereby **dividing the reserve into equal eastern and western parts**.
- PTR is the **joint pride** of both **Madhya Pradesh** and **Maharashtra**.

The Reserve is located in the southern reaches of the Satpura hills in the Seoni and Chhindwara districts in Madhya Pradesh, and continues in Nagpur district in Maharashtra as a separate Sanctuary.
- It was **declared a National Park by the Government of Maharashtra in 1975** and the identity of a **tiger reserve was granted to it in the year 1998-1999**.

However, PTR Madhya Pradesh was granted the same status in 1992-1993. It is one of the major Protected Areas of **Satpura-Maikal ranges** of the Central Highlands.
- It is among the sites notified as **Important Bird Areas (IBA) of India**.

The IBA is a programme of Birdlife International which **aims to identify, monitor and protect a global network of IBAs for conservation of the world's birds** and associated diversity.

- **Flora:**

- The green cover is thickly spread throughout the reserve.
- A mixture of **Southern dry broadleaf teak forests** and **tropical mixed deciduous forests** is present.
- Shrubs, climbers and trees are also frequently present. **Some of them are unique varieties and possess medicinal as well as healing properties.**
- **Bamboo plantations** are also present nearby the water banks.

- **Fauna:**

- **Mammals:**

These include – sloth bear, jackal, nilgai, wild dog etc.

- **Birds:**

This comprises peafowl, magpie robin, pintail, drongo, unia, myna etc.

- **Major Tiger Reserves of India:**



Source: IE

Biju Patnaik

Why in News

The **birth anniversary of Biju Patnaik** was celebrated (5th March). He is remembered as a freedom fighter, an Indian politician, an aviator and a businessman.

Key Points



- **Brief Profile:**

- Bijayananda Patnaik was **born on 5th March 1916**, he is popularly known as Biju Patnaik.
- He was an ace pilot and joined the Royal Indian Air Force in 1936.
- He was the two times Chief Minister of Odisha.

- **Role in Freedom Struggle:**

- Biju Patnaik started his career as a freedom fighter in 1942. He **joined the Quit India Movement** under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi to make India free.
 - He became a prominent leader of Congress and was engaged in the Quit India Movement with **Jay Prakash Narayan** and **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia**.
 - In 1943, he **underwent imprisonment for about two years** for his participation in the Quit India Movement.
- He fearlessly undertook covert missions, ferrying freedom fighters to secret meetings with their supporters, and even airdropped leaflets in support of **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army**.
- He played a major role in **World War II** and the **Kashmir War of 1948** as a pilot in the Indian Air Force.

- **Role in Kashmir Integration:**

Biju Patnaik had fearlessly flown a DC-3 transport aircraft to Srinagar on 27th October 1947, ferrying soldiers of the Sikh regiment after the tribal invasion from Pakistan in Kashmir.

- **Role in Indonesian Freedom Struggle:**

On the request of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Biju Patnaik flew to Java and brought Sultan Sjahrir out of Dutch controlled territory in Indonesia for a meeting in Delhi.

- For this act of bravery, he was given honorary citizenship in Indonesia and awarded the '**Bhoomi Putra**', the highest Indonesian award, rarely granted to a foreigner.
- In 1996, the Biju Patnaik was awarded the highest Indonesian national award, the '**Bintang Jasa Utama**'.

Source: PIB
