Rapid Fire Current Affairs

Tea Mosquito Bug

Tea production in India is under threat due to the **infestation of the Tea Mosquito Bug (TMB)**. The **Tea Mosquito Bug (*Helopeltis theivora*) is a common pest that sucks the sap from the tender parts of tea plants**, leading to heavy crop losses. **It also damages the plants by inserting eggs into their tissues**. TMB has affected both **low and high-elevation tea plantations. The United Planters Association of Southern India (UPASI)** has raised concerns over heavy crop losses in all the tea districts of South India due to the rapid spread of the bug. The Tea Board of India **removed several pesticides from its approved list of Plant Protection Code (PPC) to make Indian teas free from harmful pesticides.** Currently, only seven pesticides are approved for use in **South India under the PPC**, and tea growers are unable to achieve effective control of the pest. The UPASI has sought government approval to use effective molecules that have been evaluated and approved by the **Central Insecticide Board & Registration Committee(CIBRC)** for other crops in India and have minimum residue levels for tea.

The **CIBRC was established by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1970 to regulate insecticides under the Insecticides Act, 1968 and Insecticides Rules, 1971**. The **CIB advises the government on technical matters and has other assigned functions. Insecticide importers and manufacturers need to register with the Registration Committee.**

Read more: Tea Industry of India

G20 Health Working Group: Leveraging Digital Health and Innovation

The 2nd Health Working Group meeting under the G20 India Presidency saw an important discussion on **citizen-centric health delivery ecosystems for universal health coverage, leveraging digital health and innovation.** The Ministry of Ayush in India has emphasized the importance of integrating traditional medicine with technology to establish an efficient, affordable, and quality healthcare model. To achieve this goal, they have introduced a **comprehensive IT backbone called "**Ayush Grid**",** which will create a secure and **interoperable digital ecosystem to transform the Ayush sector.** The Ayush Grid operates at four levels, ensuring seamless digital connectedness between all stakeholders and highlighted the **importance of using digital tools to maintain medical records, exchange information, and evaluate the effectiveness of various modalities of healthcare.**

Ministry of Ayush noted that the upcoming WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine **in India has a mandate to work on data analytics and technology in Traditional Medicine. Read more:** AYUSH Grid and NAMASTE Portal**,** National Ayush Mission

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US Oil and Gas Fields Emit 70% More Methane Than Reported

According to a recent study published in The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, **methane emissions from US oil and gas fields were 70% higher than the official figures reported by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** from 2010-2019. The study estimates that **14.8 tera-grams of methane were released annually during this period.** The researchers found that the **EPA did not account for "super-emitters" - equipment that emits large amounts of methane, due to**

poor operational practices or malfunctioning.

Methane is the **primary component of natural gas and a byproduct of fossil fuel exploration.** It is 86 **times more efficient at trapping heat over a 20-year-period than carbon dioxide.** It is released from a range of sources, including wetlands, agriculture (livestock, rice), waste (landfills, wastewater), and fossil fuel drilling (coal, oil, gas). The **International Energy Agency estimates that over 70% of emissions from oil and gas operations can be reduced.** The study also found that methane intensity decreased despite increased oil and gas production from 2017-2019. However, sustaining this decline **could be challenging as oil and gas fields mature and wells become less productive.**

Read more: Methane Emissions

India Steel 2023

The **Union Ministry of Steel, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce, Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, and **FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry)**, is organizing **India Steel 2023, a conference and exhibition on the steel industry.** The conference will cover topics such as **logistics infrastructure, demand dynamics,** green steel production**, and technology solutions for enhancing productivity and efficiency.** India Steel 2023 will feature a classified range of engaging sessions, covering topics such as "Augmentation of Enabling Logistics Infrastructure" "Demand Dynamics for Indian Steel Industry" "Sustainability Goals via Green Steel: Challenges and Way Forward" "Conducive Policy Framework & Key Enablers for Indian Steel" and "Technology Solutions for Enhancing Productivity & Efficiency".

India is a significant player in the global steel industry, **being the world's second-largest producer of crude steel**. In the financial year 2021-2022, the country produced 120 million tonnes of crude steel. **The states of Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, and the northern regions of Andhra Pradesh hold more than 80% of India's steel reserves.** Some of the important steel-producing centers in the country are **Bhilai, Durgapur, Burnpur, Jamshedpur, Rourkela, and Bokaro.** In terms of consumption, **India is the second-largest consumer of finished steel in 2021, with a consumption of 106.23 million tonnes. China is the largest steel consumer globally, followed by India.**

Read more: Green Steel