

National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)

Why in the news?

- The **first set of five volumes of Mongolian Kanju** has been published under the **National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)**.



About National Mission for Manuscripts

- It was **launched in February 2003** by the **Ministry of Tourism and Culture**, with the **mandate of documenting, conserving and disseminating** the knowledge **preserved in the manuscripts**.

Objectives

- The **objectives of the Mission** are to publish rare and **unpublished manuscripts** so that the **knowledge enshrined** in them is **spread to researchers, scholars and the general public at large**.
- Under this scheme, **reprinting of 108 volumes of Mongolian Kanjur** has been taken up by the Mission.
- It is expected that **all the volumes will be published by March 2022**.

Topic- GS Paper 1–Art and Culture

Source- AIR

Lithium in stars: Forty-year-old puzzle about the stars is solved

Why in the news?

- A **forty-year-old puzzle** regarding the **production of Lithium in stars** has been solved by **Indian researchers**.
- When stars grow beyond their **Red Giant stage** into what is known as the **Red Clump stage**, they **produce Lithium** in what is known as a **Helium Flash**, and this is what enriches them with **Lithium**.



Fact about Lithium in stars

- Stars, as **per known mechanisms of evolution**, actually **destroy Lithium** as they **evolve into red giants**.

- Planets were known to have **more Lithium than their stars** as is the case **with the Earth-Sun pair**.
- However, **leading to a contradiction**, some stars were found that were **Lithium rich**.

About Lithium

- It is a **light element commonly used in communication device technology**.
- It was **first produced in the Big Bang**, around **13.7 billion years ago** when the **universe came into being, along with other elements**.
- The present **abundance of Lithium** in the universe is only **four times the original (Big Bang) value** because Lithium is **actually destroyed in the stars**.
- The Sun, for instance, has about a **factor of 100 lower amount of Lithium** than the Earth.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)

Why in the news?

- Recently **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has constituted an **inter-ministerial committee** to probe the **violation of various legal provisions** by **three NGOs – Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust and Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust**.



About the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

- It is a **law enacted by Parliament to regulate foreign contribution** (especially monetary donation) provided by **certain individuals or associations to NGOs** and others within India.
- The government has used the **Act over the years to freeze bank accounts of certain NGOs** who it found were **affecting India's national interest for wrong purposes**.

Provision of FCRA Act 2010

- As per the **FCRA Act 2010**, all NGOs are required to be **registered under the Act to receive foreign funding**.
- An organisation cannot **receive foreign funding** unless it is **registered under the 2010 Act**, except when it **gets government approval for a specific project**.
- Under the **FCRA Act**, **registered NGOs can receive the foreign contribution for five purposes** – social, educational, religious, economic and cultural.

Topic- GS Paper 2–Governance

Source- The Hindu



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Pygmy Hogs

Why in the news?

- Recently, in a study, it was **observed that Pygmy Hogs**, who once extended across the entire **southern foothills of the Himalaya** but now the **species' domain had shrunk** to just one location in the world, i.e. **Manas National Park of Assam**.



About Pygmy Hogs

- It is the **smallest, rarest and most highly specialized member** of the **pig family**.
- It was **formerly known to occur across a narrow strip** of **early successional tall grassland plains** along the **southern Himalayan foothills** in the **Indian subcontinent**.

Conservation Status

- It is listed as '**Critically Endangered**' under the **IUCN Red List**.
- It is protected under '**Schedule I**' of the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.

Note:

- It is one of the **very few mammals** that build its **own home, or nest, complete with a 'roof'**.
- It is an '**indicator species**' as its **presence reflects the health** of its **primary habitat, the tall, wet grasslands** of the region.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Environment

Source- The Hindu

North Eastern Region Community Resource and Management Program

Why in the news?

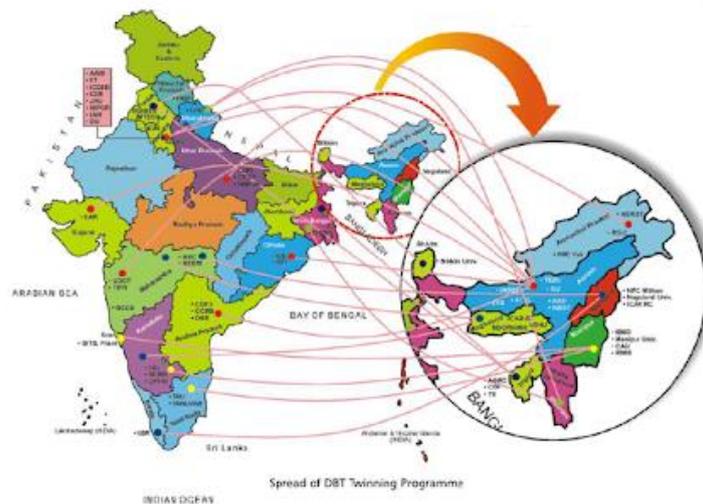
- **Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)** has recently interacted with **Self Help Groups** associated with **North Eastern Region Community Resource and Management Program (NERCORMP)**.

About NERCORMP

- It is a **livelihood and rural development project** which is a joint initiative of the **North Eastern Council (NEC), Ministry of DoNER and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**.
- It is operating in four states **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur**.

Objectives

- To transform the **lives of the poor and marginalized tribal families** in **North East (NE) India**.
- **Social mobilization, organization and capacity building** to tap and realize the enormous potential of the communities.
- **Intervene with the economic, social activities and infrastructure** with predominant thrust on income-generating activities to achieve economic transformation



Related Information

About International Fund for Agricultural Development

- It is an **international financial institution** and a **specialized agency of the United Nations**.
- It works to **address poverty and hunger in rural areas of developing countries**.
- It is **headquartered in Rome, Italy**.

Topic- GS Paper 2–Governance (Self Help Group)

Source- PIB

India's 2018 Tiger Census sets a new Guinness World Record

Why in the news?

- **India's 2018 tiger census** has recently entered the **Guinness Book of World Record** for being the **most significant camera trap wildlife survey**, yet.



About all India Tiger Estimation 2018

- The **fourth cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation 2018** had counted **2,967 tigers**, which is **about 75% of the global tiger population**.
- The data is said to be the **most comprehensive to date**, in terms of both **resource and data amassed**. **Camera traps** (outdoor photographic devices fitted with motion sensors that start recording when an animal passes by) were placed in **26,838 locations across 141 different sites** and **surveyed an effective area of 1,21,337 sq.km**.



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- From the **photographs obtained, 2,461 individual tigers** (excluding cubs) were identified using **stripe pattern recognition software**.

Tiger Census Report 2018

- The survey was led by the **National Tiger Conservation Authority** and the **Wildlife Institute of India**, in collaboration with **State Forest Departments**. World Wildlife Fund India was the **implementation partner**.

Key Findings

- **Madhya Pradesh was the top performer** with the highest number of tigers (526), followed by Karnataka (524) and Uttarakhand (442). In contrast, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram are the worst Performers state which saw a decline in tiger population.
- **Greater conservation efforts are needed** in the “critically vulnerable” Northeast hills and Odisha.
- A positive outcome of the survey was that it concluded that **India’s tiger population had increased by roughly one-third: from 2,226 in 2014 to 2,927 in 2018**.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Environment

Source- The Hindu

Ophiocordyceps sinensis: World Costliest Fungus

Why in the news?

- **Ophiocordyceps sinensis** is a fungus also known as **Himalayan Viagra, or Himalayan Gold** has entered the **International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species**.



About the Ophiocordyceps sinensis

- This is a **fungal parasite of larvae (caterpillars)** that belongs to the **ghost moth**.
- These are **endemic to the Himalayan and Tibetan plateau and are found in China, Bhutan, Nepal and India**.
- This fungus is locally known as **Kira Jari (in India), Yartsagunbu (in Tibet) and Yarsagumba (in Nepal)**.
- In India, it is primarily found in **Uttarakhand** in the higher reaches of districts like **Pithoragarh and Chamoli**.

Medicinal Value

- It has been used **in traditional Tibetan and Chinese medicine as a tonic**, as a **therapeutic medicine for lung, liver and kidney problems**.
- In recent times, it has **widely traded as an aphrodisiac** (stimulating sexual desire) and a powerful tonic, often called the ‘Himalayan Viagra.’

Conservation Status

- It is listed under the ‘**vulnerable category**’ as per IUCN Red List.

Note:



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- It is called **Himalayan Gold** because the fungus sells locally for **around Rs 10 lakh per kg** and goes on to be **sold in international markets like China** (where it is highly prized) at upwards of **Rs 20 lakh per kg**.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Environment

Source- Economics Times

Iran drops India from Chabahar rail project

- Recently the **Iranian government** has decided to **proceed with the construction of Chabahar rail project** on its own, **citing delays from the Indian side in funding and starting the project**.
- This **development comes as China finalizes a massive 25-year, \$400 billion strategic partnership deal with Iran**, which could **cloud India's plans**.



Related Information

- **Iranian Transport and Urban Development** have recently inaugurated the **track-laying process for the 628 km Chabahar-Zahedan line**, which will be **extended to Zaranj across the border in Afghanistan**.
- The **entire project would be completed by March 2022**.

Background

- The **Chabahar rail project** was to **construct the Chabahar-Zahedan railway as “part of transit and transportation corridor in a trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan”**.
- The project was **meant to be part of India's commitment to the trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan to build an alternate trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia**.
- **Indian Railways Construction Ltd (IRCON)** had **promised to provide all services, superstructure work, and financing for the project**.

Implications on India

- The **Iran-China deal impinges on India's “strategic ties” with Iran and the use of Chabahar port**.
- **Bandar-e-Jack port** lies to the west of Chabahar & right before **Straits of Hormuz**.
- China would thus **extend its control along the Pakistan-Iran coast**.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Infrastructure

Source- The Hindu

National Intelligence Grid

Why in the news?

- The **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** has recently signed a **memorandum of understanding with the National Crime Records**



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Bureau (NCRB) to access the centralised online database on FIRs and stolen vehicles.

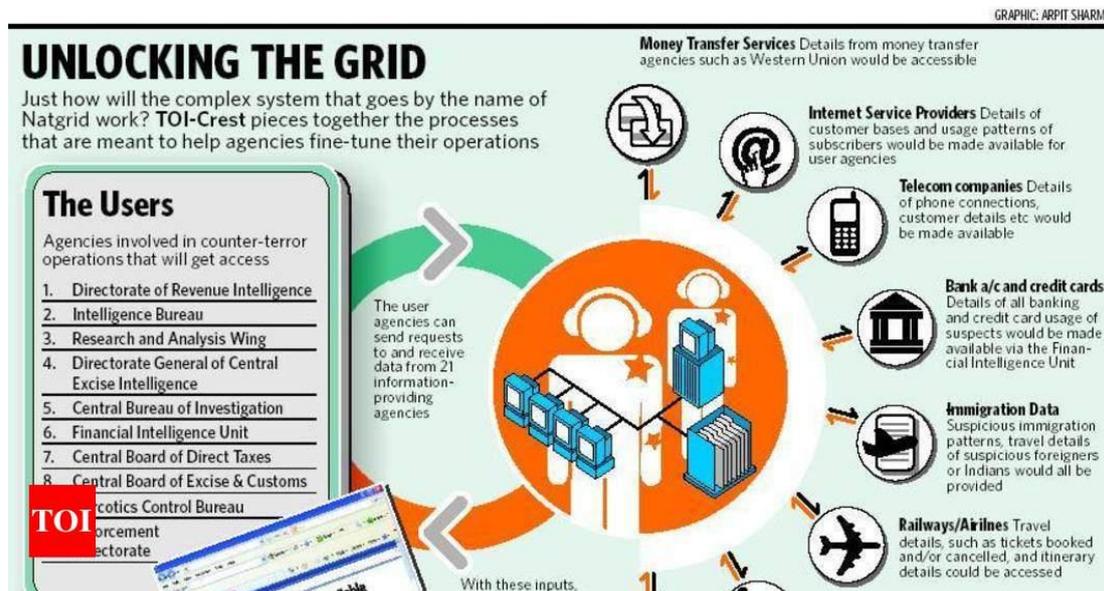


Image courtesy: Times of India

About National Intelligence Grid

- It is an **integrated intelligence grid that connects databases of core security agencies which came after India's terror attack in Mumbai in 2009.**
- It was **formed to collect comprehensive patterns of intelligence that can be readily accessed by intelligence agencies, will link ten user agencies with certain databases that would be procured from 21 organisations.**

Related Information

About the National Crime Records Bureau

- The **National Crime Records Bureau** is an **attached office of the Ministry of Home Affairs** responsible for **collecting and analysing crime data** as defined by the **Indian Penal Code and Special and Local Laws.**
- **NCRB** is **headquartered in New Delhi.**

Topic- GS Paper 2–Governance

Source- The Hindu

Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Why in the news?

- In its **recent judgment**, the **Supreme Court upheld the Shebait rights of the Travancore royal family in the administration of Shree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Kerala.**

About Shebait

- A **Shebait is any person who serves and supports the deity and works as a manager of the debuttar property.**
- The Shebait manages the properties like the temple or any other land or property which is vested with the deity.
- Shebait is the **only person who has the power to talk on behalf of the deity** that is the god or goddess.
- He has the **power to deal** with all the affairs of the deity.

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About Padmanabhaswamy Temple

- It is a **Hindu temple** located in **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala**.
- The temple is **built in an intricate fusion of the Chera style and the Dravidian style of architecture**, featuring high walls, and a **16th-century gopura**.
- The principal deity **Padmanabhaswamy (Vishnu)** is enshrined in the **"Anantha Shayana" posture**, the eternal yogic sleep on the serpent **Adi Shesha**.

Topic- GS Paper 1–Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

Nagorno-Karabakh

Why in the news?

- Recently the tension escalated between the **Armenia and Azerbaijan in Central Asia** due to **territorial disputes** has impacted the **Nagorno-Karabakh region** in the **South Caucasus**.

What is this conflict about?

- The conflict in the **Nagorno-Karabakh region** began following the **breakdown of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s** and lasted till **approximately 1994**, with both **Armenia and Azerbaijan** claiming this strategic territory.
- At that time, the **enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh** had held a **referendum boycotted by Azerbaijan** where the people chose **independence over joining either of the two countries**.
- The **conflict between ethnic Armenians and ethnic Azerbaijanis** in **Nagorno-Karabakh** reached a **particular low** with **Armenia and Azerbaijan** accusing each other of having instigated ethnic cleansing.



About Nagorno-Karabakh

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- Nagorno-Karabakh is a **landlocked region in the South Caucasus**, within the **mountainous range of Karabakh**, lying between **Lower Karabakh and Zangezur**. It covers the **southeastern range of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains**.
- Nagorno-Karabakh is a **disputed territory, internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan** but mostly governed by the **Republic of Artsakh (formerly named the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic)**.

Topic- GS Paper 1–Geography

Source- Indian Express

Google for India Digitisation Fund

Why in the news?

- Recently the **US technology giant Google** will invest **\$10 billion in India** over the next five-seven years as '**India Digitization Fund**'.



- The fund will focus on areas such as:
 - a) **enabling affordable access to the internet and information** for every Indian in their **language building new products and services in segments like consumer tech, education, health and agriculture**
 - b) **empowering businesses especially small and medium businesses to transform digitally etc.**

Significance of this fund

- It will present an **opportunity for tech majors like Google** to grow their **share in India's internet pie**.
- The **potential hurdles for Chinese companies** investing in India could provide better **prospects for American giants to strengthen their position** in a market which has the **second-most Internet users in the world**.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Economics

Source- The Hindu

Achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 in doubt: UN report

Why in the news?

- Recently a report titled **“State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World”** has been released by **the United Nations**.
- The report has warned that **achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of ‘Zero Hunger’** that it had **mandated by 2030**, will be **very difficult**.

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About the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report

- The report is **jointly produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO).**
- The report aims to **produce the most authoritative global study on the progress towards ending hunger and malnutrition.**

Highlights of the report

- According to the report, about **six hundred and ninety million people went hungry in 2019** – up by **10 million from 2018** and by **nearly 60 million in five years.**

Undernourishment

- The **global prevalence of undernourishment** – or overall percentage of **hungry people** – had changed little at **8.9 per cent**, but the **absolute numbers have been rising since 2014.**
- The **number of undernourishment people in India** declined from **21.7% in 2004-06 to 14% in 2017-19.**
- **Asia** remains home to the **greatest number of undernourished people** followed by **Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.**

Stunting

- According to the report, in **2019**, **between a quarter and a third of children under five (191 million) were stunted or wasted** – too short or too thin.
- The **prevalence of stunting in children under five years of age in India** declined from **47.8% in 2012 to 34.7% in 2019.**

Obesity

- The **number of adults (18 years and older) who are obese** grew from **3.1% in 2012 to 3.9% in 2016.**

Anaemia among women

- The **number of women of reproductive age (15–49) affected by anaemia** grew from **165.6 million in 2012 to 175.6 million in 2016.**

Note

- **SDG 2** deals with **End hunger**, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Topic- GS Paper III– Important reports

Source- Down to Earth

Woolly Whitefly: An invasive species

Why in the news?



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- Recently two **types of ladybird beetles** are among the **three indigenous bugs found to be the biological weapons** against a **Caribbean-origin enemy of Indian fruit farmers** – the **woolly whitefly**.



About Woolly Whitefly

- It is among the **newest of 118 exotic pests troubling farmers** in India, particularly fruit growers, are first described from **Jamaica in 1896 and noticed in Florida, the U.S. in 1909.**
- This **whitefly (*Aleurothrixus floccosus*) is invasive and polyphagous**, meaning a creature that feeds on various kinds of food.
- **ICAR's National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources in Bengaluru had in 2019 reported the spread of the pest from the Caribbean island through transportation of infested seedlings.**

About Invasive Species

- An **invasive species** can be **any living organism**—an amphibian, plant, insect, fish, fungus, bacteria, or even an **organism's seeds or eggs**—that is not native to an **ecosystem and causes harm.**
- They can harm the environment, the economy, or also human health.
- They alter the **environment** in which they invade and are **difficult and expensive to control after they colonise a landscape.**
- They possess **phenotypic plasticity** (the ability to adapt to **environmental stress**).

Topic- GS Paper 3–Environment

Source- The Hindu

Draft Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020

Why in the news?

- The **Government** has recently **released new Draft of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020**, along with giving a **window of 30 days** for suggestions and amendments.



Background

- In 2014, the Supreme Court in **NALSA vs Union of India** case recognised a **transgender person's right to self-identification as male, female or the third gender.**
- Further, the Court directed central and state governments to **grant legal recognition to transgender persons, address issues of social stigma and discrimination, and provide social welfare schemes** for them.
- The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** was passed on **November 26, 2019.**
- It allows persons to **self-perceived their gender identity, provides for the identification of transgender persons, and confers them with certain rights and benefits.**
- Following the **notification of the Act, the Government circulated the Draft Rules to the Act on April 16, 2020, for public feedback.**

Who are Transgender Persons?

- According to the **World Health Organisation (WHO), 'transgender' is an umbrella term that includes persons whose sense of gender does not match the gender assigned to them at birth.**
- For example, a **person born as a man may identify with the opposite gender, as a woman.**
- According to the **2011 Census, the number of persons who do not identify as 'male' or 'female' but as 'other' stands at 4,87,803 (0.04% of the total population).**
- This **'other' category applied to persons who did not identify as either male or female and included transgender persons.**

Topic- GS Paper 2–Social Justice

Source- The Hindu

Spike missiles

Why in the news?

- The **Army is set to place a repeat order for Spike-LR (Long Range) Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM) from Israel as part of emergency procurement.**
- The **emergency procurements come in the backdrop of continuing tensions on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.**



About Spike missile

- It is a **fourth-generation missile which can engage any target with precision at ranges up to 4-kilo metres.**
- It can be **operated in fire-and-forget mode and the fire, observe and update mode using the fibre-optic data link.**



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- It can work in **non-line-of-sight (NLOS) mode** allowing the **gunner to operate from a covered position.**
- The missile has an **inbuilt seeker, which gives the firer the flexibility** to use any of two modes: Day (CCD) and Night (IIR).
- The dual seeker adds to the missile's reliability.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Defence

Source- The Hindu

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