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Asperger's syndrome

(Topic- GS Paper III–Science and technology, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Elon Musk has recently announced that he has Asperger's syndrome (AS).

What is Asperger's?

- The disorder is named after German doctor Hans Asperger, who first described it in 1944.
- It belongs to the autism spectrum, a family of conditions, which can severely inhibit a person's mental and social development.
- People with AS exhibit three primary symptoms:
 - having difficulty with social interaction
 - engaging in repetitive behavior
 - often focus obsessively on a complex topic
 - focusing on rules and routines

Cure

- It cannot be cured.
- Early diagnosis and intervention can help a child make social connections, achieve their potential, and lead a productive life.

Mount Sinabung's

(Topic- GS Paper I–Geography, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news ?

- Recently, Mount Sinabung volcano has erupted belching a massive column of volcanic ash and smoke 3,000 metres (3 km) into the sky.
- The volcano had also erupted in March.

About Mount Sinabung's

Indonesia volcano



- Mount Sinabung is a Pleistocene-to-Holocene stratovolcano of andesite and dacite in the Karo plateau of Karo Regency of North Sumatra, Indonesia.
- It is located on the seismically active zone known as the "Ring of Fire" — an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Ocean.

About Ring of Fire

About Pacific Ring of Fire



- The Ring of Fire, also referred to as the Circum-Pacific Belt, is a path along the Pacific Ocean characterized by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.
- These places are dotted with 75% of Earth's all active volcanoes.
- It traces boundaries between several tectonic plates including the Pacific, Juan de Fuca, Cocos, Indian-Australian, Nazca, North American, and Philippine Plates.
- The abundance of volcanoes and earthquakes along the Ring of Fire is caused by the amount of movement of tectonic plates in the area.

- The countries affected by it are Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and other island nations like the Solomon Islands, Fiji, and many more in Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

FCRA amendments crippling our work

(Topic- GS Paper III–Economics, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news ?

- Recently, the amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) enacted last year that among others made it compulsory for NGOs to open a bank account in Delhi has crippled the work of many organisations that are unable to receive foreign funds.

Issues

- Indian entities, including hospitals and charitable trusts, hoping to receive COVID-19 relief material from overseas individual donors or donor agencies, could be in trouble, unless they are registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) with a stated objective involving provision of medical care.
- On May 3, the government permitted imports without GST levies for pandemic relief material donated from abroad for free distribution in the country, delegating States to certify the entities that will receive such imports.
- However, no exemption has been granted from the FCRA law that requires any domestic entity receiving foreign material or cash donations to have requisite approvals from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

About 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 foreign contribution for five purposes — social, educational, religious, economic and cultural.

US to join New Zealand-led global campaign to stamp out violent extremism online

(Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation, Source- Indian Express)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the United States will join a New Zealand-led global campaign known as ‘**Christchurch Call to Action**’ to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online.
- It makes a policy change two years after the administration of former president Donald Trump declined to participate.

Why America has not Join this campaign previously?

- The US cited free speech protections when it declined to join the campaign in 2019.
- It will not take steps that would violate the freedoms of speech and associations protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, nor violate reasonable expectations of privacy.

Christchurch Call to Action Summit

- The Christchurch Call to Action Summit (also called the Christchurch Call), was a political summit initiated by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern that took place on 15 May 2019 in Paris, France, two months after the Christchurch mosque shootings of 15 March 2019.
- The summit aimed to "bring together countries and tech companies in an attempt to bring to an end the ability to use social media to organise and promote terrorism and violent extremism".
- The initiative outlines collective, voluntary commitments from governments and online service providers intended to address the issue of terrorist and violent extremist content online and to prevent the abuse of the internet.

Note:

- **India** has joined France, New Zealand, Canada and several other countries in Paris to combat terrorism and extremism online and to secure the internet.

Report on ‘Connected Commerce: Creating a Roadmap for a Digitally Inclusive Bharat’

(Topic- GS Paper III–Economics, Source-PIB)

Why in the news?

- NITI Aayog and Mastercard have recently released a report titled ‘**Connected Commerce: Creating a Roadmap for a Digitally Inclusive Bharat**’.

Key recommendations

- The report identifies challenges in accelerating digital financial inclusion in India and provides recommendations for making digital services accessible to its 1.3 billion citizens.

Key recommendations in the report include:

- Strengthening the payment infrastructure to promote a level playing field for NBFCs and banks.
- Digitizing registration and compliance processes and diversifying credit sources to enable growth opportunities for MSMEs.
- Building information sharing systems, including a ‘fraud repository’, and ensuring that online digital commerce platforms carry warnings to alert consumers to the risk of frauds.
- Enabling agricultural NBFCs to access low-cost capital and deploy a ‘phygital’ (physical + digital) model for achieving better long-term digital outcomes. Digitizing land records will also provide a major boost to the sector.
- To make city transit seamlessly accessible to all with minimal crowding and queues, leveraging existing smart-phones and contactless cards, and aim for an inclusive, interoperable, and fully **open system such as that of the London ‘Tube’**.

Small finance banks may lend ₹3,000 cr. to MFIs’

(Topic- GS Paper III–Economics, Source-The Hindu)

Why in the news ?

- RBI’s move has recently allow small finance banks (SFBs) to classify loans to small microfinance institutions (MFIs) (with a loan book of sub-₹500 crore) as priority sector advances will lead to an incremental funding of up to ₹3,000 crore to the MFIs, as per **Acuite Ratings**.

SFB loan to MFIs for on-lending to be classified as priority sector lending

- The Reserve Bank of Indian has decided to allow the classification of priority sector lending for loans given by small finance banks (SFB) to microfinance institutions (MFI) for on-lending to individuals.
- The decision has been taken to address the liquidity issues of MFIs amid the severe Covid crisis.
- This facility will be available up to March 31, 2022.
- At present, lending by Small Finance Banks (SFBs) to Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) for on-lending is not reckoned for priority sector lending (PSL) classification.
- Bank credit will be permitted up to 10 percent of the bank's total priority sector portfolio as on March 31, 2021.
- Loans disbursed under the scheme will continue to be classified under priority sector till the date of repayment or maturity whichever is earlier.

Priority Sector

- Priority Sector means those sectors which the Government of India and Reserve Bank of India consider as important for the development of the basic needs of the country and are to be given priority over other sectors.
- The banks are mandated to encourage the growth of such sectors with adequate and timely credit

Categories of Priority Sector

The categories of priority sector are as follows

- Agriculture
- Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
- Education
- Housing
- Social Infrastructure
- Renewable Energy

The banks are mandated to encourage the growth of such sectors with adequate and timely credit.

Pakistan government to set new rules to meet FATF requirements

(Topic- GS Paper II–International Relation, Source-The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Pakistan, keen to exit from the grey list of the FATF, is set to introduce new rules relating to anti-money laundering cases and change the prosecution process to meet its remaining tough conditions recently.
- Pakistan was put on the grey list by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global watchdog for money laundering and terror financing in June 2018 and the country has been struggling to come out of it.

Outstanding issues

- This is part of two sets of rules, including the AML (Forfeited Properties Management) Rules 2021 and the AML (Referral) Rules 2021 under the “National Policy Statement on Follow the Money” approved by the federal Cabinet meeting a few days ago.
- These rules and related notifications for certain changes in the existing schedule of Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010 (AMLA) would come into force immediately, to be followed by the appointment of administrators and special public prosecutors for implementation.
- Based on these measures, the FATF would conclude if Pakistan has complied with three outstanding benchmarks, out of 27, that blocked its exit from the grey list in February 2021.

About Financial Action Task Force

- It is a global watchdog that was founded to tackle money laundering initially but its role became prominent post the 9/11 terror attacks.
- It was set up **in 1989 by the G7 countries, with headquarters in Paris.**

Objectives

- The objectives are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- It is therefore a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
- **It is empowered to curtail financing of UN-designated terrorist groups.**
- The FATF monitors countries to ensure they implement the FATF Standards fully and effectively, and holds countries to account that do not comply.

Members

- The FATF currently comprises 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations, representing most major financial centres in all parts of the globe.
- The two regional organisations are – Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Commission.
- **India became a full member in 2010.**

Financial Action Task Force has two lists:

Grey List

- Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list.
- This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.

Consequences of being in the FATF grey list:

Considered in the grey list may face

1. Economic sanctions from IMF, World Bank, ADB
2. Problem in getting loans from IMF, World Bank, ADB and other countries
3. Reduction in international trade
4. International boycott

Black List

- Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the blacklist.

- These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities.
- The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.

Note:

- As of 2019, FATF has blacklisted North Korea and Iran over terror financing.
- Twelve countries are in the grey list, namely: Bahamas, Botswana, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Pakistan, Panama, Sri Lanka, Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and Yemen.

Methane emissions

(Topic- GS Paper III–Environment, Source-Down to Earth)

Why in the news?

- Recently the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the United Nations Environment Programme have released a report titled Global Methane Assessment: Benefits and Costs of Mitigating Methane Emissions.

Key highlights of the report

- Human-caused methane emissions are increasing faster currently than at any other time since record keeping began in the 1980s.
- Carbon dioxide levels have dropped during the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
- However, methane in the atmosphere reached record levels last year, according to the data from the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Sources of Methane Emission

- The UN report noted that most human-caused methane emissions came from three sectors: Fossil fuels, waste and agriculture.

Fossil fuel sector :

- Oil and gas extraction, processing and distribution accounted for 23 per cent of methane emissions in the **fossil fuel sector**.
- Coal mining accounted for 12 per cent of emissions.

Waste sector

- Landfills and wastewater made up about 20 per cent of emissions in the **waste sector**.

Agricultural sector

- In the agricultural sector, livestock emissions from manure and enteric fermentation constituted for roughly 32 per cent.

- The rice cultivation contributes eight per cent of emissions.

Initiative to tackle Methane emission

- The European Commission had adopted the European Union Methane Strategy in October 2020.
- It outlined measures to cut methane emissions in Europe and internationally.
- The assessment found that the mitigation potential varied between countries and regions.
- Europe had the greatest potential to curb methane emissions from farming, fossil fuel operations and waste management.
- **India had the greatest potential to reduce methane emissions in the waste sector.**
- China's mitigation potential was best in coal production and livestock, while Africa's was in livestock, followed by oil and gas.
- The waste sector could cut its methane emissions by improving the disposal of sewage around the world.

Behavioural changes

- Three behavioural changes — reducing food waste and loss, improving livestock management and adopting healthy diets (vegetarian or with a lower meat and dairy content) — could reduce methane emissions by 65–80 million tonnes per year over the next few decades.

3rd Arctic Science Ministerial

(Topic- GS Paper III–Environment, Source-PIB)

Why in the news?

- India has recently participated in the 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM3) meeting.
- The theme of the **3rd Arctic Science Ministerial: 'Knowledge for a Sustainable Arctic'**.
- The first two Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM) meetings were held in the USA in 2016 and Germany in 2018 respectively.

About 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial

- It is a global platform for discussing research and cooperation in the Arctic region.
- It is the first Ministerial meeting being held in Asia.

Purpose

- The meeting is designed to provide opportunities to various stakeholders to enhance collective understanding of the Arctic region.
- The meeting also emphasizes the constant engagement in monitoring and strengthens Arctic observations.

India and Arctic

- India's engagement with the Arctic dates back to 1920 with the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in Paris.
- Since July 2008, India has a permanent research station in the Arctic called Himadri at NyAlesund, Svalbard Area in Norway.
- It has also deployed a multi-sensor moored observatory called IndARC in the Kongsfjorden fjord since July 2014.
- The research in the Arctic region from India is coordinated, conducted, and promoted by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.

About Arctic Council

- It was formally established in 1996 by the Ottawa Declaration which is an intergovernmental forum for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States.

Members

- The members of the Arctic Council include Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States.

Observer Status

- Since 2013, India enjoys 'Observer' status in the Arctic Council with twelve other countries (Japan, China, France, Germany, UK, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Spain, Netherlands, Singapore, and South Korea).