

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 16 Jun 2021

1. National Geographic recognises 'Southern Ocean' as globe's fifth ocean

(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- Down to Earth)

Why in the news ?

- The Earth has finally attained popular recognition for its fifth ocean, with a decision by the National Geographic Society to add the Southern Ocean around Antarctica to the four it recognizes already: the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian and Arctic oceans.
- The International Hydrographic Organization too had recognised the term in 1937 before repealing it in 1953.

About the Southern Ocean



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

- The Southern Ocean, also known as the Antarctic Ocean, comprises the southernmost waters of the World Ocean.
- The Southern Ocean has long been recognized by scientists, **but because there was never agreement internationally or officially recognized.**
- The magazine says the Southern Ocean is the only ocean 'to touch three other oceans and to completely embrace a continent rather than being embraced by them'.
- Its northern limit is latitude **of 60 degrees south.**
- The Southern Ocean is defined not by the continents that surround it, but by the **Antarctic Circumpolar Current (ACC) that flows from west to east.**
- Scientists think the ACC was created 34 million years ago when the continent of Antarctica separated from South America, allowing water to flow unimpeded around the "bottom" of the world.

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Home of large marine life

- The Southern Ocean is home to large populations of whales, penguins and seals.
- But industrial fishing on species like krill and Patagonian tooth fish had been a concern for decades, the magazine said.
- It hoped to draw attention to these issues, in addition to the rapid warming of the Southern Ocean due to global warming by officially changing the name of the water body.

About the International Hydrographic Organization

- The International Hydrographic Organization is an intergovernmental organization that works to ensure all the world's seas, oceans and navigable waters are surveyed and charted.
- It has been established in 1921.
- It coordinates the activities of national hydrographic offices and promotes uniformity in nautical charts and documents.
- It issues survey best practices, provides guidelines to maximize the use of hydrographic survey data and develops hydrographic capabilities in Member States.

2. One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)

(Topic- GS Paper II –Governance, Source- AIR)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Centre told the Supreme Court that nearly 69 crore, or 86% of the total beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), were “swiftly brought under” the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) plan in 32 states and Union territories by December 2020.

About One Nation One Ration Card

- The ‘One Nation One Ration Card’ plan is an ambitious endeavour of the Government to ensure the delivery of food security entitlements to all beneficiaries covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).
- The government decided a nation-wide rollout of the scheme in all states and Union Territories by March 2021.
- It is aimed at nation-wide portability of ration cards under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).
- Under ONORC, the beneficiaries can lift their entitled foodgrains from any ePoS (electronic Point of Sale device) enabled Fair Price Shop (FPS) of their choice by using their same/existing ration cards with biometric authentication on the ePoS device.
- The identification of eligible beneficiaries and issuance of ration cards to them for distribution of foodgrains under NFSA lies with the concerned State/UT Government.

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Implementing Agency

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution in association with State/UT Governments is implementing 'One Nation One Ration Card' (ONORC) plan.

Eligibility under One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)

- Any citizen, who is declared under Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, will be eligible to get the benefit of this scheme across the country.
- The directions under Section-38 of the NFSA have been issued to all States/UTs to cover all eligible disabled persons under the NFSA.
- All States/UTs have also been advised to identify needy persons from the weaker sections of the society including disabled persons and issue NFSA ration cards to all eligible persons/households.
- The beneficiaries will be identified on the basis of their Aadhaar based identification through the electronic point of sale (PoS) device.

Significance

- The scheme aims to ensure all beneficiaries, especially migrants get ration (wheat, rice and other food grains) across the nation from any Public Distribution System (PDS) shop of their own choice.
- The scheme is launched with the purpose that no poor person should be deprived of getting subsidised food grains under the food security scheme when they shift from one place to another.
- It helps in reducing the incidents of hunger deaths in the country, to further improve rankings in the Global Hunger Index.

Note:

- **In Global Hunger Index 2020, India's ranks 94 out of 107 countries.**

3. Taiwan reports 'largest' incursion by Chinese forces

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, as many as 28 Chinese air force aircraft, including fighters and nuclear-capable bombers, entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) which is the largest reported incursion till date.

Repeated missions by China's air force

- Taiwan has complained over the last few months of repeated missions by China's air force near the Selfruled Island, concentrated in the southwestern part of its air defence zone near the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands.

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- The latest Chinese mission involved 14 J-16 and six J-11 fighters, as well as four H-6 bombers, which can carry nuclear weapons, and anti-submarine, electronic warfare and early warning aircraft.

Related Information

One-China Policy

- The One-China policy refers to the policy or view that there is only one state called "China", despite the existence of two governments that claim to be "China".
- As a policy, this means that countries seeking diplomatic relations with People's Republic of China (PRC, Mainland China) must break official relations with the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) and vice versa.
- It is the diplomatic acknowledgement of China's position that there is only one Chinese government.
- Under the policy, China sees Taiwan as a breakaway province to be reunified with the mainland.

4. UN Trade Forum 2021

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Organization, Source- AIR)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Union Minister Piyush Goyal has said that India's per-capita carbon dioxide emission is the lowest amongst big economies at the UN Trade Forum 2021.

More on the news



Towards a green and inclusive recovery

- India ambitious renewable energy target of 450 Gigawatts by 2030 shows India's commitment towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

About the UN Trade Forum

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- The UN Trade Forum was created as a space for dialogue on how trade can be harnessed for a more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable world.

Related Information

Intended Nationally determined contributions

- The Paris Agreement requires all Parties to put forward their best efforts through nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead.
- This includes requirements that all Parties report regularly on their emissions and on their implementation efforts.
- **It is not legally binding.**
- India also reaffirmed its **Intended Nationally Determined Contributions** commitments to meeting the goals under the Paris Agreement in order to combat the climate change.

India's INDC, to be achieved primarily, by 2030

- India promised to reduce the “emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35 % by 2030 from 2005 level.
- It will achieve about “40% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources (mainly renewable like wind and solar power) by 2030” with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance, including from the **Green Climate Fund**.
- India also promised an additional carbon sink (a means to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere) of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by the year 2030.

5. New Shephard

(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Amazon founder and billionaire Jeff Bezos’s space company called Blue Origin concluded the online auction for the first seat on New Shephard, a rocket system meant to take tourists to space.

More on the news

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- In 2018, Blue Origin was one of the ten companies selected by NASA to conduct studies and advance technologies to collect, process and use space-based resources for missions to the Moon and Mars.
- In 2019, both signed an agreement that gives Blue Origin permission to use NASA's historic test stand, as a part of a growing number of partnerships between the space agency and the commercial space industry.

About New Shepard

- It is a rocket system that has been designed to take astronauts and research payloads past **the Karman line – the internationally recognized boundary of space.**
- It has been named after astronaut Alan Shephard – the first American to go to space – and offers flights to space over 100 km above the Earth and accommodation for payloads.
- The idea is to provide easier and more cost-effective access to space meant for purposes such as academic research, corporate technology development and entrepreneurial ventures among others.

Boost Space tourism

- Space tourism seeks to give laypeople the ability to go to space for recreational, leisure or business purposes.
- The idea is to make space more accessible to those individuals who are not astronauts and want to go to space for non-scientific purposes.

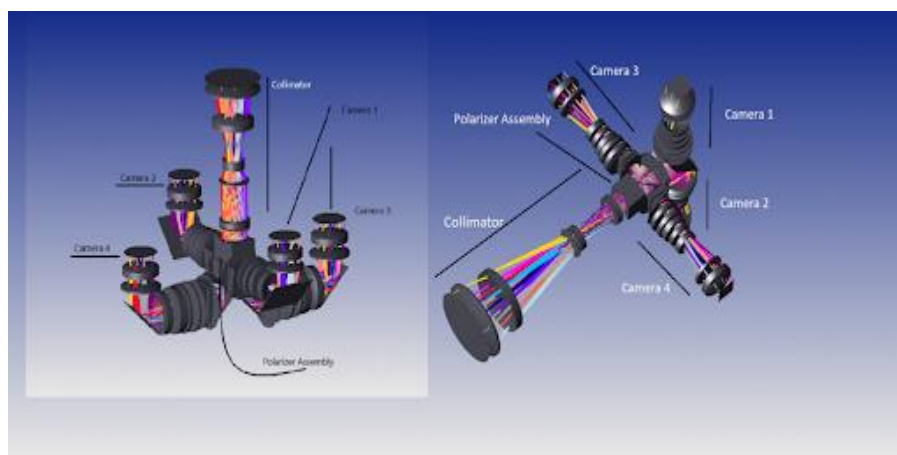
6. PASIPHAE

(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, Indian astronomer has developed Polar-Areas Stellar-Imaging in Polarisation High-Accuracy Experiment (PASIPHAE) which will be used in upcoming sky surveys to study stars.

About PASIPHAE



- Polar-Areas Stellar-Imaging in Polarisation High-Accuracy Experiment (PASIPHAE) is an international collaborative sky surveying project.
- Scientists aim to study the polarisation in the light coming from millions of stars.
- The name is inspired from Pasiphae, the daughter of Greek Sun God Helios, who was married to King Minos.

How it works?

- The survey will use two high-tech optical polarimeters to observe the northern and southern skies, simultaneously.
- It will focus on capturing starlight polarisation of very faint stars that are so far away that polarisation signals from there have not been systematically studied.
- The distances to these stars will be obtained from measurements of the GAIA satellite.
- By combining these data, astronomers will perform a maiden magnetic field tomography mapping of the interstellar medium of very large areas of the sky using a novel polarimeter instrument known as WALOP (Wide Area Linear Optical Polarimeter).
- The PASIPHAE survey will measure starlight polarisation over large areas of the sky.
- This data along with GAIA distances to the stars will help create a 3-Dimensional model of the distribution of the dust and magnetic field structure of the galaxy.

- Such data can help remove the galactic polarised foreground light and enable astronomers to look for the elusive B-mode signal.

About WALOP

- Wide Area Linear Optical Polarimeter (WALOP) is an instrument, when mounted on two small optical telescopes, that will be used to detect polarised light signals emerging from the stars along high galactic latitudes.
- A WALOP each will be mounted on the 1.3-metre Skinakas Observatory, Crete, and on the 1-metre telescope of the South African Astronomical Observatory located in Sutherland.

7. Jabs help against hospitalisation

(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, a real-world study undertaken by Public Health England in 14,019 people infected with the delta variant (B.1.617.2) in England found that vaccination with two doses of AstraZeneca and Pfizer offered high protection against hospitalisation.
- Of the 14,019 people infected with the delta variant, only 166 required hospitalisation.
- The study was undertaken between April 12 and June 4.

Key finding of the Study

- In the case of the AstraZeneca, effectiveness against hospitalisation after full vaccination was 92%, while it was 96% in the case of Pfizer.
- Public Health England had earlier found that despite modest reductions, vaccines remain effective against the delta variant.
- It found that full vaccination offered good protection against symptomatic disease.
- Vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic disease was 67% in the case of AstraZeneca and 88% with Pfizer.

Single dose

- Effectiveness against hospitalisation was high even with one dose of AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccine.
- In the case of delta variant, one dose of AstraZeneca vaccine offered 71% protection, while two doses offered 92% protection.
- In the case of Pfizer vaccine, the protection was 94% after one dose and 96% after two doses.

Another Study

- In another study it was found that protection against all symptomatic infections after a single dose of AstraZeneca was only 33.5% against the delta variant and 51.1% against the beta (B.1.1.7) variant.

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- After the second dose, the protection against all symptomatic infections increased to 59.8% in the case of the delta variant and 87.9% against the beta variant.

8. Protection of Heritage Trees

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, the Maharashtra government has decided to make amendments to the Maharashtra (Urban Areas) Protection and Preservation of Trees Act of 1975, to introduce provisions for the protection of ‘heritage trees’.

About Heritage Trees

- Under the proposed amendment, a tree with an estimated age of 50 years or more shall be defined as a heritage tree.
- The heritage tree may belong to specific species, which will be notified from time to time.
- The state climate change department should also consider a tree’s rarity, its botanical, historical, religious, mythological and cultural importance in defining a heritage tree.
- The local Tree Authority will have to ensure tree census to be carried out every five years along with counting of heritage trees.

Calculation of age of trees

- The most common method of determining the age of the tree is Dendrochronology or tree-ring dating also called growth rings.
- The experts provide that each year, roughly a tree adds to its girth, the new growth is called a tree ring.
- The environment department, in consultation with the forest department, will issue guidelines to determine the age of the tree.

Also in news

India exports GI certified ‘Jardalu’ Mangoes to UK

- Recently, Bihar exported the first commercial consignment of GI certified Jardalu mangoes from Bhagalpur to the United Kingdom.
- Jardalu mangoes from Bhagalpur district were given GI certification in 2018.

Rajasthan govt. to set up Vedic Education and Sanskar Board

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- Rajasthan government will set up a Vedic Education and Sanskar Board to revive the knowledge of ancient Sanskrit scriptures and connect the learnings of the Vedas with science and yoga.
- The board is likely to be set up in the coming four to five months.
- The State, at present, has about 20 residential Vedic schools, including ‘Gurukuls’ (seminaries) adhering to the ancient teacher-disciple tradition, which are run by a trust, but they do not follow any regulated curriculum for imparting education.

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