

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 18 AUG 2021

Colorado River

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, for the first time, the federal government in the US declared a water shortage for the Colorado River basin due to a historic drought, which will lead to water cuts in some southwestern states starting October 2021.

About Colorado River



- It is a major river of North America, rising in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, U.S.
- It flowing generally west and south into the Gulf of California in northwestern Mexico.
- Its drainage basin covers 246,000 square miles (637,000 square kilometres) and includes parts of seven states—Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and California.
- The river forms the international boundary between the U.S. state of Arizona and Mexico.**
- The river drains a vast arid and semiarid sector of the North American continent, and because of its intensive development it is often referred to as the “**Lifeline of the Southwest.**”

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Taliban in Kabul Means for New Delhi

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

- Recently, for the second time in recent history, Indian embassy staff have cleared out of Afghanistan.

More in the news

- As the Taliban push ahead with military offensives across Afghanistan, preparing to take over after the exit of US and NATO forces, India faces a situation in which it may have no role to play in that country.
- It would be a reversal of nearly 20 years of rebuilding a relationship that goes back centuries. Afghanistan is vital to India's strategic interests in the region.

India's Afghan investment

Projects across the country

- India has undertaken 400 plus projects in all 34 of Afghanistan's provinces".
- **Some of these projects include:** Salma Dam, Zaranj-Delaram Highway, Afghan Parliament, Stor Palace, Power infra like 220kV DC transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri, capital of Baghlan province to the north of Kabul, reconstructed a children's hospital, free consultation camps, set up the Afghanistan National Agricultural Sciences and Technology University (ANASTU) in Kandahar, gifted civil and military transportation vehicles, India pledged \$1 million to Aga Khan heritage project and many more projects are under way.
- The fate of these projects is now up in the air.

India's Concern:

- India shall be concerned about the Taliban's renewed support for international terrorism and Pakistan's re-direction of jihadi groups towards India.
- Taliban may have a tough time balancing its religious ideology with state interests as it is a radical group.
- India needs to wait and watch how the Taliban manages it.
- India should be prepared for terror, unlike in the 1990s, India shall now show the political will to retaliate forcefully.

Bharat Net programme

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

Why in the news?

- Union Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has recently said that the six lakh villages of the country will get internet connectivity under the Bharat Net programme by 2024.

About BharatNet programme

- It is a flagship mission implemented by Bharat Broadband Network Ltd. (BBNL).
- The aim of the programme to have an optical fibre network in all gram panchayats.
- It is a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) set up by the Government of India under the Companies Act, 1956.

Nodal implementing agency

- It is being implemented by the Department of Telecommunication under the Ministry of Communications.
- The entire project is being funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), which was set up for improving telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country.

Implementation:

- a. The project is a Centre-State collaborative project, with the states contributing free Rights of Way for establishing the Optical Fibre Network. The project is implemented in three-phases until 2023.

BharatNet PPP Model will bring in the following consumer friendly advantages:

- Use of innovative technology by the Private Sector Provider for the consumers;
- High quality of service and Service Level to consumers;
- Faster deployment of network and quick connectivity to consumers;
- Competitive tariffs for services;
- Variety of services on high-speed broadband including Over The Top (OTT) services and multi-media services as part of packages offered to consumers, and
- Access to all online services.

Significance

- Better access to services offered by Central and state governments.

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- It will also enable online education, telemedicine, skill development, e-commerce and other applications of broadband.
- Revenue generation from **broadband connections to individuals & institutions, sale of dark fibre, Fiberization of mobile towers**, e-commerce etc.

Related Information

About Dark fibre

- It is an unused optical fibre that has been laid but is not currently being used in fibre-optic communications. Since fibre-optic cable transmits information in the form of light pulses, a ‘dark’ cable refers to one through which light pulses are not being transmitted.
- Companies lay extra optical fibres to avoid cost repetition when more bandwidth is needed.
- **It is also known as unlit fibre.**

Gene bank

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

Why in the news?

- Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has recently inaugurated the world’s second-largest refurbished state-of-the-art National Gene Bank at the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), Pusa, New Delhi.

About National Gene Bank

- The National Gene Bank was established in the year 1996 to preserve the seeds of Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) for future generations.
- It can preserve about one million germplasm in the form of seeds.
- Presently it is protecting 4.52 lakh accessions, of which 2.7 lakh are Indian germplasm and the rest have been imported from other countries.

Related Information

About National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources

- National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) **is a nodal organisation in India for the management of Plant Genetic Resources (PGR).**
- The NBPGR has linkage with National Active Germplasm Sites (NAGS) for the management of active germplasm of field and horticultural crops.

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Mandate

- To act as a nodal institute at the national level for acquisition and management of indigenous and exotic plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and to carry out related research and human resource development, for sustainable growth of agriculture.

Related Terms

Germplasm

- It is a live information source for all the genes present in the respective plant, which can be conserved for long periods and regenerated whenever it is required in the future.

Ex-situ conservation

- It is the conservation of areas outside their natural habitat.
- Examples: Botanical gardens, zoological parks, seed banks, cryopreservation, field gene banks, etc.

RBI unveils financial inclusion index

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

Why in the news?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently announced the formation of a composite Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) to capture the extent of financial inclusion across the country.

About Financial inclusion index

- It is a comprehensive index that incorporates details of banking, investments, insurance, postal as well as the pension sector in consultation with the Government and respective sectoral regulators.

Parameters

- The FI-Index comprises of three broad parameters (weights indicated in brackets) viz., Access (35%), Usage (45%), and Quality (20%) with each of these consisting of various dimensions, which are computed based on a number of indicators.

Scale

- The index captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion in a single value ranging between 0 and 100, where 0 represents complete financial exclusion and 100 indicates full financial inclusion.

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Features

- A unique feature of this Index is that it has a Quality Parameter that captures the quality aspect of financial inclusion.
- This may be reflected by financial literacy, consumer protection, and inequalities and deficiencies in services.
- The Index is also responsive to ease of access, availability and usage of services, and quality of services, in all 97 indicators.

Without a base Year

- **The FI-Index has been created without a base year**, to accurately reflect each stakeholder's cumulative efforts, over the years to financial inclusion.
- **This Index will be published annually, every July.**

Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme

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

Why in the news?

- Ministry of Defence (MoD) has recently provided Rs 400 crore under the **Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS)** for creating state-of-the-art testing infrastructure in partnership with the private industry

About Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme

- The scheme was launched by Raksha Mantri on May 08, 2020.

Objectives

- The Scheme aims to promote indigenous defence production, with a special focus on the participation of MSMEs and Start-Ups by bridging gaps in defence testing infrastructure in the country.
- The scheme would run for five years and envisages the setting up of 6-8 Greenfield Defence Testing Infrastructure facilities that are required for defence and aerospace-related production.
- It will facilitate indigenous defence production, consequently, reduce imports of military equipment and help make the country self-reliant.

Finance and Cooperation

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- The Scheme has an outlay of Rs 400 crore for creating state of the art testing infrastructure for five years.
- The projects under the Scheme will be provided with up to 75% government funding in the form of ‘Grant-in-Aid’.
- The remaining 25% of the project cost will have to be borne by the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) whose constituents will be Indian private entities and State Governments.
- Only private entities registered in India and State Government agencies will qualify for forming the implementation agency for the Scheme.
- **The SPVs under the Scheme will be registered under the Companies Act 2013.**

Tomato leaf curl New Delhi virus

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

Why in the news?

- National Institute of Plant Genomics Research (NIPGR) has recently reported an effective defence strategy deployed by a resistant tomato cultivar against the Tomato leaf curl New Delhi virus (ToLCNDV).
- It employs Sw5a (R gene) that recognizes AC4 protein (viral effector) of ToLCNDV to restrict virus spread.

About Tomato leaf curl New Delhi virus (ToLCNDV)

- It is a bipartite begomovirus species (genus Begomovirus, family Geminiviridae) whose isolates are transmitted in nature by the whitefly Bemisia tabaci in a circulative and persistent manner.
- Tomato leaf curl New Delhi virus (ToLCNDV) infection **causes severe losses in tomato yield worldwide.**

Distribution

- It is more prevalent in northern India.
- ToLCNDV is an important constraint to tomato production in particular, as it causes one of the most predominant and economically important diseases affecting tomatoes in the Indian sub-continent.
- **Epidemics of ToLCNDV were limited to Asian countries until recent times**, with reported isolates mainly concentrated to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in the Indian subcontinent, but they were also found to be present in Thailand, Indonesia, and Taiwan in Southeast and East Asia.

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