

KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

23RD DECEMBER, 2020

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHTS

- The Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change, along with the Wildlife Conservation Society, India, has come up with a unique initiative — a “firefly bird diverter” for overhead power lines in areas where Great Indian Bustard (GIB) populations are found in the wild. The GIB is one of the most critically threatened species in India, with fewer than 150 birds left in the wild.
- The latest data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS5) provide evidence of an uptake in the use of modern contraceptives in rural and urban areas, an improvement in these demands being met, and a decline in the average number of children borne by a woman, and prove that the country’s population is stabilising and fears over a “population explosion” and calls for a “two child policy” are misguided, experts say.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded the ‘Legion of Merit’ by U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday for his role in advancing the India-U.S. relationship.
- Exchanging views on regional situations, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea, in light of the current events, Defence Ministers of India and Japan “concurred” in sending a clear message that they “strongly oppose any attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by coercion or any activities that escalate tension”.
- A UN rights expert urged outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump to pardon Julian Assange, saying the WikiLeaks founder is not “an enemy of the American people”.
- The government plans to set up a Development Finance Institution (DFI) in the next three to four months with a view to mobilise the ₹ 111 lakh crore required for funding of the ambitious national infrastructure pipeline.

INDIA-VIETNAM VIRTUAL SUMMIT

1. India and Vietnam signed seven pacts during their virtual summit, in areas such as defence, petrochemicals, and nuclear energy, and agreed to intensify their development partnership that will enable achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. One specific agreement will cover USD 5 million Indian Grant Assistance for **Army Software Park at National Telecommunications University, Nha Trang, Vietnam.**
3. **Vietnam is a key pillar of India’s Act East policy.** Both Countries need to leverage the economic **opportunities available because of anti-China sentiments and several manufacturing firms deciding to shift from China.**

EARLY HEALTH WARNING SYSTEM

1. The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) is developing an unique Early Health Warning System which is **expected to forecast the possibility of disease outbreaks in the country.**
2. The model being developed is **based on the relationship between weather changes and incidence.** There are certain diseases where weather patterns play a crucial role.
3. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), early warning systems are timely surveillance systems that collect information on epidemic-prone diseases in order to trigger prompt public health interventions.

RISE IN LEOPARD POPULATION

1. As per a recent report ‘Status of leopards in India, 2018’ released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change there has been a “60% increase in the population count of leopards in India from 2014 estimates”.
2. The largest number of leopards have been estimated in **Madhya Pradesh (3,421)** followed by Karnataka (1,783) and Maharashtra (1,690).
3. Techniques Used in the census: **Camera Traps, Satellite Imaging, Field work by the Wildlife Institute of India and National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).**

STRENGTHEN SAFEGUARDS FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

1. Recently, **experts have highlighted the need to strengthen safeguards for corporate whistleblowers** and extend the requirement of a vigil mechanism to large private companies in India.
2. Absence of any specific guidelines on the functioning of a vigil mechanism has led to companies not ensuring that whistleblower complaints are addressed in a timely manner.
3. **Companies were able to retaliate against employees raising whistleblower complaints and even terminated their employment** as any civil suit for such actions could be too expensive and time-consuming.

DISTRICT MINERAL FOUNDATION TRUST FUNDS

1. Dhanbad (Jharkhand) Deputy Commissioner has ordered an audit and an impact assessment of utilisation of funds from the District Mineral Foundation Trust (DMFT) for the financial years 2017-2020.
2. DMFT Funds: Mining companies contribute 10-30% on the royalty amount that they pay to the government to DMF Trust in the district they are operating in.
3. The idea behind the contribution is that **local mining-affected communities, mostly tribal and among the poorest in the country, also have the right to benefit from natural resources extracted from where they live.**