

# KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

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## NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

- **India's hardwon independence and unity needs to be preserved. Today there are threats from China. There may be threats from Afghanistan after the U.S. withdraws its troops. A transition to a more federal structure will allow the Centre to focus on external threats instead of internal dissensions. Our internal divisions helped invaders from West Asia and the British. Hopefully, we will learn from our history.**
- **Amid the perpetual debate surrounding Bt cotton's positive and negative impacts, a recent study titled — 'Longterm impact of Bt cotton: An empirical evidence from North India' — has said its adoption in Punjab in the past over a decade has resulted in net economic and environmental benefits.**
- **Families who have lost breadwinners due to pandemic need help while orphaned children need support. It also does not help that India's pension system is weakening, bank deposits have low yields and official policy expects people to essentially fend for themselves. The Centre should not hesitate to review its tax basket to rely more on the wealthiest to compensate those who have been hit the hardest.**
- **It now appears more likely that a deal may be forged between the Taliban and powerbrokers once associated with the Afghan government. This could lead to a Taliban centric religious council that sets an overall tenor of governance based on Islamic law yet permits a semi-autonomous executive governmental power to operate within that framework.**
- **Three weeks after the government announced that Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) members can take a second COVID19 advance from their retirement savings accounts, companies managing their own EPF trusts are reluctant to process requests from employees who have sought the advance.**

## NUTRIENT LOSS IN WHEAT & RICE

1. Researchers from various institutes under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya found depleting trends in grain density of zinc and iron in rice and wheat cultivated in India.
2. The researchers collected seeds of rice (16 varieties) and wheat (18 varieties) from the gene bank maintained at the ICAR's Cultivar repositories.
3. Reason for the Decrease: **Dilution effect' that is caused by decreased nutrient concentration in response to higher grain yield. This means the rate of yield increase is not compensated by the rate of nutrient take-up by the plants.** Also, the soils supporting plants could be low in plant-available nutrients.
4. Suggestions: Growing newer-released (1990s and later) cultivars of rice and wheat cannot be a sustainable option to alleviate zinc and iron malnutrition in Indian population. There is a need to concentrate on other options like biofortification, where we breed food crops that are rich in micronutrients.

## BIOTECH-KISAN PROGRAMME

1. The Ministry of Science and Technology has issued a Special Call for the NorthEast Region as a part of its Mission Programme "Biotech-Krishi Innovation Science Application Network (Biotech-KISAN)".
2. It is a scientist-farmer partnership scheme launched in 2017. It is a pan-India program, following a hub-and-spoke model and stimulates entrepreneurship and innovation in farmers and empowers women farmers.
3. **The Biotech-KISAN hubs are expected to fulfil the technology required to generate agriculture and bio-resource related jobs and better livelihood ensuring biotechnological benefits to small and marginal farmers.**
4. Farmers are also exposed to best global farm management and practices.

## GAIN-OF-FUNCTION RESEARCH

1. The Wuhan Institute of Virology was said to have conducted gain-of-function research on coronaviruses which may possibly have caused the lab-leak origin of the SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19 pandemic).
2. **In virology, gain-of-function research involves deliberately altering an organism in the lab, altering a gene, or introducing a mutation in a pathogen to study its transmissibility, virulence and immunogenicity.**
3. This is done by genetically engineering the virus and by allowing them to grow in different growth mediums, a technique called serial passage.

## STRATEGY TO PROMOTE MEDICAL, RURAL AND MICE TOURISM

1. The Ministry of Tourism has formulated three draft strategies with roadmaps for promoting Medical and Wellness Tourism, for development of Rural Tourism and for promotion of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) Industry in India.
2. India has been ranked 34th out of 140 countries on the World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2019, released by the World Economic Forum (WEF).
3. Significance Multiplier Effect: **Not only does the tourism sector provide high-quality jobs, it also enhances investment in India, accelerates development, Push to the Service Sector, Preservation of National Heritage and Environment and Renewal of Cultural Pride, Soft Power and Boost to Other Forms of Tourism.**