

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Nagaland's capital Kohima is home to a unique cemetery that also has a tennis court. The United Kingdom based Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has listed five sites with unusual features. The Kohima War Cemetery is one of 23,000 World War graves across the continents maintained by the CWGC. "In 1944, following hard fighting in the Burmese jungle, the Japanese forces in the region pushed across the Chindwin River and into India. In their path was the Fourteenth Army, made up of forces from across the Commonwealth.

A digital initiative for managing COVID19 won a national e-Governance award for Nagaland's Mon district, a month after the killing of 14 civilians by the armed forces. The district's project won silver in the category of "Use of information and communication technology in the management of COVID19".

A para athlete in Odisha has covered a distance of 213 km in a wheelchair in 24 hours ending on Sunday. If his marathon wheelchair drive is approved by the Guinness World Records, Kamalakant Nayak will break the present record of 182.4 km (113.34 miles) achieved by Mario Trindade of Portugal in 2007. Better Life Foundation, an Odisha based NGO which organised the event, said the feat would send across a message that disability was only a state of mind.

Ukraine said it had "evidence" that Russia was behind a massive cyberattack that knocked out key government websites this past week, while Microsoft warned the hack could be far worse than first thought. Tensions are at an all time high between Ukraine and Russia, which Kyiv accuses of having amassed troops on its border ahead of a possible invasion. Some analysts fear the cyberattack could be the prelude to a military attack.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote to the Prime Minister expressing "shock and hurt" at the State's proposed tableau being excluded from the Republic Day parade. Tableau was "commemorating the contributions of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his INA 125th birth anniversary year and was carrying the portraits of some of its most illustrious sons and

STATE OF FOREST REPORT

1.The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has released the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021. The biennial report by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) is an assessment of the country's forest resources.

2.Highlights of the Report: India's forest and tree cover has risen by 2,261 square kilometers in the last two years with Andhra Pradesh growing the maximum forest cover of 647 square kilometers. The total tree-and-forest cover in the country includes an increase of 1,540 square kilometres of forest cover and 721 sq km of tree cover compared to the 2019 report. India's total forest and tree cover is now spread across 80.9 million hectares, which is 62 per cent of the geographical area of the country.

3.The top five states in terms of increase in forest cover are Andhra Pradesh (647 sq km), Telangana (632 sq km), Odisha (537 sq km), Karnataka (155 sq km) and Jharkhand (110 sq km). The gain in forest cover or improvement in forest canopy density may be attributed to better conservation measures, protection, afforestation activities, tree plantation drives and agroforestry. Among the mega cities in the country, Ahmedabad has been the biggest loser when it comes to forest cover.

4.States with maximum forest cover: **Area-wise, Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.** 17 states/UTs have above 33 per cent of the geographical area under forest cover. Out of these states and UTs, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya have more than 75 per cent forest cover.

5.Mangrove cover in the country: There is an increase of 17 sq km in mangrove cover in the country as compared to the previous assessment of 2019. Total mangrove cover in the country is 4,992 sq km. Top three states showing mangrove cover increase are Odisha (8 sq km) followed by Maharashtra (4 sq km) and Karnataka (3 sq km).

6.Carbon stock: **The total carbon stock in the country's forest is estimated to be 7,204 million tonnes and there is an increase of 79.4 million tonnes in the carbon stock of the country as compared to the last assessment of 2019.** The annual increase in the carbon stock is 39.7 million tonnes.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURE OF ISFR 2021

1.In the present ISFR 2021, FSI has included a new chapter related to the assessment of forest cover in the Tiger Reserves, Corridors and Lion conservation area of India. A new initiative of FSI has also been documented in the form of a chapter, where the 'Above Ground Biomass' has been estimated. **FSI, in collaboration with Space Application Centre (SAC), ISRO, Ahmedabad, initiated a special study for estimation of Above Ground Biomass (AGB) at pan-India level, using L-band of Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) data.**

2.FSI in collaboration of with Birla Institute of Technology & Science (BITS) Pilani, Goa Campus has performed a study based on 'Mapping of Climate Change Hotspots in Indian Forests'. The collaborative study was carried out with the objective to map the climatic hotspots over the forest cover in India, using computer model-based projection of temperature and rainfall data, for the three future time periods i.e. year 2030, 2050 and 2085. The report also contains information on various parameters State/UT wise. Special thematic information on forest cover such as hill, tribal districts, and north eastern region has also been given separately in the report.

3.Efforts by Government to increase forest cover in the country: To achieve India's aim of increasing additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes CO2 equivalent by 2030, Nagar Van Yojna has been introduced to increase the tree cover and joined with the second phase of Green Mission in the next five years.

4.**Concerns: The north-east did not show positive results as the current assessment showed a decrease of forest cover to the extent of 1,020 sq km in the region.** Arunachal Pradesh lost the maximum forest cover of 257 sq km, followed by

daughters — Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Sri Aurobindo, Matangini Hazra, Nazrul, Birsa Munda and many patriots”.

The seeming delay in taking criminal action against the perpetrators of hate speeches in Haridwar and Delhi is despite the Supreme Court’s judgments that hate speech is an attack on dignity in the “matter of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship” and threatens the unity of the nation as a whole. “The unity and integrity of the nation cannot be overlooked and slighted, as the acts that promote or are likely to promote divisiveness, alienation and schematism do directly and indirectly impinge on the diversity and pluralism, and when they are with the objective and intent to cause public disorder or to demean dignity of the targeted groups, they have to be dealt with as per law,” the Supreme Court observed in its December 7, 2020 judgment in the Amish Devgan case.

Novak Djokovic’s hopes of defending the Australian Open men’s singles title ended on Sunday after he lost an appeal against the cancellation of his visa and resultant deportation. The Australian government had detained the unvaccinated star on “health and good order” grounds.

The law that governs interfaith marriages in the country, the Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954, is being challenged for endangering the lives of young couples who seek refuge under it. More than a year after a writ petition was moved before the Supreme Court, seeking striking down of several of its provisions, the Union government is yet to submit its response.

Mali’s former President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who led the West African country from 2013 until he was ousted in a coup in 2020, died.

A massive volcanic eruption in Tonga that triggered tsunami waves around the Pacific caused “significant damage” to the island nation’s capital and smothered it in dust, but the full extent was not apparent with communications still cut off.

Seventy per cent of India’s adults have been fully vaccinated against COVID19 while 93% received the first jab, said Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya while launching a postage stamp on indigenously developed vaccine

Manipur which lost 249 sq km, Nagaland 235 sq km, Mizoram 186 sq km and Meghalaya 73 sq km. In total 140 hill districts of the country, the forest cover reduced by 902 sq km in the last two years. In the 2019 report, the forest cover in the hill regions had increased by 544 sq km.

SIACHIN GLACIER

1. It is located in the Eastern Karakoram range in the Himalayas. It is the Second-Longest glacier in the World’s Non-Polar areas. The Siachen Glacier lies immediately south of the great drainage divide that separates the Eurasian Plate from the Indian subcontinent.

2. Context: In a significant statement, Army chief General M.M. Naravane recently said **India “is not averse” to the demilitarisation of the Siachen Glacier, on the condition that Pakistan accepts the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL)** dividing the two countries’ positions.

3. The Army chief said the militarisation of Siachen was a result of an attempt by Pakistan to unilaterally change the status quo in late 1984, forcing India to take countermeasures.

SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE

1. A new report of the US State Department on the Beijing’s extensive territorial claims of “historic rights” in the South China Sea (SCS) has rejected them as being “plainly inconsistent with international law”. The report concludes that these claims gravely undermine the rule of law in the oceans and numerous universally recognised provisions of international law reflected in the convention.

2. The Ruling of 2016 was a serious blow to the Chinese claims. It was based on the UNCLOS which China had ratified. What did it say? **The Ruling dismissed Beijing’s claims on the entire area in the nine-dashed-line in the SCS. It clarified the definition of the “islands”. It found that none of the Spratlys- including Itu Aba, Thitu, Spratly Islands, Northeast Cay, and Southwest Cay- are legally islands** because they cannot sustain a stable community or independent economic life. The Court also agreed with the Philippines that Johnson Reef, Cuarteron Reef, and Fiery Cross Reef are rocks. Hughes Reef and Mischief Reef were found to be below water at high-tide, generating no maritime entitlements.

3. Overall issue: Beijing has overlapping territorial claims with several Southeast Asian states in the South China Sea. China claims almost all of the resource-rich sea, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade passes annually, with competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. Beijing has also been accused of deploying a range of military hardware, including anti-ship missiles and surface-to-air missiles there, and ignored a 2016 international tribunal decision that declared its historical claim over most of the waters to be without basis.

4. Strategic Importance: **This sea holds tremendous strategic importance for its location as it is the connecting link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean (Strait of Malacca).** According to the United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD) one-third of the global shipping passes through it, carrying trillions of trade which makes it a significant geopolitical water body.

5. Contesting Claims Over Islands: The Paracel Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam. The Spratly Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei and Philippines. The Scarborough Shoal is claimed by the Philippines, China and Taiwan. Since 2010, China has been converting uninhabited islets into artificial islets to bring it under UNCLOS (For example, Haven Reef, Johnson South Reef and Fiery Cross Reef).

RELEVANCE FOR MANNED SPACE MISSION FOR INDIA

1. Boost to industries: The Indian industry will find large opportunities through participation in the highly demanding Space missions. **Gaganyaan Mission is expected to source nearly 60% of its equipment from the Indian private sector.**

2. Employment: According to the ISRO chief, the Gaganyaan mission would create 15,000 new employment opportunities, 13,000 of them in private industry and the space organisation would need an additional manpower of 900.

3. Spurs research and development: It will thrust significant research in areas such as materials processing, astro-biology, resources mining, planetary chemistry, planetary orbital calculus and many other areas.

Covaxin to mark one year of the inoculation drive.

Odisha's directorate of prisons and correctional services has proposed to hike incentives of convicted prisoners by four folds after the High Court expressed concern over low wages. If the proposals are accepted, unskilled convicts will get ₹234 against ₹50 and semiskilled convicts may be paid ₹274 against ₹60 per day respectively.

4.Motivation: Human space flight will provide that inspiration to the youth and also the national public mainstream. It would inspire the young generation into notable achievements and enable them to play their legitimate role in challenging future activities.

5.Prestige: India could potentially become the fourth country to launch a human space mission. The Gaganyaan will not only bring about prestige to the nation but also establish India's role as a key player in the space industry.