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27TH JULY 2022

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

India has added five more Ramsar sites, or wetlands of international importance, bringing the number of such sites in the country to 54, Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav said. These are the Karikili Bird Sanctuary, Pallikaranai Marsh Reserve Forest and Pichavaram Mangrove in Tamil Nadu, the Sakhya Sagar in Madhya Pradesh and the Pala Wetlands in Mizoram. India's Ramsar wetlands are spread over 11,000 sq.km — around 10% of the total wetland area in the country — across 18 States. No other South Asian country has as many sites, though this has much to do with India's geographical breadth and tropical diversity. The U.K. (175) and Mexico (142) — smaller countries than India — have the most Ramsar sites, whereas Bolivia spans the largest area with 1,48,000 sq.km under the Convention protection.

Russia will pull out of the International Space Station (ISS) after 2024 and focus on building its own orbiting station, the country's new space chief said on Tuesday amid tensions between Moscow and the West over the Ukraine war. Yuri Borisov said during a meeting with President Vladimir Putin that Russia would fulfill its obligations to its partners before leaving. "The decision to leave ISS after 2024 has been made," Mr. Borisov said. NASA and other international partners hope to keep the space station running until 2030.

Two Border Security Force personnel, part of the United Nations Peacekeeping contingent, were killed in violent armed protests in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Tuesday, a BSF spokesperson said.

26,126 number of rural habitations with contaminants in drinking water. About 26,279 rural habitations were identified to have contaminants in water sources as of April 1 this year. Minister of State for Jal Shakti Bishweswar Tudu said fluoride beyond permissible limits has been found in certain isolated pockets (point source) of 408 districts in 26 States and UTs, and arsenic in certain isolated pockets (point source) of 209 districts in 25 States and UTs.

329 number of tigers India lost in the past three years due to poaching, natural and unnatural causes. According to a reply in the Lok Sabha, 68 tiger deaths were

MAHULI GROUP OF TEMPLES

1.The National Monument Authority (NMA) is going to submit a report on comprehensive development of Mahuli group of temples to the Ministry of Culture. Also known as Dakshin Kashi, the Mahuli Group of Temples are located in Mahuli near Satara in Maharashtra.

2.It is situated at confluence of the rivers Krishna and Venna. These are famous group of 5 temples belonging to 11th and 12th CE in Hemadpanthi style of architecture. Hemadpanthi style is named after its founder, Hemadpant, who was the Prime Minister at the court of Seuna Yadavas of Devagiri.

3.Vishweshwar Temple side is called "Sangam Mahuli" whereas Rameshwar Temple side is called "Kshtra Mahuli". This area has the samadhis of great Maratha queens Rani Tarabai Bhosle and Rani Yesho Bai Bhosle.

STARLINK MISSION

1.Elon Musk's SpaceX has launched the Starlink as its 32nd launch of 2022 using its workhorse Falcon 9 rocket. Starlink is a constellation of broadband satellites in the low-Earth orbit. Announced in 2015, the Starlink project is a satellite constellation development project underway by SpaceX. Under the project, SpaceX intends to evolve into a constellation of nearly 12,000 satellites.

2.The aim is to provide low-cost and reliable space-based Internet services to the world. This is a project to develop a low-cost, high-performance satellite bus and requisite customer ground transceivers to implement a new space-borne Internet communication system. This will offer speeds of up to 1 Gbit/s, with latencies between 25 ms and 35 ms.

3.The Starlink satellites carry Hall thrusters, which use electricity and krypton gas to generate an impulse, To manoeuvre in orbit, To maintain altitude and To guide the spacecraft back into the atmosphere at the end of their mission.

4.SpaceX has launched Starlink satellites to space quicker than its rivals in the satellite internet race, such as OneWeb, due in part to Falcon 9's rapid reusability and The edge associated with using in-house rockets.

NATIONAL MINERAL EXPLORATION TRUST

1.The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR Act), 1957 was amended in March 2021. The amended Act mandates National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) as a nonprofit autonomous body. The NMET is a Trust set up by the Central Government under the Ministry of Mines.

2.It was set up for the purposes of regional (inter-state) and detailed exploration of minerals with special emphasis to strategic and critical minerals. This exploration is done using the NMET funds accrued to it and in such manner as prescribed by the Central Government.

3.The holder of a mining lease or a prospecting licence-cum-mining lease has to pay to the NMET, 2% of the royalty paid by it. Such contributions are made to the relevant state government along with royalty payments, and the state government, in turn, transfers the amount to NMET.

4.MET is similar to the District Mineral Foundation set up under the same Act, but with Different rate of contribution (2% instead of 10-30%), Different level of operation (boosting exploration effort instead of enhancing welfare of the mining affected) and comes under different jurisdictional authorities (central Government instead of state governments).

PLASTICS ALTERNATIVE-NITI AAYOG

1.Lok Sabha passed the Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022 moved by Minister of Earth Sciences. The bill seeks to give effect to To the Antarctic Treaty, The Protocol on Environment Protection (Madrid Protocol) to the Antarctic Treaty and To the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources. The main aim is to ensure de-militarization of the region along with getting it rid of mining or illegal activities. It also aims that there

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DELHI: VIJAY NAGAR 9717380832 & OLD RAJENDER NAGAR 9811293743 | JAIPUR: 8290800441 | PATNA: 7463950774 | RANCHI: 9939982007
BENGALURU: KORMANGALA 7619166663 & CHANDRA LAYOUT 7619136662 | BHOPAL: 7509975361 | INDORE: 7314977441 | IMPHAL: 9650245599
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attributed to natural causes, five to unnatural causes, 29 to poaching and 30 to 'seizure' while a total of 197 tiger deaths are under scrutiny. However, the number of poaching cases has reduced over the years — from 17 in 2019 to four in 2021. According to the data presented, 125 people have been killed in 'tiger attacks' in this period.

₹15,477 crore, the amount spent by the government to construct 2,088 kms of roads in areas bordering China in the last five years. In total, the government spent ₹20,767 crore in constructing 3,595 kms of border roads that included those in areas along the frontiers with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, according to details provided in the Lok Sabha. There has been a renewed focus on developing infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.

According to Niti Aayog's report of August 2021, most power DISCOMS in the country incur losses every year — the total loss was estimated to be ₹90,000 crore in the financial year 2021. Despite the Centre's prescription for annual or periodical revision of retail power tariff, States have not complied. The general approach is to use electricity as a tool for political agenda and make promises to allure people despite knowing that such assurances, if implemented, are not sustainable in the long run.

Nineteen MPs were on Tuesday suspended from attending the Rajya Sabha for the remainder of the week for disrupting the House proceedings and demanding a discussion on price rise and a rollback of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on essentials. This is the highest number of single batch suspension following the suspension of four Congress members from the Lok Sabha on Monday for the rest of the Monsoon Session.

The Supreme Court on July 26 orally asked the Centre to find out from the Finance Commission if there is a way to curb political parties from promising and distributing "irrational freebies" during election campaigns. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana flagged the issue as "serious" and asked for means to control the promise of "freebies" to entice voters.

Days after China and Pakistan held a meeting to bring other countries into the China-Pakistan Economic

should not be any nuclear test / explosion in the region.

2.Applicability - The Bill will apply to any person, vessel or aircraft that is a part of an Indian expedition to Antarctica under a permit issued under the Bill. Areas comprising of Antarctica include: The continent of Antarctica, including its ice-shelves, and all areas of the continental shelf adjacent to it, and All islands (including their ice-shelves), seas, and air space south of 60°S latitude.

3.Committee - The Bill also establishes a 'Committee on Antarctic Governance and Environmental Protection', which Grants permits for various activities, Implements and ensures compliance of relevant international laws for protection of Antarctic environment, Obtains and reviews relevant information provided by parties to the Treaty, Convention, and Protocol, and Negotiates charges with other parties for activities in Antarctica. The Bill will also facilitate India's interest and pro-active involvement in the management of growing Antarctic tourism and sustainable development of fisheries resources in Antarctic waters. It will also help in increased international visibility, credibility of India in Polar governance leading to international collaboration and cooperation in scientific and logistics fields. The Bill also lays out a structure for government officials to inspect a vessel, conduct checks of research facilities.

4.IAA - The Bill also proposed to set-up Indian Antarctic Authority (IAA) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences. The IAA shall be the apex decision making authority and shall facilitate programmes and activities permitted under the Bill. It shall, Provide a stable, transparent and accountable process for the sponsorship and supervision of Antarctic research and expeditions; Ensure the protection and preservation of the Antarctic environment; and Ensure compliance by Indian citizens engaged in the Antarctic programs and activities with relevant rules and internationally agreed standards.

5.Antarctic fund - The act directs creating a fund called the Antarctic fund that will be used for protecting the Antarctic environment.

6.Jurisdiction - The Bill also extends the jurisdiction of Indian courts to Antarctica. It lays out penal provision for crimes on the continent by Indian citizens, foreign citizens who are a part of Indian expeditions, or are in the precincts of Indian research stations. The Bill also prohibits mining, dredging and activities that threaten the pristine conditions of the continent. It also prohibits any person, vessel or aircraft from disposing waste in Antarctica and bars the testing of nuclear devices.

BEST PRACTICES AND PLASTIC ALTERNATIVES

1.Edible Seaweed Cups (Indonesia): Seaweed can grow up to 60 times faster than land-based plants, making it an important carbon sink. **A US-based firm has created algae-blended ethylene-vinyl acetate transforming air and water pollution (ammonia, phosphates, and carbon dioxide) into plant biomass rich in proteins.**

2. A UK firm has invented the only commercially available zero plastic recycled paper bottle in the world. In 2020, a Scotland-based paper manufacturing company developed a sustainable wood-based alternative to plastic packaging. A UK-based company has developed an additive which, when added to the masterbatch of polyolefins, i.e., PE and PP, onsets the degradation.

3.Plastic Alternatives-The study also draws two alternate scenarios Improve waste management infrastructure as per capita GDP grows and Reduce plastic use demand per capita with a fraction of plastic in municipal solid waste capped at 10% by 2020 and 5% by 2040, waste management gradually improves as in the previous scenario.

4.Bio-plastics encompass many materials that are either bio-sourced or biodegradable or both and are made from renewable biomass resources, (corn starch/ sugarcane/ cassava) - might be biodegradable or not. Biodegradable plastic means that plastics, other than compostable plastics, which undergo complete degradation by biological processes It requires ambient environmental (terrestrial or water) conditions, in specified time

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Corridor (CPEC), India on Tuesday said that efforts to broaden CPEC's scope are "inherently illegal". "We have seen reports on encouraging a proposed participation of third countries in the so called CPEC projects. Any such actions by any party directly infringe on India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. India firmly and consistently opposes projects in the so called CPEC, which are in Indian territory that has been illegally occupied by Pakistan.

Surging inflation and sharp slowdowns in the United States and China prompted the IMF to cut its outlook for the global economy this year and next, while warning Tuesday that the situation could get much worse.

periods, without leaving any micro plastics, or visible, distinguishable or toxic residue, which has adverse environment impacts, adhering to laid down standards of BIS and certified by CPCB.

5. Compostable plastics mean plastics that undergo degradation by biological processes. During composting, they yield CO₂, water, inorganic compounds and biomass at a rate consistent with other known compostable materials, excluding conventional petro-based plastics, and do not leave visible, distinguishable or toxic residue.

6. These can be plantbased, but can also be petroleum-based as well. Oxo-degradable/ oxo-biodegradable plastics are conventional plastics such as PE, which include an additive to help them break down into smaller fragments. They could lead to microplastic leakage in the environment.