

Prelim Bits 09-08-2018

World Network of Biosphere Reserves

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- The Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in Sikkim has been included in the UNESCO designated World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).

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- The decision was taken at the 30th Session of International Coordinating Council (ICC) of Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO held at Palembang, Indonesia.

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- It has become the 11th Biosphere Reserve from India to be included in WNBR.

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- The core zone of Khangchendzonga National Park was designated a World Heritage Site in 2016 under the 'mixed' category.

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- The biosphere reserve is one of the highest ecosystems in the world, reaching elevations of 1, 220 metres above sea-level.

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State	List Of Biosphere Reserves
Himachal Pradesh	Cold Desert
Uttarakhand	Nanda Devi *
Sikkim	Khangchendzonga *
Arunachal Pradesh	Dehang-Debang

Assam	Manas
Assam	Dibru-Saikhowa
Meghalaya	Nokrek *
Madhya Pradesh	Panna
Madhya Pradesh	Pachmarhi *
Madhya Pradesh-Chattisgarh	Achanakmar-Amarkantak *
Gujarat	Kachchh
Odisha	Similipal *
West Bengal	Sundarban *
Andhra Pradesh	Seshachalam
Karnataka-Tamil Nadu-Kerala	Agasthyamala *
Tamil Nadu-Kerala	Nilgiri *
Tamil Nadu	Gulf of Mannar *
Andaman & Nicobar Island	Great Nicobar *

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** Highlighted ones are included in World Network of Biosphere Reserves*

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Biosphere Reserves

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- Biosphere Reserve is an international designation by UNESCO for representative parts of natural and cultural landscapes extending over large area of terrestrial or coastal/ marine ecosystems or a combination thereof.
- They are living examples of how human beings and nature can co-exist while respecting each other's needs.
- India is a signatory to the landscape approach supported by UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme.
- Biosphere Reserve Programme is being implemented by Government of India since 1986.
- The financial assistance under the programme is given in 90:10 ratio to the North Eastern Region States and 3 Himalayan states and in the ratio of 60:40 to other states.
- The State Government prepares the Management Action Plan which is approved and monitored by Central MAB Committee.

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Niryat Mitra

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- It is a mobile app launched by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It provides wide range of information required to undertake international trade.
- The information includes policy provisions for export and import, applicable GST rate, available export incentives, tariff, preferential tariff.
- ITC (HS) code refers to Indian Trade Clarification (ITC) and are based on Harmonized System (HS) of Coding.
- It was adopted in India for import-export operations.
- This app works internally to map the ITC HS code of other countries with

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that of India and provides all the required data without the users bothering about the HS code of any country.

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Ease of Living Index

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- It is an initiative of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to help cities assess their liveability vis-à-vis global and national benchmarks.
- It ranks 111 cities based on four pillars namely Institutional, Social, Economic and Physical.
- It is based on Ease of Living assessment standards which are closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- It encourage cities to move towards an 'outcome-based' approach to urban planning and management.
- It is going to be launched as part of Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) and Swachh Survekshan 2019.

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Swachh Manch

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- It is a web-based platform which aims to bring together every stakeholder contributing to the Swachh Bharat Mission under a common platform.
- It will allow stakeholders to create/invite/participate in volunteering opportunities around neighborhoods.
- It will enable uploads of pictorial evidence of citizens and organizations participating in the initiatives as acknowledgement of their efforts and contributions to the cause of 'swachhata'.
- It will also be integrated with the existing Swachhata App to act as a citizens' grievance redressal platform.
- It is going to be launched as part of Swachh Survekshan 2019.

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Maize Pest

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- An invasive agricultural pest Fall Armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) was discovered in Karnataka by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research.
- It is a major maize pest in North America and it arrived in Africa in 2016.
- It has spread to Central and Western Africa in 2016 and has proved very hard to control.
- It prefers Maize, but can feed on 80 species of plants, including rice, sorghum, millet, sugarcane and cotton.
- The recent attack in Karnataka is the first report of the pest in Asia. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are at immediate risk.
- India's tropical climate could allow the pest to thrive.
- It can be controlled with insecticides, through natural enemies or by inter-cropping.

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NRI and RTI

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- The central government has recently informed the Lok Sabha that NRI cannot file RTI applications to seek governance-related information from the Central government departments.
- Click [here](#) to know more about RTI.

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Source: The Hindu, PIB

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