

Prelim Bits 17-08-2017

Madhyamik and Uchchatar Shiksha Kosh

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- Cabinet has recently approved the setting up of a single corpus fund “Madhyamik and Uchchatar Shiksha Kosh (MUSK)”.

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- The proceeds of secondary and higher education cess will be credited to this fund.

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- It is a non-lapsable fund and it will be utilised for the government’s schemes in the education sector.

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Elephant Census

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- The first-ever synchronised **All-India Elephant population estimation** was carried out by the Union Ministry of Environment.

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- Previously, various states used different methodologies and effort was not synchronised across the country.

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- According to the census, Karnataka has the highest number of elephants, followed by Assam and Kerala respectively.

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- The Asian Nature Conservation Foundation (ANCF) at IISc, Bengaluru aided the Project Elephant Directorate to carry out the Census.

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Project Elephant

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- Project Elephant was launched by the Government of India in the year 1992 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
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- The objectives are to protect elephants, their habitat & corridors, to address issues of man-animal conflict and welfare of captive elephants.
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Ecosystems Service Improvement Project

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- India signs Global Environment Facility (GEF) Grant Agreement with the World Bank for Ecosystems Service Improvement Project.
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- The objective of the Project is to enhance forest ecosystem services and improve the livelihoods of forest dependent communities in Central Indian Highlands.
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- The Project will be implemented in the states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh under the National Mission for Green India.
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- The project will be entirely financed by the World Bank out of its GEF Trust Fund.
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- The duration of the project is 5 years.
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Global Environment Facility (GEF)

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- The Global Environment Facility was established in 1991 as a pilot program in the World Bank to assist in the protection of the global environment and to promote environmental sustainable development.
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- The UNDP and UNEP and the World Bank were the three initial partners implementing GEF projects.
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- In 1992, at the Rio Earth Summit, the GEF was restructured and moved out of the World Bank system to become a permanent, separate institution.
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- Today it is an international partnership of 183 countries, international

institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector that addresses global environmental issues.

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- Since 1994, the World Bank has served as the Trustee of the GEF Trust Fund and provided administrative services.

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- GEF funds are available to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meet the objectives of the international environmental conventions and agreements.

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- The GEF is a financial mechanism for 5 major international conventions

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1. The Minamata Convention on Mercury,
2. The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs),
3. The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD),
4. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and
5. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

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- The GEF, although not linked formally to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (MP), supports implementation of the Protocol in countries with economies in transition.

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- The GEF has 18 agencies as the operational arm of the GEF.

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- These agencies work closely with project stakeholders to design, develop and implement GEF-funded projects and programs.

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North Koel Reservoir Project

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- Cabinet has given the approval for the completion of North Koel reservoir project in Jharkhand and Bihar.

- The North Koel River rises on the Ranchi Plateau in Jharkhand.
- It is a tributary of River Sone that joins the river Ganga in Bihar.
- The project envisages building a dam named “**Mandal dam**” in Jharkhand.
- The river along with its tributaries meanders through the northern part of **Betla National Park**.
- The reservoir project is expected to flood villages which are within the **Palamau Tiger Reserve**.
- Thus the GoI restricted the storage capacity of Mandal dam in order to reduce the submergence and to protect Betla National Park and Palamau Tiger Reserve.
- The project aims to provide irrigation the most backward and drought prone areas of Palamu & Garhwa districts in Jharkhand and Aurangabad & Gaya districts in Bihar.



Committee to oversee disinvestment

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- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has recently approved the proposal of setting up a Ministerial Group to decide on the details of strategic disinvestment of Public sector firms.

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- The proposal was given by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).

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- The empowered ministerial group is led by Finance Minister and members include Minister for Road Transport, Minister of Administrative Department.

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- The approval will help in speedy completion of strategic disinvestment transactions.

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