

UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 04-06-2021

SAGE Initiative

- With the objective of focussing on the needs of India's fast-rising elderly population, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJ&E) will launch the Senior care Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE) project.
- The SAGE project will select, support and create a "one-stop access" of elderly care products and services by credible start-ups.
- Start-ups can apply for being a part of SAGE through the SAGE portal.
- They will be selected on the basis of innovative products and services across sectors such as health, housing, apart from technological access linked to finances, food management, and legal guidance.
- The MoSJ&E will act as a facilitator, enabling the elderly to access the products through these identified start-ups.
- India's elderly population is on the rise, and the share of elders, as a percentage of the total population in the country, is expected to increase from 7.5% in 2001 to almost 12.5% by 2026, and surpass 19.5% by 2050.
- So, there is an urgent need to create a more robust elder care ecosystem in India, especially in the post-COVID phase.
- The SAGE project is shaped on the recommendations of the empowered expert committee (EEC) report on start-ups for elderly.

Horticulture Cluster Development Programme

- Horticulture Cluster Development Programme (CDP) was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW) to ensure holistic growth of horticulture.
- It is central sector programme that aims at growing and developing identified horticulture clusters to make them globally competitive.
- It is implemented by the National Horticulture Board (NHB) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW).
- **Clusters** - MoA&FW has identified 53 horticulture clusters, of which 12 have been selected for the pilot launch of the programme. They are,
 - a. Shopian (J&K) and Kinnaur (H.P.) for Apple,
 - b. Lucknow (U.P.), Kutch (Gujarat) and Mahbubnagar (Telangana) for Mango,
 - c. Anantpur (A.P.) and Theni (T.N.) for Banana,

- d. Nasik (M.H.) for Grapes,
- e. Siphahijala (Tripura) for Pineapple,
- f. Solapur (M.H.) and Chitradurga (Karnataka) for Pomegranate and
- g. West Jaintia Hills (Meghalaya) for Turmeric.
- These clusters will be implemented through Cluster Development Agencies (CDAs) which are appointed on the recommendations of the respective State/UT Government.
- **Benefits** - It will address all major issues related to the Indian horticulture sector including pre-production, production, post-harvest management, logistics, marketing and branding.
- It will leverage geographical specialisation and promote integrated and market-led development of horticulture clusters.
- It will help in 'Doubling farmers' income. It will benefit about 10 lakh farmers and related stakeholders of the value chain.
- It will improve exports of the targeted crops by 20% and create cluster-specific brands to enhance the competitiveness of cluster crops.
- The programme is expected to converge with other initiatives of the Government such as the [Agriculture Infrastructure Fund](#).
- CDP has a huge potential to transform the entire horticulture ecosystem improving its global competitiveness by building last-mile connectivity.

RBI to Supervise Cooperative Banks

- A political party has set up a task force to prepare an action plan against a recent change in the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 that has brought cooperative banks under the supervision of the Reserve Bank of India.
- Previously, the cooperative banks have been under dual regulation by the state Registrar of Societies and the RBI. So, they have escaped scrutiny despite failures and frauds.
- **Amendment** - The amended law has given RBI the power to supersede the board of directors of cooperative banks after consultations with the concerned state government.
- [Earlier, it could issue such directions only to multi-state cooperative banks.]
- Also, urban cooperative banks will now be treated on a par with commercial banks.
- With prior approval of the RBI, a cooperative bank can issue shares to its members or to any other person residing within its area of operation, by way of public issue or private placements.
- [These shares can be equity shares, preference shares, or special shares.]
- It can also issue unsecured debentures or bonds with maturity of not less than 10 years.
- This essentially means non-members can become shareholders of the bank,

and this will allow the RBI to merge failing banks quickly.

The EAGLE Act

- The Equal Access to Green cards for Legal Employment (EAGLE) Act of 2021 was introduced in the US House of Representatives. It will remove the per-country cap on permanent residency visas, or green cards.
- It seeks to phase out the 7% per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas and raises the per-country limit on family-sponsored visas from 7% to 15%.
- It provides for a nine-year period for the elimination of this limit.
- The 7% limit was introduced in the mid-20th century, which has led countries with relatively small populations to be allocated the same number of visas as a relatively large-population country.
- However, since the highest number of applicants is from India and China, the EAGLE Act also seeks to reserve visas for 'Lower Admission States' for nine fiscal years (FY).
- While 30% of employment-based visas will be reserved in FY1, this would be reduced to five% in FY 7, 8 and 9.
- The bill also ensures that "no country may receive more than 25% of reserved visas and no country may receive more than 85% of unreserved visas," in the nine fiscal years.
- **Significance** - The EAGLE Act may speed up the petitions for those applying for employment-based green cards.
- The Act will benefit the US economy by allowing American employers to focus on hiring immigrants based on their merit, not their birthplace.
- Think-tank Cato Institute had reported in March 2020 that 75% of the backlog for employment-based visas was made up of Indians.
- So, this act will be advantageous for Indian job-seekers who currently rely on temporary visas or await green cards to work in the US.

NASA's Missions to Venus

- NASA has selected two missions to Venus - DAVINCI+ and VERITAS. These missions are part of the NASA's ninth Discovery Program.
- [Discovery Program began in 1992 to give scientists the chance to launch some missions that use fewer resources and have shorter developmental times.]
- NASA is expected to allot \$500 million to each of these missions that will launch between 2028 and 2030.
- **DAVINCI+** (Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigation of Noble gases, Chemistry, and Imaging) is the first US-led mission to Venus' atmosphere since 1978.

- This mission will try to understand Venus' composition to see how the planet formed and evolved.
- It also consists of a descent sphere that will pass through Venus' thick atmosphere and take measurements of noble gases and other elements.
- This mission will try to return the first high resolution photographs of a unique geological feature of the Venus called "tesserae", which may be comparable to Earth's continents.
- Their presence may suggest that Venus has tectonic plates like Earth.
- **VERITAS** (Venus Emissivity, Radio Science, InSAR, Topography, and Spectroscopy) will map the planet's surface to determine its geologic history and understand why it developed so differently from Earth.
- It'll orbit Venus with a radar that will help to create a three dimensional reconstruction of its topography which might tell if processes such as plate tectonics and volcanism are still active there.
- It will also map the emissions from Venus's surface that may help in determining the type of rocks that exist on Venus.
- It will also determine if active volcanoes are releasing water vapour into the atmosphere.

Internet from the Sky

- OneWeb has successfully launched 36 satellites in its Low Earth Orbit (LEO) constellation, making it reach 218 in-orbit satellites.
- OneWeb is a global communications company that aims to deliver broadband satellite Internet around the world through its fleet of LEO satellites.
- **LEO technology** - LEO satellites have been orbiting the planet since the 1990s, providing people with various communication services.
- They are positioned around 500km-2000km from earth, compared to stationary orbit satellites which are approximately 36,000km away.
- Latency (time needed for data to be sent and received) is contingent on proximity.
- As LEO satellites orbit closer to the earth, they provide stronger signals and faster speeds than traditional fixed-satellite systems.
- Also, because signals travel faster through space than through fibre-optic cables, they also have the potential to rival if not exceed existing ground-based networks.
- However, LEO satellites travel at a speed of 27,000 kph and complete a full circuit of the planet in 90-120 minutes.
- As a result, individual satellites can only make direct contact with a land transmitter for a short period of time thus requiring massive LEO satellite fleets and consequently, a significant capital investment.
- **Criticisms** - There are logistical challenges with launching thousands of

satellites into space as well.

- Satellites can be seen in the night skies which create difficulties for astronomers as satellites reflect sunlight to earth, leaving streaks across images.
- Satellites travelling at a lower orbit can also interrupt the frequency of those orbiting above them.
- There are already almost 1 million objects larger than 1cm in diameter in orbit, a byproduct of years of space activities. Those objects, referred to as 'space junk,' can damage spacecrafts or collide with other satellites.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express, Down To Earth, Business Line, Live Science

