# 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 an 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**