

## Parliamentary Panel examining Prohibition of Child Marriage Amendment or PCMA Bill 2021, gets another extension

- **PCMA Bill 2021** was introduced in Lok Sabha, 'and' was then referred to the **Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports** (under the Rajya Sabha).
  - ⊕ The bill is based on the **recommendations of Jaya Jaitley committee (2020)** where it suggested increasing the age of marriage for females to 21 from 18.
- **Key provisions of PCMA (Amendment) Bill, 2021**
  - ⊕ **Objective:** Seeks to bring parity in the **minimum age of marriage** for **men** and **women** overriding all existing laws, including any custom, usage, or practice governing the parties in relation to marriage.
  - ⊕ Will amend the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006**.
  - ⊕ **Definition of child:** It provides that child means a male or female who has not completed twenty-one years of age.

### Arguments for Increasing Age of Marriage

- **Gender neutrality** in marriage age.
- Women would get more time to pursue **higher education** and participate **in the workforce**.
- **Avoid early age pregnancies**.

### Arguments against

- Priority should be given to **curb child marriages**.
- May **not address the social and cultural** patriarchal norms.
- At age of 18 could vote but could not exercise the **right of choice to marry**.

## Tenth anniversary of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

- BRI is a massive **China-led infrastructure project launched in 2013**.
  - ⊕ It seeks to **connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks** with the aim of improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth.
- **Concerns with BRI**
  - ⊕ **Unsustainable debts** by China to partner countries lead to a debt trap making them vulnerable to Chinese political and economic manipulation.
  - ⊕ BRI infrastructure project has encountered major **implementation problems, such as corruption scandals, labour violations, environmental hazards, and public protests**.
  - ⊕ **India's concerns**
    - ◆ It passes through the **Gilgit Baltistan region of India** and thus **violates India's sovereignty and territorial integrity**.
    - ◆ BRI projects will enhance **China's stature and undermine India's influence over smaller South Asian countries** and Indian Ocean littoral states.
- **Efforts to Counter BRI**
  - ⊕ **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)** by the developed countries.
    - ◆ PGII is the repackaged version of the Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative.
  - ⊕ **India's efforts**
    - ◆ **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) initiative** during the recent G20 summit.
    - ◆ **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** for connecting India to the Middle east and Russia.



## Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR) to be rolled out across the nation

- **Union Education Ministry** has directed states to begin implementing the **APAAR**, also known as "One Nation, One Student ID."
  - ⊕ It is aligned with **National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR)**.
    - ◆ **NDEAR** was established in **2021** and act as an enabler for **New Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- **APAAR** serves as a **registry** for **institutions, students and faculty** by **creating lifelong credentials**, and **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)**.
  - ⊕ **ABC** is an **online repository of academic data** that facilitates **students' mobility** among higher educational institutions.
- It will give a **unique identification number** to each student (enrolled from pre-primary to higher education).
- **Significance**
  - ⊕ **Streamlining** the **admission** process for students transferring schools and colleges across the country.
  - ⊕ **Seamless tracking** of their academic journey and achievements.
  - ⊕ Will also help **government agencies monitor dropouts**.
  - ⊕ Promotes **transparency** and **efficiency** in the education system.
- **Challenges in implementation**
  - ⊕ **Digital divide** may hamper the accessibility for students in rural areas.
  - ⊕ **Variation in educational curriculums** may result in **non-uniform data collection**.
  - ⊕ It raises **privacy concerns** as **access of Students' personal information**, etc. will be required.

## Union government to extend Palm-oil plantation in north-eastern states under NMEO-OP

- **National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)**, launched in 2021 to promote **oil palm cultivation**.
  - ⊕ Aims to make country **Atmanirbhar in edible oils with special focus on North Eastern States and Andaman & Nicobar**.
- **Key Features:**
  - ⊕ **Scheme Type: Centrally Sponsored Scheme**
  - ⊕ **Funding pattern:** 60:40 between the Central and the State Government for General states and 90:10 for NE states and 100% for UTs.
  - ⊕ It is being **implemented in 15 states/UT's in the country**.
  - ⊕ It is proposed to cover an additional area of 6.5 lakh hectare (ha.) for oil palm till the year 2025-26 and reaching the target of 10 lakh hectares.
  - ⊕ Increasing production of seedlings by **establishment of seed garden**, nurseries of oil palm etc.
- **Need:** India is the world's **largest palm oil importer**.
  - ⊕ Around 9 Million Tonne (MT) of palm oil is imported every year (56 % of the total imports of edible oil.)
- **Major Challenges:** Impacts biodiversity as well as soil conditions), water guzzling crop (Oil Palm tree requires from 200 to 300 litres of water per day), deforestation etc.

### About Palm oil

- Around 90% of the world's oil palm trees are grown in Malaysia and Indonesia.
- It is also used in food products, detergents, cosmetics and biofuel.
- In India, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala accounts for 98% production.

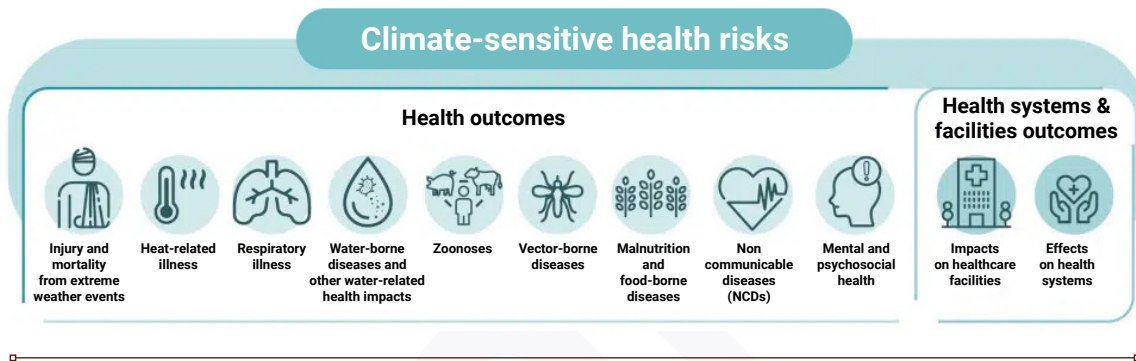
## Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) increased the MSP for all mandated Rabi crops for marketing season 2024-25

- The increase in Minimum Support Prices (MSP) is based on the **price policy recommendations by the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP)**.
  - ⊕ The increase is in line with the Union Budget 2018-19 announcement of **fixing the MSP** at a level of at least **1.5 times of the All-India weighted average Cost of Production**.
- CACP also recommended certain **non-price recommendations for Rabi Crops**. These include:
  - ⊕ Promote and **diversify pulse production** by expanding the area under cultivation.
  - ⊕ **Reduce dependence on imports of edible oils** by increasing production and expanding of scope of the National Mission on Edible Oils.
  - ⊕ **Review Open-Ended Procurement Policy for Rice and Wheat** as it distorts cropping pattern and leads to overexploitation of groundwater.
    - ◆ **Procurement can be restricted** to requirements under the National Food Security Act and other welfare schemes.
  - ⊕ **Timely availability of seeds should be ensured** and States should prepare a dynamic Seed Rolling Plan to provide quality seeds to farmers.
  - ⊕ **Appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies should be adopted** to enhance agricultural resilience to climate change and variability.

MSP is a form of **market intervention** announced by the Government of India at the beginning of the sowing season to insure farmers against any sharp fall in farm prices.

## World Health Summit (WHS) 2023 under the theme 'A Defining Year for Global Health Action' concluded

- Founded in 2009 and held annually in Berlin, WHS brings together different stakeholders to set the agenda for better health and well-being for all.
- Key Outcomes of WHS 2023:**
  - Statement on Green Health:** It supported commitment to build climate-resilient, low-carbon sustainable health systems. For this, it encouraged all health leaders to join **The Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health (ATACH)**.
    - ATACH, a **World Health Organization (WHO)** initiative, works to realize the ambition set at COP26 to build climate-resilient and sustainable health systems.
  - M8 Alliance Declaration:** It called for global cooperation and integration for addressing climate change and health threats and addressing disparities and the needs of the most vulnerable.
    - M8 Alliance is the **academic foundation of WHS** and consists of 31 members (**India is a Member**).
- WHO has identified **climate change as the 'single biggest health threat facing humanity'**. Climate change directly affects the **environmental and social determinants of health**.
- Other Initiatives for climate-resilient health systems:**
  - Climate Resilient Health Systems Initiative under Adaptation Action Coalition
  - Pacific Island Action Plan on Climate Change and Health



## Also in News



### Yuva Sangam

- Modelled on Kashi Tamil Sangamam, Yuva Sangam is an initiative by the Government of India under the **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**.
- It aims to **strengthen people-to-people connect** between youth belonging to different States/UTs of India.
  - Youths across various states will visit other states for 5-7 days.
  - Multi-dimensional exposure will be provided under **five broad areas** - **Paryatan** (Tourism), **Parampara** (Traditions), **Pragati** (Development), **Paraspar Sampark** (People-to-people connect), and **Prodyogiki** (Technology).
- It draws **inspiration from the National Education Policy 2020** and focuses on **experiential learning**.



### Intra-State Transmission System Green Energy Corridor (InSTS GEC)

- The Cabinet approved the **InSTS GEC Phase II** for the 13 GW Renewable Energy Project in Ladakh.
  - Power Grid Corporation of India Limited** will be the Implementing Agency for this project.
- This project is in addition to InSTS GEC Phase-II, which is already under implementation in the States of **Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh for grid integration and power evacuation of approx. 20 GW of RE power**.
  - It is expected to be **completed by 2026**.



### RISUG (Reversible Inhibition of Sperm under Guidance)

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has concluded a seven-year study on the male contraceptive RISUG, finding it to be safe and effective
- RISUG is a **non-hormonal injectable contraceptive** that provides **long-lasting sterility with complete reversibility**.
  - The study found that RISUG's **pregnancy prevention was 99.02% without any serious side effects**.
- Contraception is defined as the **intentional prevention of conception through the use of various devices, sexual practices, chemicals, drugs, or surgical procedures**.



### Marsquake

- Marsquake is a **quake or tremor on the surface of Mars**, much like the tremors caused by earthquakes on the Earth.
- NASA's **InSight lander** in 2022 detected **strongest Marsquake** which was caused by the **tectonic forces** within Mars.
  - The Earth's crust is divided into **tectonic plates that continually shift**, triggering quakes but the **Martian crust is a single solid plate**.
  - Mars is still slowly shrinking and cooling, and there is still **motion within the crust** even though there are **no active plate tectonic processes**. These **faults can trigger quakes**.



## Simlipal Tiger Reserve (STR)

- The Government of Odisha began its own tiger census in STR.
- About STR
  - ⊕ It is named after red silk cotton semul trees.
  - ⊕ It is also included under the UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves.
  - ⊕ It includes Joranda and Baharepani waterfalls.
  - ⊕ Highest peaks: Twin peaks of Khairiburu and Meghashini.
  - ⊕ Rivers in STR: Burhabalanga, Palpala Bandan, Salandi, Kahairi and Deo.
  - ⊕ Forest Type: Moist and dry deciduous forest (Monsoon forest)
  - ⊕ Fauna: elephant, leopard, sambar and hill mynah.



## Climate Teleconnections

- As per study, climate teleconnections are increasingly getting stronger globally.
- Climate Teleconnections is referred as links between weather phenomena at widely separated locations on earth.
  - ⊕ It describes how climate events in one part of the world can affect weather thousands of kilometers away.
- Exists both in the atmosphere and the ocean. Southern hemisphere more prominently affected by it.
- They are mainly dominated by atmospheric Rossby waves.
  - ⊕ Rossby waves occurs due to the Earth's rotation and help transfer heat from the tropics towards the poles and cold air towards the tropics.



## Coral reef fossils

- Coral reef fossils have been unearthed at 18,000 feet above sea level at Burtse, Ladakh
- Significance of Coral reef fossils:
  - ⊕ It will provide glimpses into the region's geological past which comprises of an ancient underwater world and the incredible biodiversity that once thrived in this area.
  - ⊕ It offers a remarkable parallel to the beaches of Rameshwaram or Andaman Nicobar.
- About Burtse
  - ⊕ Located in eastern Ladakh Himalayas, east of Daulat Beg Oldie sector.
  - ⊕ A strategic road to Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) passes through it.



## Muthuvan Tribe

- Members of Muthuvan tribe of Anamalai hills will be part of the Project Nilgiri Tahr, aimed at protecting Nilgiri Tahr.
  - ⊕ They are known for their traditional knowledge and understanding of hills.
- Population of Muthuvan tribe is limited to fragmented habitats in the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
  - ⊕ Traditionally, Muthuvans are nomadic agriculturists, hunters and trappers.
  - ⊕ Their primary cultivations are coffee, ginger, sugarcane and paddy.
  - ⊕ The Muthuvans live in hamlets called Kudi, whose headman is known as Kani or Moopan.

## Places in News



## Lao PDR

- Lao PDR is now the second country after Bangladesh to eliminate lymphatic filariasis (LF) in 2023.
- Lao PDR (Capital: Vientiane)
- Political Boundaries:
  - ⊕ Laos, landlocked country of northeast-central mainland Southeast Asia.
  - ⊕ Laos is bounded to the north by China, to the northeast and east by Vietnam, to the south by Cambodia, to the west by Thailand, and to the northwest by Myanmar.
- Geographical Features:
  - ⊕ Dominating the landscape are its inhospitable forest-covered mountains.
  - ⊕ The highest point: The Phu Bia (9245 feet)
  - ⊕ Major River: The Mekong.



AHMEDABAD



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI



SIKAR