

Infestation of Kashmiri Apples

❖ Context:

- Iranian kiwis flooding the Kashmiri market are infecting locally harvested apples with the pests, *Aspidiotus nerd*, *Aonidella aurantii* and *codling moth*.

❖ Key Highlights:

- **Kashmir produces 71% of the country's apples**
 - Iran is also exporting apples to India, from orchards which have been affected by these pests, illegally and unlawfully under the trade name of Afghan apple misusing the free trade agreement.
 - **Codling moth larvae** are not able to feed on leaves. The caterpillars bore into fruit and stop it from growing, which leads to premature ripening.
 - They are **polyphagous**, able to utilise a variety of food sources and thus are spread all over the world.
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) is a 1951 multilateral treaty overseen by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation that aims to secure coordinated, effective action to prevent and to control the introduction and spread of pests of plants and plant products. • The Convention's implementation is governed by the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures • The convention is also recognized by the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement) • Under the convention, Phytosanitary certificates, accompanied with the consignment, are issued by the NPPO of the exporting country, to indicate that consignments of plants, plant products or other regulated articles meet specified phytosanitary import requirements of the importing country. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate of Plant Protection and Storage (Faridabad, Haryana), an attached office under Ministry of Agriculture is designated as National Plant Protection Organisation for India under the convention. It is headed by Plant Protection Advisor to the Government of India • Major activities are exclusion of exotic pests, surveillance and monitoring and control of locusts, registration of pesticides and monitoring of their availability and quality, promotion of integrated pest management approach in plant protection, development of the human resources in plant protection and monitoring of pesticide residues in agricultural commodities. • Plant Quarantine (Regulation of Import into India) Order 2003 issued under the Destructive Insects & Pests Act, 1914 regulates the imports of agricultural commodities and the wood packaging material. It is administered by the Directorate |
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Rurban Mission

❖ Context

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Launched in 2016 by Ministry of Rural Development ➤ As per Census of India 2011 statistics, the rural population in India constitutes almost 68% of the total population. ➤ Large parts of rural areas in the country are not stand-alone settlements but part of a cluster of settlements, which are relatively proximate to each other. ➤ These clusters typically illustrate potential for growth and development. ➤ Both from an economic viewpoint as well as to optimise benefits of infrastructure provision, the Mission aims at development of 300 Rurban clusters (categorised into tribal and non-tribal), in the next five years. ➤ The objective of the Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) is to develop clusters and bridge rural-urban divides by stimulating local economic development and enhancing basic services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Telangana state stood first in the implementation of Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission followed by TN and Gujarat. ❖ About the Mission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These clusters, once developed, can then be classified as 'Rurban'. • A Centrally Sponsored Scheme, 30% of the estimated investment for each Rurban cluster is given as Critical Gap Funding (CGF), while 70% of the funds is mobilised by the States through convergence with synergic State and Central programmes as well as private investment and institutional funding. • Integrated Cluster Action Plan (ICAP) is the key document covering baseline studies outlining the requirements of the cluster and the key interventions needed to address these needs and to leverage its potential. |
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Special Category Status

❖ Context

- The Central government has extended a **special package in lieu of the Special Category Status** to **Andhra Pradesh**.

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❖ Key Highlights:

- An amount of ₹19,846.199 crore under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 has been provided.
- As per the recommendations of the respective Finance Commissions, Revenue Deficit Grant of ₹22,112 crore for 2015-20 and ₹5,897 crore for 2020-21 had been granted.

❖ About Special Category (SCS) Status:

- There is **no provision of SCS in the Constitution.**
- Special Category Status (SCS) is a classification given by the Centre to assist in the development of those states that face geographical and socio economic disadvantages like hilly terrains, strategic international borders, economic and infrastructural backwardness, and non-viable state finances.
- The concept of SCS emerged in 1969 when the Gadgil formula (that determined Central assistance to states) was approved.
- First SCS was accorded in 1969 to Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and Nagaland.
- Over the years, eight more states were added to the list:- Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tripura Land, finally, in 2010, Uttarakhand.
- Until 2014-15, SCS meant these 11 states received a variety of benefits and sops.

❖ Granting SCS Status:

- Special Category Status for plan assistance was granted in the past by the National Development Council to the States that are characterized by a number of features necessitating special consideration.

- Now, it is done by the central government.

❖ Benefits:

- Center state expenditure ratio is 90:10 for centrally-sponsored schemes and external aid while the rest 10 percent is given as loan to the state at Zero Percent Rate of Interest (for general states 70:30)
- Preferential treatment in getting central funds.
- Concession on excise duty to attract industries to the state.
- 30 percent of the Centre's gross budget also goes to special category states.
- These states can avail the benefit of debt-swapping and debt relief schemes.
- States with special category status are exempted from customs duty, corporate tax, income tax and other taxes to attract investment.
- Special category states have the facility that if they have unspent money in a financial year; it does not lapse and gets carried forward for the next financial year.

Flex-Fuel Vehicles

❖ Context:

- Govt has issued an advisory to carmakers to introduce flex-fuel engines in vehicles.

❖ Key Highlights:

- Carmakers are given six months' time to introduce flex-fuel engines.
- Manufacturers have to produce the Flex Fuel Strong Hybrid vehicles and both types of vehicles must comply with the BS-6 emission norms.

❖ About Flex-Fuel Vehicles(FFVs) :

- The flex-fuel engine-based vehicles use a blend of the gasoline and ethanol.
- FFVs will allow vehicles to use all the blends and also run on unblended fuel.
- Also, these vehicles are a logical extension of the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme launched by the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in January 2003.
- Ethanol is a by-product of sugarcane but can also be made from grains. In short, ethanol is a renewable fuel made from various plant materials collectively known as biomass.
- Given the size of the country's sugarcane and grain production, India can meet most of its ethanol requirements indigenously.
- In a good flex-fuel vehicle, up to 83 per cent ethanol can be mixed with petrol, which is a global standard.

News in Between the Lines

Gurudwara Lakhpat Sahib



❖ Context:

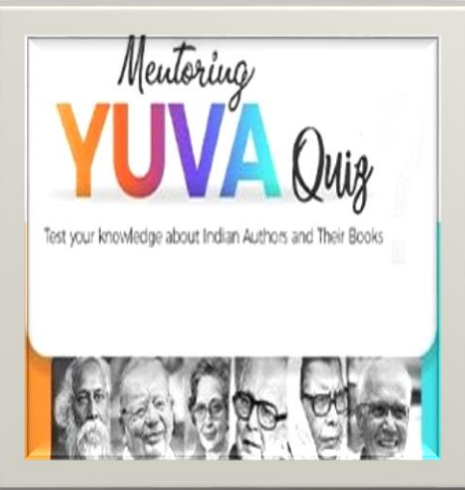

- Every year from 23rd to 25th Dec, Sikh sangat of Gujarat celebrates the Gurburab (celebration of birth anniversary) of Guru Nanak Dev at Lakhpat Sahib Gurudwara at Kutch district.
- Guru Nanak Dev was born on the full moon day of Karthik (a month of Hindu calendar) in Talwandi, Pakistan in 1469.

❖ Key Highlights:

- Guru Nanak on his way to Mecca stayed over in the town during his second (1506-1513)

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	<p>and fourth (1519-1521) missionary journeys known as udasis. The first and third udasis were undertaken by Guru Nanak Dev during 1497-1509 and 1515-1517 respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ He visited the site in fourth journey. The descendants of the host established the Gurudwara in the early 19th Century. ➤ Gurudwara Lakhpat Sahib has his relics including wooden footwear and palkhi as well as manuscripts and markings scripts of Gurmukhi.
<p>PM - Yuva Mentorship Scheme</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National Book of Trust announced 75 selected authors under the scheme ❖ Key Highlights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Goal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a pool of authors below the age of 30 years who can write on a spectrum of subjects to promote Indian heritage, culture & knowledge on an international platform. • To bring reading and authorship, as a preferred profession at par with other job options ➤ National Book of Trust under Ministry of Education is implementing agency ➤ An All India contest was held between 01st June - 31st July 2021 ➤ The selected authors will undergo 6-months of mentorship under eminent writers and editors of NBT, receive Rs. 50,000
<p>Tai Khamti Resistance</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Arunachal Pradesh Deputy CM called the Centre to recognise battles against British in North East ❖ About the Resistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It was a struggle for independence undertaken by Tai khamti people in 1839. Some 80 British soldiers including Col Adam White were killed in the conflict. ➤ Tai Khamtis are a Theravada Buddhist community settled in the lower region drained by Tengapani and Dihang River (tributary of Brahmaputra) covering Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. ➤ Society is patriarchal in nature and live in nuclear family ➤ Sedentary agriculture is main economic activity ➤ The English came into contact with the strategically inhabited frontier communities of Assam during first Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826) ➤ Tai Khamtis assisted Britishers in the war who tried to use them as buffer communities against Burmese ➤ After the war, Britishers encroached in the ancestral domains of the Khamtis which led to the resistance ➤ Other famous resistances of the North east are a series of Anglo-Abor wars from 1858 to 1911 and the Wancho-British war in Tirap district's Ninu in 1875 ➤ The Abors, now called Adis, inhabit central Arunachal Pradesh, while the Wanchos live in the southern part
<p>Good Governance Index 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Released by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, on Good governance Day on 25th December celebrated to mark the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee ❖ Key Highlights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It covers 10 sectors, 58 indicators dividing states into 4 categories - Group A, Group B,

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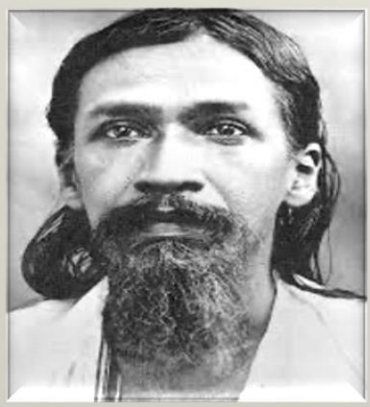




NE & Hill states, UTs.

- **Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa** top the score this year.

150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo



❖ Context

- The Prime Minister chaired the first meeting of the **High Level Committee (HLC)** which has been constituted to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo.

❖ About Sri Aurobindo

- Sri Aurobindo was an **Indian philosopher, yoga guru, maharishi, poet, and Indian nationalist.**
- He was also a journalist, editing newspapers such as **Bande Mataram.**
- **Composed 'SAVITRI' English poetry**
- **Wrote a famous book: 'THE LIFE DIVINE'**
- **Translated the song 'VANDE MATARAM (written by Bankim Chandra) into English.**
- From **1902 to 1910 he partook in the struggle to free India from the British.** As a result of his political activities, **he was imprisoned in 1908 (Alipore Bomb case).** In this case he **was defended by- C.R Das.**
- Two years later he fled British India and **found refuge in the French colony of Pondichéry (Puducherry).**
- In Pondichéry he **founded a community of spiritual seekers,** which took shape as the **Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1926** also he developed a spiritual practice called **Integral Yoga.**
- He believed that the **basic principles of matter, life, and mind would be succeeded through terrestrial evolution by the principle of supermind** as an intermediate power between the two spheres of the infinite and the finite.

Rare Pink Handfish



❖ Context:

- A rare 'walking' fish with hands has been spotted **after 22 years** in Australia near the **Tasmanian coast,** last spotted in **1999.**

❖ About:

- The **Australian marine researchers** used an underwater camera inside the seabed in **Tasman Fracture Marine Park.**
- Handfishes have small population sizes and their distributions are **restricted.** Thus, they are highly **vulnerable** to disturbance.
- Some species are classified as **critically endangered.**
- They are scientifically called as **Latin brachium.**
- The species has been named '**handfish**' because of their little hand like structure, which they use to walk on the sea bed.
- Handfishes grow up to 15 cm long. They have skin covered with denticles, which give them an alternate name '**warty anglers**'.
- They are **slow-moving fish.**

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