

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS – MARCH 31, 2021

NATIONAL

- Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare Dr. Harsh Vardhan – inaugurated ‘DSIR-PRISM’ scheme through video conferencing in IIT, Delhi



- ✓ The new scheme is an alignment and awareness event aimed at promoting innovations
- ✓ DSIR-PRISM refers to ‘Department of Scientific and Industrial Research – Promoting Innovations in Individuals, Startups and MSMEs’
- ✓ The PRISM scheme extends its support to any citizen of the country through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in alignment with the National objectives
- ✓ It will be applicable in the core technology areas like water, affordable healthcare, green technology, sewage management, industrially utilizable smart materials, clean energy and waste to wealth
- ✓ The launching event was organized by DSIR, Ministry of Science and Technology in association with three major National Initiatives - Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA), Ministry of Education, Smart India Hackathon (SIH), Ministry of Education and RuTAG, IIT Delhi.
- ✓ Approximately 3500 institutions and 50,000 innovators attended the launch event
- ✓ As per the scheme, the financial grant is given in two phases - Phase I and Phase II.

- ✓ This includes initial innovation stage and the advanced enterprise setup phase
 - ✓ The financial assistance will be processed through DSIR outreach-cum-cluster innovation centres available throughout India.
 - ✓ The grant in Phase I is from Rs. 2 lakhs to Rs. 20 lakhs and that for Phase II is a maximum of Rs. 50 lakhs.
- **India – to be provided the ‘Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects’ (GGP), which is a financial assistance scheme of Japan**
- ✓ The GGP is extended by Japan for development projects designed to meet the diverse basic human needs in more than 100 countries, including India
 - ✓ The scheme supports projects implemented by non-profit organizations such as NGOs, medical and educational institutions
 - ✓ Further, the organisation must be eligible to receive foreign funds under the concerned national laws.
 - ✓ The organization must be International, National or Local NGO/Medical Institution/Educational Institution/Community-Based Organization (CBO).
 - ✓ The organisation must also be registered under Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976.
 - ✓ Along with this, it must be registered under the relevant registration acts including National and State acts.
 - ✓ Under the scheme, a maximum fund assistance of 10 million Japanese Yen is to be provided for a single project
 - ✓ The basic areas to be covered under the scheme includes basic human needs and human security, primary education and adult illiteracy, safe drinking water and sanitation, women’s empowerment, environment protection, CSR projects, poverty alleviation, etc.
 - ✓ The GGP scheme was first launched in 1989 by Japan
- **On March 30, the Road Transport and Highways Ministry - issued draft rules regarding the concession in the motor vehicle tax against the scrapped vehicles.**
- ✓ As per the draft rules, the central government has proposed up to 25% of tax concession on the purchase of the new vehicles alongwith the submission of the scrappage certificate.
 - ✓ In the case of non-transport vehicles, the similar concession on the motor vehicle tax will be 25% and 15% in the case of transport vehicles.
 - ✓ Recently, Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari unveiled the ‘Vehicle Scrapping Policy’ in Lok Sabha with an aim to improve fuel efficiency and reduce pollution.
 - ✓ According to the Ministry, the concessions will be available up to 8 years in the case of transport vehicles and will be up to 15 years in case of non-transport vehicles, starting from the date of the first registration.

- ✓ Under the Vehicle scrapping policy, the commercial vehicles must be de-registered after 15 years in case they fail to get the fitness certificate.
 - ✓ The private vehicles must be de-registered after 20 years if they are found unfit or in case of a failure to renew the registration certificate.
 - ✓ All the vehicles of the state government, central government, panchayats, municipal corporations, public sector undertakings, state transport undertakings, and autonomous bodies with state and union governments must be de-registered and scrapped after 15 years from the registration date.
 - ✓ The scheme aims to provide substantial incentives to the owners of the old vehicles in order to scrap unfit and old vehicles through the registered scrapping centres.
 - ✓ The Road Transport and Highways Ministry will promote the setting up of the Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility (RVSF) across the country with the private partnerships.
- **On March 30, the Finance Ministry – announced the issuance of the 16th tranche of electoral bonds from April 1 to April 10**
- ✓ The Government launches the electoral bonds as an alternative to the cash donations that are made to the political parties
 - ✓ The bonds are part of government's efforts to bring transparency in the political funding.
 - ✓ The electoral bonds for the elections can be purchased by any individual who is a citizen of India or by any agency established or incorporated in India.
 - ✓ The political parties that are registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 will be eligible to receive the electoral bonds.
 - ✓ The eligible parties must have secured not less than 1% of the votes polled in the last General Election to the Legislative Assembly of the State or House of the People
 - ✓ The parties can purchase the electoral bonds through a bank account with an authorized bank.
 - ✓ As per the Ministry of Finance, State Bank of India has been given the authorization to issue and encash the electoral bonds through its 29 authorized branches
 - ✓ The electoral bonds will remain valid for the fifteen calendar days from the date of issue.
 - ✓ The electoral bond which will be deposited by an eligible political party in its account will be credited on the same day.
 - ✓ Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Assam, and Puducherry are in the process of electing new governments

INTERNATIONAL

- **Germany and Canada - announced restrictions on the usage of Astra-Zeneca's Covid-19 vaccine**

- ✓ The decision follows fresh concern over unusual blood clots reported in a few people who had received the shots
- ✓ On March 30, Germany restricted the use of Astra-Zeneca's vaccine in people under 60
- ✓ The country's independent vaccine expert panel released new data showing a rise in reported cases of an unusual form of blood clot in the head — known as sinus vein thrombosis
- ✓ A total of 31 blood clot cases have been reported out of 2.7 million doses of AstraZeneca administered in Germany so far
- ✓ Several German regions had already suspended use of the AstraZeneca shots in younger people
- ✓ A day before, Canada suspended use of the AstraZeneca jab in people under 55 years

INDIA AND NEIGHBOURS

- **Indian companies – to develop the transmission lines of Bangladesh's first nuclear plant constructed at Rooppur**
- ✓ In this regard, India signed a deal with Bangladesh following talks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart, Sheikh Hasina, in Dhaka
- ✓ PM Modi arrived in the capital of Bangladesh on March 26 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the country's war of independence from Pakistan and the establishment of diplomatic ties with New Delhi.
- ✓ The Indian company Larsen & Toubro Limited (L&T) will set up the 400kV and 230kV transmission lines, which are the major work of the transmission project.
- ✓ The power transmission project will be implemented with India's Line of Credit (LoC) financing.
- ✓ The estimated project cost is Tk10,981 crore, of which Tk8,219 crore will be financed by Exim Bank while the Bangladesh government will provide Tk1,527 and the project implementing agency, PGCB will provide Tk1,235 crore respectively.
- ✓ Rooppur Nuclear power plant is an under-construction 2.4 GW electricity-producing nuclear power plant in Bangladesh.
- ✓ It is being constructed at Rooppur in the Pabna District of Bangladesh, on the bank of Padma River.
- ✓ The site is located on the eastern bank of the Ganges River at about 160 kilometers west of Dhaka.
- ✓ There are two units of plants which are expected to be completed in 2022 and 2024 respectively.
- ✓ The Rooppur nuclear power project is the first initiative under the Indo-Russian deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries.

- ✓ In this regard, a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed at Moscow, Russia in March 2018 between Russia, Bangladesh and India.
- ✓ The nuclear plant is to be built by the Russian Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation.
- ✓ In June 2018, Infrastructure major, Hindustan Construction Company Ltd. (HCC) was given contract for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.
- ✓ It will be for the first time an Indian company will be involved in any nuclear project out of the country.
- ✓ Since India is not a Nuclear Supplier group (NSG) member, it cannot participate directly in construction of Atomic power reactors.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **A butterfly species believed to be a native of Sri Lanka – has been discovered in the Western Ghats.**
- ✓ The species discovered in the Agasthiyarmalai Biosphere reserve is known as *Nacaduba sinhala ramaswamii* and commonly named Ramaswami's Six Lineblue.
- ✓ The new butterfly species was discovered by Ramasamy S R K, a researcher



- ✓ This butterfly was first sighted in Tenkasi at the foothills of the Western Ghats in 2016
- ✓ Line blues are small butterflies belonging to the subfamily Lycaenidae.
- ✓ Their distribution ranges from India and Sri Lanka, to the whole of south-east Asia, Australia and Samoa in the Pacific.
- ✓ They are characterised by hairy eyes
- ✓ The species appears to breed more during the northeast monsoon, though the breeding season extends from September to January, with the peak in October.
- ✓ This is the first record of the species *Nacaduba sinhala* outside its endemic range in Sri Lanka.

DEFENCE

- **India - is set to clear a mega indigenous project to build three nuclear-powered attack submarines soon**
- ✓ After the initial three, further approval will be given for another three submarines at a later stage
- ✓ The development of the indigenous submarines is as part of the long-term plan to counter China's expanding naval footprint in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond.
- ✓ The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) is likely to give the final nod "within a month or two" to the mega submarine project
- ✓ The project is for the construction of six nuclear-powered attack submarines, also called SSNs in naval parlance, each weighing over 6,000 tonnes, at the ship-building centre (SBC) in Vishakapatnam.
- ✓ Out of the first three submarines to be given approval, the first indigenous SSN is expected to be rolled out by around 2032.
- ✓ Each of these submarines are expected to cost around Rs 15,000 crore
- ✓ India will also commission its second nuclear-powered submarine armed with nuclear ballistic missiles (called SSBN), INS Arighat, this year.
- ✓ The first, INS Arihant, became fully operational with a successful "deterrence patrol" in late-2018.
- ✓ INS Chakra is a nuclear-powered attack submarine presently in use

- **India – to participate in a French naval exercise 'La Perouse' in the Bay of Bengal this month**
- ✓ It will be the first French naval exercise that Indian Navy will be a part of.
- ✓ Japan, Australia, and the United States of America (USA) will also participate in the exercise.
- ✓ As per the French Embassy, two French Navy ships, the Surcouf and the Tonnerre will sail to Bay of Bengal to participate in the exercise.
- ✓ The French naval exercise La Perouse will be held from April 5 to 7.
- ✓ In 2019, the first edition of the La Perouse was held with the participation of four countries - France, USA, Australia and Japan
- ✓ Usually, La Perouse will be followed by Varuna in Arabian Sea
- ✓ Varuna, the joint naval exercise between India and France, was first conducted in 1983

ECONOMY

- **The World Bank - has raised India's GDP growth prediction to 10.1% from 5.4% projected in January for the fiscal year 2021-22**
- ✓ The increase is attributed to a strong rebound in private consumption and investment growth.

- ✓ The World Bank also predicted that the country's real GDP growth for FY22 would be in the range of -7.5 to 12.5% considering the uncertainty related to the pandemic in 2021-22.
- ✓ This was revealed in the World Bank's South Asia Economic Focus Spring update report.
- ✓ As per the report, the government consumption is expected to rise by about 16.7% in 2021, which will reflect a strong fiscal stimulus in India.
- ✓ The World Bank noted that the increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) in India in 2020 will make South Asia the only major region in the developing world to see a surge in FDI in 2020.
- ✓ India is the largest country in the region and it has registered a 1.5% increase of GDP in terms of FDI during 2020
- ✓ India has been attracting record deals in IT consulting and digital sectors including e-commerce platforms, data processing services and digital payments through various mergers and acquisitions.
- ✓ Due to this, India's net international reserves have almost doubled to 17.3 months of imports of Goods and Services from around 10.7 months in 2019.
- ✓ As per the report, overall South Asia region is expected to grow by 7.2% in 2021 and 4.4% in 2022 from a revised GDP decline of 5.4% in 2020.

SPORTS

- **India – has moved to the 10th position in the overall ranking of medal-winning countries in Shooting World Cups, since the event began in 1986.**
- ✓ The Indian shooters have displayed great skill and won 30 medals at the recently concluded ISSF World Cup in Delhi, ahead of the Tokyo Olympics
- ✓ India has achieved a total of 15 Gold, 9 Silver and 6 Bronze Medals.
- ✓ With this, India has taken its overall World Cup medals to 127 (50G, 39S, 38B) from 75 in just two years
- ✓ China tops the tally with 835 medals (317 G, 286 S and 232 B), while the USA is second with 563 medals (199 G, 181 S, 183 B).
- ✓ India has won a total of 52 medals (31G, 13S, 8B) since 2019, out of which 20 (13G, 3S, 4B) have come from the mixed team events, the most by any country.
- ✓ China is second with 16 medals in mixed events (5G, 7S, 4B).
- ✓ India will field 15 shooters at the Tokyo Games and will be one of the strongest contingents in the discipline there.

