

Posidonia Australis

❖ Context

- Australian researchers have located what is believed to be the **largest plant on Earth** - and they estimate it's at **least 4,500 years old**.



❖ Key Highlights

- It has been discovered in **UNESCO's World Heritage site of Shark Bay** in Western Australia.
- The plant is **ribbon weed**, a species of seagrass.



- Spread over **200 sq. km** and with a total length of **180 kms**, the plant expanded from a **single colonising seedling**.
- Researchers wanted to understand how genetically diverse the seagrass meadows in Shark Bay were, and which plants should be collected for seagrass restoration.
- Researchers used 18,000 genetic markers to generate a "fingerprint" from the sampled shoots of the grass. They found it to be one only.

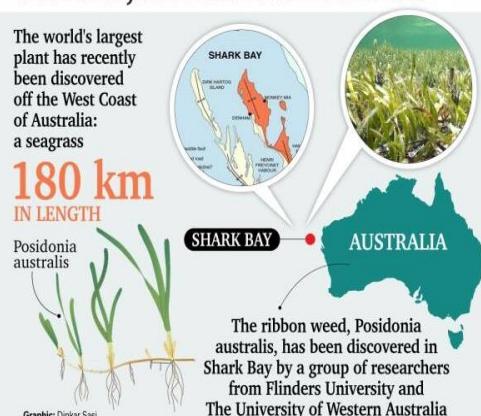
❖ The conundrum

- The discovery has also presented an ecological conundrum.
- **The plant is sterile. It doesn't have sex. It cannot spread seeds.**

- **Plants that don't have sex tend to also have reduced genetic diversity**, which they normally need when dealing with environmental change.
- Then how the plant is able to survive for 4500 years.
- Even today, the plant experiences extreme ranges of environmental conditions - 17-30 °C of temperature, normal to double salinities, darkness to extreme light conditions - which would typically be highly stressful for plants.

❖ Polyploidy

A 4,500-YEAR OLD PLANT, SPREAD OVER 20,000 FOOTBALL FIELDS



- Another unique feature of the plant that has been discovered is that it is a polyploid i.e. **it has twice as many chromosomes as its oceanic relatives**.
- Instead of taking 50% of the chromosomes from each parent, it took 100% from both, ending up with twice the chromosomes.
- Scientists believed that the characteristic may be the reason behind its long time survival.

Last Mile Delivery Issues With DBT

❖ Context

- A variety of exclusionary factors can be found at every stage of the **delivery pipeline of Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT)**, according to a survey.

Through the schemes			
Issue	Respondents (%)	Follow-up action taken	Respondents whose issue was resolved (%)
MGNREGS			
No response/ non-acceptance of application	41	Submitted a written complaint to panchayat/block office/district office	45.2
Rozgar Sevak/ Official unavailable	24	Multiple visits to panchayat/Submitted written complaint	84.6
Application processing delayed	12	Multiple visits to panchayat/Submitted written complaint	100
Time-consuming application process	13	No follow-up question asked	-
PM Kisan Samman Nidhi			
Far away enrolment points	33	No follow-up question asked	-
Patwari unavailable	30	Multiple visits	87
Aadhaar-bank seeding issue	17	Approached bank to get seeding/correction/ KYC done	50
Time-consuming application process	16	No follow-up question asked	-

Source: Dvara report

❖ Key Highlights

- The survey is based on response from around 2,500 respondents in seven States: **Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh**.
- DBT, which was started on **January 1, 2013**, with an aim to reform government delivery system, now covers **313 schemes under 53 Central ministries** and departments.
- All 28 States and nine Union Territories (UTs) have adopted DBT for distributing various welfare initiatives, including subsidies. The Centre claims **it managed to save over ₹2.22-lakh crore as of March 31, 2021**, with the help of DBT.

❖ The Issues:

- **Lack of accessibility:** One of the most prominent issues faced by citizens attempting to enroll is the lack of accessibility/proximity to enrolment points, unavailability, or erratic availability of officials/operators responsible for enrolment, etc.

- **Disruptions to payment schedule** : In terms of receiving money in their bank accounts through DBT, one of the most prominent issues is disruptions to payment schedule. Reasons for disruptions could be spelling errors in Aadhaar details, pending KYC, etc.
- **Travelling long distances:** Respondents also spoke about issues such as travelling long distances to withdraw cash, erratic functioning of cash out points, etc.
- ❖ **Recommendations:**
 - There is an urgent need to increase **the accessibility of enrolment** points for citizens across schemes, specifically in rural and peri-urban areas.
 - The speedy implementation of the objectives laid down in the **Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and CSC e-governance Services India Limited**.
 - The creation of a **common grievance redress cell** for all DBT schemes across tiers — State, district, and block.
 - A cell at each tier must be assigned with the task of **collating and live-tracking** all complaints generated at its sub-tiers and ensure timely redressal of grievances.

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News in Between the Lines

High Potential Individual Visa Programme



❖ Context

- The visa programme launched recently by the **UK** is being criticised for nurturing **global inequalities and discriminating against developing nations**.

❖ Key Highlights Of The Programme

- It allows **graduates**, in the last 5 years, from the **top 50 non-UK universities** to **stay and work in the nation for a minimum of two years**.
- The work visa for a PhD or other doctoral qualification will be for at least three years.
- The route would **allow students to bring dependents or close family members into the country**.
- The top 50 universities are chosen from the **annual rankings lists of 'QS,' 'Times Higher Education,' and the 'Academic Ranking of World Universities,' and include institutions** from the United States, Canada, Japan, Germany, Australia, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, France, Sweden, and Switzerland.
- There are **no South Asian, South American or African universities** on the list.
- There is **no Indian university** featured in the list. **However, Indian students studying at any of the top ranking foreign universities** in the list are eligible for the HPI visa.
- According to the UK government, the goal is to create a highly desirable and able pool of mobile talent from which UK employers can recruit and drive financial progress and technological advances.

Greedflation



❖ Context

- Economists and politicians in the USA are debating whether **monopolistic companies are fueling inflation**.

❖ Key Highlights

- **Price gouging** refers to when retailers and others take advantage of spikes in demand by charging exorbitant prices for necessities, often after a natural disaster or other state of emergency.
- It is being argued that **price gouging by dominant companies is squeezing consumers' purchasing power and supercharging inflation**. This hypothesis is known as greedflation.
- The hypothesis is being floated based on certain trends being observed in the US economy, contrary to the predictions of believed models.
- Among them are **falling real wages in the overheated labour market and rise in profits of the companies when the unemployment is low**.
- Experts in economics are pondering over three questions:
 - Are companies charging more than necessary to cover their rising costs?
 - If so, is that enough to meaningfully accelerate inflation?
 - And is all this happening because large companies have market power they didn't decades ago?
- According to basic economic theory, **charging what the market can bear will prompt companies to produce more**, constraining prices and ensuring that more people have access to the goods that's in short supply.
- Whereas **fertiliser and oil companies, over the world, have reported their best profits in years**, even as they struggle to expand supply in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war.

eSanjeevani

❖ Context

- The **National Health Authority (NHA)** announced the successful integration of eSanjeevani with its flagship scheme – **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**.

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❖ Key Highlights

- eSanjeevani is the **telemedicine service** of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- This integration allows the **existing users of the facility to easily create their Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA)** and use it to link and manage their existing health records like prescriptions, lab reports, etc.
- The **users would also be able to share their health records with doctors on eSanjeevani** which will help in better clinical decision making and ensuring the continuum of care. eSanjeevani service is available in **two variants**.
- The first one is **eSanjeevani Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWC)** – the Doctor-to-Doctor telemedicine service through which the beneficiaries visiting a HWC can virtually connect to doctors/ specialists in the Hub that could be at tertiary healthcare facility/hospital/medical college.
- This enables the government to provide general and specialised health services in rural areas and isolated communities.
- The second variant, **eSanjeevani OPD** is serving patients across the country, connecting them directly to doctors from the comforts of their homes.

PUNEET SAGAR Abhiyaan



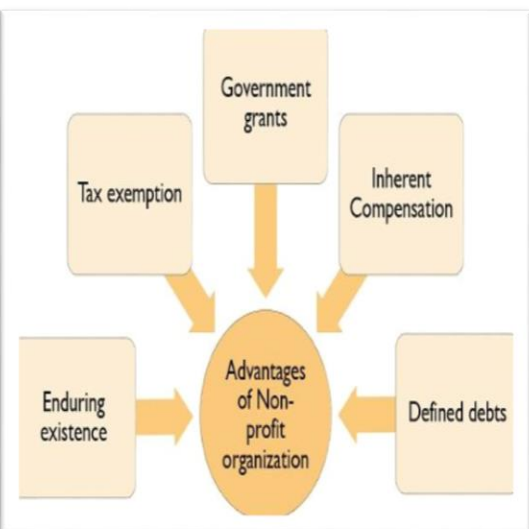
❖ Context

- **National Cadet Corps** recently has launched the latest phase of its nationwide flagship campaign 'Puneet Sagar Abhiyan'

❖ Key Highlights

- About **74,000 cadets from 10 States and 4 Union Territories** will participate in the campaign during this phase. The NCC cadets shall also be joined in by NCC Alumni, locals and tourists in several places across the country.
- The waste collected during the campaign will be disposed of in an environment friendly manner in cooperation with Government/Private agencies.
- The abhiyan was launched by NCC to **clean Sea Shores/Beaches and other water bodies including rivers & lakes, of plastic & other waste and increase awareness** amongst the local population about importance of keeping the beaches and river fronts clean.
- Drawing, poster making, essay writing, poetry, article writing, debate, etc are also being conducted at various locations during the campaign.

A Not-for-profit Company



❖ Context

- The Enforcement Directorate recently, **summoned some leaders of a political party** following a trial court order.

❖ What Is A Section 25 Company?

- As per the Companies Act, 1956, a **Section 25 company** is similar to what is defined under Section 8 under Companies Act, 2013.
- It is a not-for-profit charitable company formed with the sole object of **“promoting commerce, art, science, religion, charity, or any other useful object, and intends to apply its profits, if any, or other income in promoting its objects, and to prohibit the payment of any dividend to its members”**.
- Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013** includes other objects such as sports, education, research, social welfare and protection of environment among others.
- While it could be a public or a private company, a Section 25 company is **prohibited from payment of any dividend to its members**.
- Some examples:** Reliance Foundation, Reliance Research Institute, Azim Premji Foundation etc.

Food Laboratory Of FSSAI At Raxaul In Bihar

❖ Context

- Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare and Chemicals and Fertilizers recently inaugurated **the National Food Laboratory of FSSAI at Raxaul in Bihar**.

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❖ Key Highlights

- This laboratory has been established under the **Indo-Nepal bilateral agreement** to reduce the time in the testing of imported food samples brought into Raxaul from Nepal.
- Earlier, all the imported samples having legal sanctity were being sent to National Food Laboratory at Kolkata, for testing.
- The exporters from Nepal will find it easier to export more and more food products into India after the inauguration of a food testing laboratory in Raxaul.

Find Missing Children With AMBER Alerts



❖ Context

- Meta announced recently that **AMBER alerts** will soon be rolled out to Instagram in 25 countries.

❖ Key Highlights

- With AMBER alerts, users in these regions will soon get notifications of **missing children in the area**.
- AMBER alerts for Instagram was developed in partnership with various organisations like the **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) in the United States and the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children**.
- AMBER alerts will also be specific to the search area, which means if a user receives one, it suggests that a search for a missing child is **in progress in their vicinity**.
- It will use information like **the city you list on your profile, your IP address and location services (if turned on)** to determine if an AMBER alert should be sent to you or not.
- The alert will include important details **about the child such as a photo, description, location of the abduction and any other available information** that can be provided. People can also share the alert with friends to further spread the word.

D2M Technology



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❖ Context

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and India's public service broadcaster Prasar Bharati are exploring the feasibility of a technology that allows to broadcast video and other forms of multimedia content directly to mobile phones, without needing an active internet connection.

❖ What Is Direct-to-mobile Broadcasting?

- The technology is based on the **convergence of broadband** and broadcast, using which mobile phones can **receive terrestrial digital TV**.
- It would be similar to how people listen to FM radio on their phones, where a receiver within the phone can tap into **radio frequencies**.
- Using D2M, multimedia content can also be **beamed to phones directly**.

❖ Significance

- It can possibly be used to directly broadcast content related to citizen-centric information and can be further used to counter fake news, **issue emergency alerts and offer assistance in disaster management, among other things**.
- **For consumers**, a technology like this would mean that they would be able to access multimedia content from **Video on Demand (VoD) or Over The Top (OTT)** content platforms without having to exhaust their mobile data, and more importantly, at a **nominal rate**.
- The technology will also allow people from rural areas, with limited or no internet access, to watch video content.
- **For businesses**, one of the key benefits of the technology is that it can enable telecom service providers to offload video traffic **from their mobile network onto the broadcast network, thus helping them to decongest valuable mobile spectrum**. This will also improve usage of **mobile spectrum** and free up bandwidth which will help reduce **call drops**, increase data speeds etc.

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