

MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

❖ Context

- Parliamentarians will now be given the **entire corpus of Rs 5 crore** in a single tranche at the beginning of the fiscal year, unlike two tranches of Rs 2.5 crore released every six months.



MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT LOCAL
AREA DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

❖ Key Highlights:

- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** is soon going to launch the **Sakshi portal** for digitizing the fund flow architecture in Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS).
- It is developed by **State Bank of India**.
- The portal is part of the revised guidelines that aim at facilitating **real-time monitoring, increasing transparency, accountability, and scope of permissible works under the central sector scheme**.
- The new guidelines empower representatives for the first time to **use up to 10% of the funds allocated each year on repair and maintenance of any asset** built under any government scheme, to bring greater convergence.

❖ About MPLADS:

- It is a programme **first launched during the Narasimha Rao Government in 1993**.
- It was **aimed towards providing funds for developmental works** recommended by individual MPs.
- The MPs were entitled to recommend works to the tune of **Rs 1 crore annually** between 1994-95 and 1997-98,.
- Later on the annual entitlement was enhanced to Rs 2 crore.
- **In 2011-12, the annual entitlement was raised to Rs 5 crore per MP**.
- The MPLADS is a Central Sector Scheme fully funded by the Government of India.
- The **funds** released under the scheme **are non-lapsable**.

• Features :

- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least **15 percent of the MPLADS entitlement** for the year for areas inhabited by **Scheduled Caste population** and **7.5 per cent** for areas inhabited by **S.T. population**.
- **Lok Sabha Members** can recommend works within their Constituencies.
- **Elected Members of Rajya Sabha** can recommend works within the **State of Election (with select exceptions)**.
- **Nominated Members** of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.

• Nodal Ministry :

- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** has been responsible for the policy formulation, release of funds and prescribing monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Scheme.

• Implementation : The District Authority is responsible for overall coordination and supervision of works under scheme at district level.

- **At least 10% of the projects** under implementation in the district are to be **inspected every year by the district authority**.

World's Highest Rail Bridge

❖ Context:

- The Chenab railway bridge connects Katra and Banihal and has reportedly cleared all the necessary tests.



❖ Key Highlights:

- The Chenab Bridge, is **1,178 feet above** the riverbed underneath, making it the world's highest railway bridge.
- The Chenab bridge has been constructed as a part of the ambitious project of '**Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**' which will connect Kashmir to the other states in the country.
- The bridge, being built at around Rs 14,00 crore, is the biggest civil-engineering challenge faced by any railway project in India in recent history.

❖ Important Features:

- The bridge is designed (to withstand tremors of) Richter scale 8.
- It has been designed innovatively and is strong enough to let a tank drive through it.
- It will also be able to reduce the travelling distance to just **2-3-1/2 hour** and would benefit the trade of dry fruits, pashmina shawl and other consumable goods.

- Traversing a length of 1.3 km, once operational, the Chenab bridge will pave the way for trains to run seamlessly along the **Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project**, and prove to be a crucial connector between Kashmir and the rest of India.

❖ Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat:

- Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat is a program launched by the Government of India in 2015 with the aim of **promoting cultural exchange and national integration across the country**.
- The aim is to promote cultural exchange and understanding between the people of different states, thus strengthening the unity and diversity of the nation.
- The program encourages people to learn about the **customs, traditions, languages, and practices of other states**.

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Tigers

❖ Context

- India is considering sending **tigers to Cambodia**, where the big cat was declared extinct in 2016.



❖ Key Highlights:

- India accounts for **70% of the global wild tiger population**. This is increasing at an annual rate of 6%.
- As per the last tiger census, India is home to 2,967 tigers.
- In 2010, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam had decided to double their tiger population by 2022.
- India achieved this goal in **2018, four years before the deadline**.

❖ About Tiger:

- The **tiger (Panthera tigris)** is the largest living cat species and a member of the genus Panthera.
- Traditionally eight subspecies of tigers have been recognized, out of which **three are extinct (Caspian tiger, Javan tiger, Bali tiger)**.
- The tiger is endangered throughout its range, which stretches from the Russian Far East through parts of **North Korea, China, India, and Southeast Asia to the Indonesian island of Sumatra**.
- The **Siberian, or Amur, tiger (P. tigris altaica)** is the largest.
- The Indian, or Bengal, tiger (P. tigris tigris) is the most numerous and accounts for about half of the total tiger population.

❖ Indian Tiger or Royal Bengal Tiger:

• Habitat and Distribution :

- The Royal Bengal Tiger **lives mostly in the dense forest of India, Bangladesh, and Nepal**.
- Together, these countries have more than 80% of the world's Tiger Population.

• Threat :

- Hunting, Poaching, Urbanization, Habitat loss, and the Illegal Wildlife Trade.

• Protection Status :

- **IUCN Red List**- Endangered.
- **WPA 1972**- Schedule I.
- **CITES**- Appendix I.

• Conservation :

- India is **home to 53 tiger reserves spread across 18 states** and the last tiger census of 2018 showed a rise in the tiger population.
- India **achieved the target of doubling the tiger population four years ahead** of schedule (2022) of the St. Petersburg Declaration on tiger conservation.
- The Govt. of India had launched **“Project Tiger”** on 1st April 1973 to promote conservation of the tiger.
- **National Tiger Conservation Authority**- It is a **statutory body** under the MoEFCC and was established in 2005 following the **recommendations of the Tiger Task Force**.

News in Between the Lines

OSIRIS-REx



❖ Context

- Three years after it grabbed a sample of rock and soil from an asteroid floating in the vacuum of space, the Osiris-ReX mission is ready to drop it to Earth.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The spacecraft will **drop its sample under a parachute on September 24 of this year**, making the US the second country to return samples from the surface of an asteroid after Japan.
- Osiris-ReX, is returning samples from **asteroid Bennu, a Near Earth Object (NEO)**.
- The material returned is expected to enable scientists to learn more about the **formation and evolution of the Solar System, its initial stages of planet formation, and the source of organic compounds** that led to the formation of life on Earth.
- **Asteroid Bennu** : The asteroid was **discovered in 1999** by the Lincoln Near-Earth Asteroid Research (**LINEAR**) telescope in New Mexico and is named after the heron god Bennu from Egyptian Mythology.
 - It is an ancient asteroid, **currently more than 200 million miles** from Earth.
 - It is known that this **asteroid is a B-type asteroid**, implying that it contains **significant amounts of carbon and various other minerals**.
- **OSIRIS-Rex** : The spacecraft was launched by NASA in 2016 from the US on a two-year-long mission to its destination, Bennu.
 - The spacecraft got its first view of the asteroid in August 2018 when it pictured a grainy object from a distance of 2.3 million kilometers.
 - The mission promises to bring the largest amount of extraterrestrial material back to the Earth since the Apollo era.

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INS Androth



❖ Context

- Recently, the **INS Androth**, second in a series of **eight Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC)**, was launched in Kolkata.

❖ Key Highlights:

- It is built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE)** in Kolkata.
- **Specifications :**
 - INS Androth is about **77.6 metres long and 10.5 metres wide**, and requires a draught of only 2.7 metres.
 - **Propelled by three diesel-driven water jets**, these ships can attain a maximum **speed of 25 knots**.
 - Their primary role is to conduct anti-submarine operations in coastal waters, low intensity maritime operations and mine laying operations.
 - These ships are also capable of full-scale subsurface surveillance of coastal waters and various surface platforms and coordinated ASW operations with aircraft.
 - These ships also **carry lightweight torpedoes, ASW rockets and mines, a close-in weapon system (with a 30 mm gun)** and 16.7 mm stabilised remote-controlled guns.
 - It will be fitted with hull-mounted sonar and a low-frequency variable depth sonar.

Dawoodi Bohras



❖ Context

- The Bombay High Court will again this week hear the dispute between the current leader of the Dawoodi Bohra sect and his challenger to the post.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The Dawoodi Bohras are Shia Muslims whose leader is known as the Al-Dai-Al-Mutlaq.
- Traditionally a community of **traders and entrepreneurs**, it has over 5 lakh members in India and over 10 lakh members across the world.
- For over 400 years, the leader of the community has been based in India, including the current and the 53rd leader, His Holiness Dr Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin.
- The leader of the community is recognised by the members as having the **right to excommunicate its members**.
- In practical terms, excommunication means not being allowed to access a mosque belonging to the community or a burial dedicated to the community.
- Among the members of the community who have faced excommunication in the past are those who contested the headship of the leaders.

Leh-Manali Highway Reopens



❖ Context

- The Strategic 427 km long Leh-Manali Highway reopened for traffic, for a record time recently.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The highway is an alternate axis to the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh Highway. The road connects Ladakh to the rest of India via Manali.
- The highway is strategic for the movement of the armed forces and their supplies and wares to forward areas in Ladakh region that borders both China and Pakistan, as well as connecting the people of **Ladakh to India**.
- It has been designed, built, and maintained by the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** of the Indian army.

Anji Khad Bridge



❖ Context

- Anji Khad Bridge 2nd important bridge after Chenab Bridge on prestigious Udhampur-Srinagar- Baramulla Rail Project.

❖ Key Highlights:

- Anji bridge is situated over the Anji river and it will connect the Katra-Reasi section of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla route.
- **The Reasi yard station** is built on high, rectangular, tapered hollow piers 105m in height, with the bridge spanning about 490m -- a structure made with 7,000 reinforcement steel and 6,700 million tonnes of structural steel.

Face to Face Centres



US-Canada Border Deal



❖ Context

- A new US-Canada border deal has been implemented to stop the influx of asylum seekers at unofficial border crossings.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The new agreement **extends the Safe Third Country Act (STCA)** along the entire 3,145-mile (5,060-km) border, including internal waterways.
- This means that migrants caught crossing anywhere along the border can now be **sent back**, closing a loophole that previously allowed them to claim asylum at unofficial ports of entry.
- Last year, a record number of around **40,000 migrants entered Canada**, with the majority entering through Roxham Road, an unofficial crossing between **New York state and the province of Quebec**.
- **Concerns:** While refugee advocates criticize the new deal for being **ineffective in ending the irregular crossing** of migrants into Canada, there are concerns that it could incentivize human smuggling.

Moray eel



❖ Context

- The discovery of a new species of Moray eel is an exciting development in the field of marine biology.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The species has been named after Tamil Nadu as **Gymnothorax tamilnaduensis**.
- This discovery will likely lead to further study of this species and its unique characteristics, which could help us better understand the ecosystem it inhabits and the broader implications for marine conservation.

Honduras Ended Its Diplomatic Relations with Taiwan



❖ Context

- China and Honduras recently signed a landmark communique to formally establish diplomatic relations, with the Central American nation becoming the latest country to switch recognition from **Taipei to Beijing**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The One China policy, recognises Taiwan as part of China.
- The agreement now leaves a dwindling number of diplomatic partners for Taiwan, with Honduras joining Nicaragua, Panama and Costa Rica in recently recognising **Beijing and ending ties with Taipei**.
- The only remaining among the 193 member countries of the UN that maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan, along with the Holy See (Vatican), are the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Tuvalu, and Palau in the Pacific; Eswatini in Africa; and Belize, Guatemala, Haiti, Paraguay, St. Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Saint Kitts and Nevis, in Latin America and the Caribbean.

❖ What's the Controversy?

- China has never recognised Taiwan as an independent political entity, arguing that it was always a Chinese province.
- While Taiwan argues that the modern Chinese state was only formed after the revolution of 1911, and it was not a part of that state or of the People's Republic of China that was established after the communist revolution.

Haeil Drone



❖ Context

- The recent unveiling of North Korea's new nuclear underwater drone has raised concerns in the international community, particularly because of the **potential threat it poses to coastal areas and naval operations**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The drone, named "Haeil" or Tsunami, reportedly has the capability to create **massive radioactive waves** through submarine explosions. North Korea claims that the drone can be deployed **at any coast and port or** towed by a surface ship for operation, although the actual capabilities and deployment readiness of the device are uncertain.
- Some experts have also expressed scepticism regarding the country's claims, particularly about whether they have developed miniature versions of nuclear warheads that can be fitted on smaller **weapons like drones**.

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