

# NEWS TODAY

## URBAN FORESTRY AND URBAN GREENING IN DRYLANDS REPORT RELEASED BY FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO)

• Report was **produced in framework of FAO's Green Urban Oases Programme**, launched to **improve resilience of dryland cities** by tackling climate, health, food and economic challenges.

➤ Program **contributes to FAO's Green Cities initiative** that was launched in 2020 to **improve livelihoods and well-being of urban and peri-urban populations in at least 100 cities** around the world in next three years.

### • Key highlights of report

➤ **Some 35% of the world's largest cities** (including New Delhi, Cairo etc.) are built in world's drylands **facing a high risk of social, environmental and economic crisis** as they grow.

➤ **Scarce rainfall and water supplies** compound negative impacts of rapid urbanization on drylands, **leading to overexploitation of limited resources, increased land degradation** etc.

➤ **Urban forestry and greening strategies have yet to be fully incorporated** in many dryland cities.

### • Recommendations

➤ **At landscape level:** Plan and maintain green spaces and select trees and other plants that are suited to local environment and cityscape.

➤ **At community level:** Boost community participation and a sense of ownership, also to provide incentives to encourage tree planting and building capacity through environmental education.

➤ **At governmental level:** Create robust policies and protect urban greenery.

• **Drylands are regions in which aridity index** (ratio of annual precipitation and mean annual potential evapotranspiration) is **not more than 0.65**.

➤ Drylands **make up 41% of the Earth's land surface**, housing about 2 billion people, of whom 90% live in developing countries, mainly in Africa and Asia.

## UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA) SEEKS INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ) OPINION ON ISRAEL'S ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE

• **UNGA resolution** (India abstained from voting) **also asks ICJ** on Israel's measures aimed at:

➤ **Altering of demographic composition, character and status of Holy City of Jerusalem.**

➤ Adoption of related **discriminatory legislation and measures.**

### • Israel-Palestine Conflict

➤ It **dates back to early 20th century** with Jews claiming Palestinian land as ancestral property while Arabs being the majority.

■ Between 1920-40, **Jews migration to Palestine grew** because of persecution in Europe.

➤ In **1947**, UN voted to **split Palestine into a separate Jewish and Arab state.**

■ Rejected by **Arab states**, it led to the declaration of state of Israel in 1948 and the **first Arab-Israeli war.**

■ At ceasefire, **Jordan occupied West Bank, Egypt occupied Gaza and Jerusalem** was divided between Israel and Jordan.

➤ In **1967**, **six-day war** started between Arabs and Israel.

■ At its end, **Israel gained territorial control of Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt; West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan; and Golan Heights from Syria.**

➤ Israel still occupies **West Bank and East Jerusalem** and built Jews settlements.

➤ In 2004, ICJ ruled that **Israel's wall in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem was illegal.**

Israel's boundaries today



### ABOUT ICJ

• It is **principal judicial organ of UN.**

• ICJ, which is **composed of 15 judges**, has a **two-fold role:**

➤ **To settle**, in accordance with international law, **legal disputes between States submitted to it** by them.

➤ **To give advisory opinions on legal matters referred to it** by duly authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.

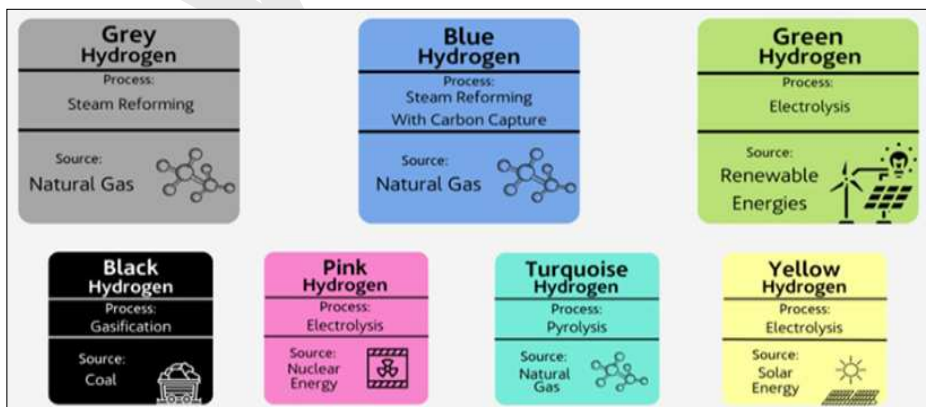
• **Judgments delivered by ICJ in disputes between States are binding upon the parties concerned.**

# MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (MoD) SIGNS UP MOUs/AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER MINISTRIES TO AWARD DEGREES TO AGNIVEERS

- MoD, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship exchanged MoUs with various stakeholders to facilitate continued education and awarding appropriate skill certificates to Agniveers.
  - Under MoU with National Institute of Open Schooling and Indira Gandhi National Open University, suitable Class 12 certificates and Bachelor's degrees will be awarded to Agniveers.
  - Market-ready and industry-accepted Kaushal Praman Patra will be issued at the time of their exit on the basis of job roles and skill sets mapped with National Occupational Standards (NOS).
- About Agniphath Scheme
  - It is a recruitment scheme for Indian youth who wish to join Armed Forces. Soldiers recruited under the scheme will be called Agniveers.
  - Scheme envisages recruitment of personnel below officer rank (PBOR) in army, air force and navy for four years, including six months of training.
  - Around 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers, between age of 17.5 to 21 years will be recruited annually.
  - Only 25% of total recruits will be allowed to continue for another 15 years under permanent commission.
  - Other 75% Agniveers will be demobilised, with an exit or "Seva Nidhi" package and the proposed MoUs are about to benefit them.

## NTPC STARTS INDIA'S FIRST GREEN HYDROGEN BLENDING OPERATION IN PIPED NATURAL GAS (PNG) NETWORK

- Project has been started in National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) Kawas township, Surat.
  - It is a joint effort of NTPC and Gujarat Gas Ltd (GGL).
  - Natural Gas is a composition of hydrocarbons (Almost 95% Methane & rest other Hydrocarbons). PNG is same natural gas which is brought at consumer end through a Pipe Line network.
- Hydrogen blending process is integration of concentrations of hydrogen into existing natural gas pipelines and the resulting blends can be used to generate heat and power.
  - Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), regulatory body has given approval for 5% vol./vol. blending of green hydrogen with PNG to start with and it would be scaled phase wise to reach 20%.
  - Depending on production methods, hydrogen can be grey, blue, green, pink etc.
- Benefits of Blending Hydrogen with PNG
  - Reduces CO2 emissions keeping net heating content same.
  - Will reduce hydrocarbon import bill significantly.
  - India can also bring forex ashore by being a green hydrogen and green chemicals exporter to the world.
- Challenges: Can weaken metal or polyethylene pipes and increase leakage risks, High Capital requirement in initial stage etc.



## NO NEED FOR EXTRA CURB ON FREE SPEECH OF MINISTERS: SUPREME COURT (SC)

- Answering a reference made to it regarding extent of Freedom of Speech and Expression available to public functionaries, constitutional bench of SC held that:
  - Right of free speech and expression, guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (a), can't be curbed by additional grounds other than those already laid down in Article 19 (2).
  - A statement made by a minister, even in official capacity, cannot be attributed vicariously to government by invoking principle of collective responsibility.
    - Under Article 75 (3) and 164 (2), Council of Ministers (CoM) is collectively responsible to House of People and Legislative Assembly of State respectively.
    - SC stated that collective responsibility flows from CoM to individual ministers, not on reverse, namely, from individual Ministers to CoM.
  - A fundamental right under Article 19, 21 can be enforced even against persons other than state or its instrumentalities.
  - A mere statement made by a minister, inconsistent with rights of a citizen, may not become actionable as constitutional tort.
    - But if it leads to an act of omission or commission by a public official then it is a constitutional tort.

- A 'constitutional tort' is a violation of one's constitutional rights, particularly fundamental rights, by an agent of the government, acting in his/her official capacity.
- A court of law can award monetary compensation to the victim in such a case.

# MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE RELEASED DRAFT NATIONAL MEDICAL COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2022

- Draft bill seeks to amend the existing **National Medical Commission (NMC) Act, 2019**.

- **Key highlights of draft bill**

- **Introducing a fifth autonomous body**, namely **Board of Examinations in Medical Science (BEMS)**, under NMC.

- **BEMS will take over the functions of National Board of Examinations.**

- **It will conduct National EXIT Test or NExT**, a common exam for **Postgraduate Medical Education admission** and a **licentiate exam** for medical Graduates (both who have foreign as well Indian degree).

- **It will accredit medical institutions** for diploma, diplomate and postgraduate fellowship, and super-speciality fellowships etc.

- **Limiting court cases**, filed by medical colleges/institutions against NMC/central government to **Delhi High Court only**.

- **Provisions for patients/their relatives/complainant to prefer appeal in Ethics and Medical Registration Board/NMC** against **State Medical Council** in relation to **negligence/professional misconduct**.

- **NMC is the apex medical education regulator**, constituted by **National Medical Commission Act, 2019**, to:

- **Improve access** to quality and affordable medical education.

- **Ensure availability** of adequate and high quality medical professionals across India.

- **Promote equitable and universal healthcare.**

## FOUR AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTIONS UNDER NMC

- **Under-Graduate Medical Education Board**
  - Sets norms for undergraduate courses.

- **Post-Graduate Medical Education Board**
  - Sets norms for post-graduate courses.

- **Medical Assessment and Rating Board**
  - Inspects and rates the medical education institutes.

- **Ethics and Medical Registration Board**
  - Regulates professional conduct of the doctors and registers them.

## ALSO IN NEWS



### Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)

- UIDAI has put in place a **resident friendly facility to help them update address in Aadhaar online** with consent of Head of Family (HoF).
  - **It will help relative(s)** of a resident **who don't have supporting documents in their own name** to update addresses in their Aadhaar.
- **UIDAI is a statutory authority**, established under provisions of Aadhaar act 2016, **under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology**.
- **It is mandated to**
  - **Collect demographic and biometric information** of residents.
  - **Store data in a central database.**
  - **Issue to each resident a 12-digit unique identity number called Aadhaar.**



### Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU)

- **India will take over the charge of Secretary General of APPU** for a tenure of 4 years.
- APPU is an **intergovernmental organization of 32-member countries** of the **Asian-Pacific region**.
- Goal of APPU is to **extend, facilitate and improve postal relations** between member countries and to promote **cooperation in the field of postal services**.
- It is the **only Restricted Union of the Universal Postal Union (UPU)** in the region, which is a **specialized agency of UN**.
- **Headquarter:** Bangkok, Thailand.



### Windfall Tax

- Government has raised windfall tax on domestic crude, diesel exports.
- It is **primarily levied on companies in the targeted industry** that benefits most from the **economic windfall**, i.e:
  - An **"unearned, unexpected gain in income** through no additional effort or expense".
  - E.g. earlier, windfall tax was **announced on domestic crude producers and refiners due to high global crude and product prices**.
- It is levied to **redistribute excess profits**.





Siyom River

- **Defence Minister inaugurated 100-metre-long bridge over Siyom river**, close to Arunachal's northern border with China.
- **About Siyom River**
  - It is a **right bank tributary of Brahmaputra** and is a **latitudinally flowing river** in Arunachal Pradesh.
  - River Siyang (Tsangpo) joins river Siyom in West **Siyang district**.
  - It flows through western borders of **Mouling National Park**.



Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA)

- **PM inaugurated 108th Indian Science Congress** at Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University.
- **Theme:** "Science Technology for Sustainable Development with Women Empowerment"
- **ISCA owes its origin to the initiative of two British Chemists, namely, Professor J. L. Simonsen and Professor P. S. MacMahon.**
- It aims to **promote cause of science in India** by holding annual congress, publishing such proceedings, journals and securing and managing funds for promotion of science.
- The **first meeting of the Congress was held in 1914 at Calcutta.**



Personalities in News

- Rani Velu Nachiyar (03 January 1730 - 25 December 1796)**
- Rani Velu Nachiyar, also known as **Veeramangai (brave women in Tamil language)** was **daughter of King Chellamuthu Vijayaragunatha Setupathy of Ramanathapuram.**
  - She became the **queen of Sivaganga state** (in present day Tamil Nadu) from **1780-1790.**
  - She built an **army of women called Udaiyaal.**
  - She was the **first queen to wage war against East India Company.**
  - She formed an **alliance with Hyder Ali** against British in 1780.
  - **Personality Traits:** A **trained fighter** with **proficiency in multiple languages** (English, French, Urdu etc.), she personifies **women empowerment** with virtues of **indomitable courage, bravery and strong determination.**



Places in News

#### Siachen Glacier (Karakoram, Ladakh)

- Indian Army has deployed its **first woman officer at Siachen.**
- **Siachen Glacier, world's highest and coldest battlefield** lies between **Saltoro Ridge** (a subrange of **Karakorams**) to west and **main Karakoram Range** to east.
- With nearly **76 km length**, it is the **second longest non-polar glacier** of the world, after **Fedchenko Glacier** in Tajikistan.
- It demarcates **central Asia** from the **Indian subcontinent.**
- It is the source for the **Nubra River**, a tributary of the **Shyok**, which is part of the **Indus River system.**
- In 1984, India took its control under **Operation Meghdoot.**



#### Austria (Capital: Vienna)

- India will sign a Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (MMPA) with Austria.
- Austria is Mountainous **landlocked country** of south-central Europe.
  - Bordered by **Czech Republic** (north), **Hungary** (east), **Slovenia** (south), **Switzerland** and **Liechtenstein** (west), and **Germany** (north-west).
- **Geographical features**
- 2/3rd of total area is covered by woods and meadows.
  - **Major river: Danube River system is main watershed** between Black Sea and North Sea.
  - **Highest Point:** Grossglockner.

