

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

❖ Context

- Maharashtra may opt out of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). Farmer groups have already flagged irregularities and demanded a new state-level programme.

❖ Key Highlights

- PMFBY, launched in **2016**, insures farmers against **all non-preventable natural risk** from **pre-sowing to post-harvest**. Farmers have to pay a maximum of **2 %** of the total premium of the insured amount for kharif crops, **1.5 %** for rabi food crops and oilseeds as well as **5 %** for commercial / horticultural crops.
- Rest is shared by Centre and States in **50:50** or **90:10 ratio (for NE states)**
- **Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Bihar, Gujarat, Punjab and West Bengal** — all predominantly agriculture states — have **already opted out** of the scheme. Some of these states have their own insurance schemes.
- The two major issues on which the Maharashtra government is thinking of opting out are **denial and delay of claims** along with a **huge subsidy burden** of nearly Rs. 3000 crores.
- The subsidy burden has increased due to the **revamped guidelines issued in 2020** according to which the full **central share** in the premium subsidy will be applicable **only up to actuarial premium rate (APR)** of 25 per cent and 30 per cent for irrigated and rainfed areas/district respectively
- This means that for a particular irrigated crop, **if the premium rate is above 25 per cent** for irrigated area and above 30 per cent for unirrigated or rainfed areas, the **state has to contribute over and above that part.**
- The **model** of crop insurance in place in Maharashtra's **Beed district** is also being studied by a central government panel set up to suggest suitable working models for PMFBY.
- In the Beed model, there is a **cap on the profit of the insurance companies**. If the claims exceed the insurance cover, the state government pays the bridge amount. If the claims are less than the premium collected, the insurance company keeps 20 % of the amount as handling charges and reimburses the rest to the state government.
- However, the issues of delay in claim settlement and getting a fair amount still remains for farmers under the model.

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)

❖ Context

- UNESCO pledged to have **80% of the world's ocean floors** mapped by **2030**.

❖ Key Highlights

- At present, **only 20 per cent** seabed has been mapped and studied.
- The repository of knowledge will be gained through studying the topology and depth of seafloors to identify the following:
 - **Location of ocean faults.**
 - **Workings of ocean currents and tides.**
 - **Transport of sediments.**
- Data gathered from this survey **will help understand seismic and tsunami risks, sustainable fisheries resources, ways to deal with oil spills, air crashes and shipwrecks as well as potential for offshore infrastructure.**
- UNESCO has called for mobilisation of the member states of its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the private sector to carry out this exercise.
- A total funding of \$5 billion (over Rs 37,600 crore) will be required for the project. This amounts to an average of \$625 million per year by 2030.
- UNESCO also launched a repository of educational content for policymakers and curriculum developers for a holistic approach towards strengthening ocean research. It also advocated the use of traditional knowledge along with modern science to achieve this goal.



❖ About IOC

- It is the United Nations body responsible for supporting global ocean science and services.
- It was **established by UNESCO general conference in 1961.**
- The IOC enables its 150 Member States to work together to protect the health of the shared ocean by coordinating programmes in areas such as ocean observations, tsunami warnings and marine spatial planning.
- The IOC is supporting all its Member States to build their scientific and institutional capacity in order to achieve the global goals including the UN Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction.
- **UNESCO is one of the specialised agency of UN.**

Face to Face Centres



Intensified Mission Indradhanush 4.0

❖ Context

- Recently, the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has unveiled the **Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 4.0** to achieve the goal of universal immunization.

❖ Key Highlights

- The IMI 4.0 will have **three rounds** and will be **conducted in 416 districts** (including 75 districts identified for Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav) across 33 States and UTs.
- It will immensely **contribute in filling the gaps and make lasting gains towards universal immunization.**
- It will ensure that **Routine Immunization (RI) services reach the unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children and pregnant women.**
- The Ministry also released the “**Operational Guidelines for IMI 4.0 – “Strengthening Immunization in Urban Areas-A framework for Action”**”. It is a handbook for “Mahila Arogya Samiti on Urban Immunization”.

❖ About Mission Indradhanush (MI)

- Launched in **December 2014.**
- **Aims:**
 - Increasing full immunization coverage.
 - Covering partially and unvaccinated children and pregnant women, in pockets of high-risk, hard-to-reach and low immunization coverage areas.
 - Focused on protecting them from vaccine preventable diseases.
- It provides vaccination against 12 Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPD).
- This mission was also identified as one of the flagship schemes under Gram Swaraj Abhiyan and Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan.

❖ Intensified Mission Indradhanush

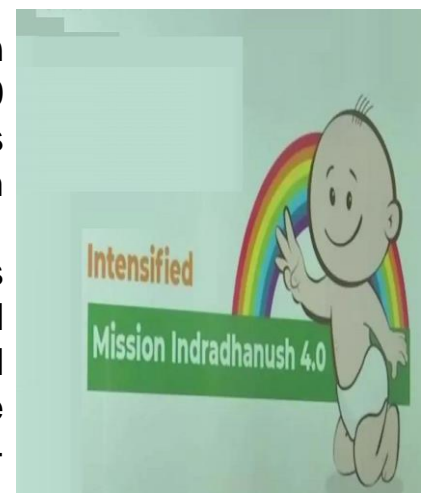
- Launched in **October 2017.**
- **Aims:**
 - To further intensify the immunization programme.
 - To reach each and every child up to two years of age and all those pregnant women who have been left uncovered under the routine immunization programme/UIP.
 - The focus of the special drive was to improve immunization coverage in selected districts and cities to ensure full immunization to more than 90% by December 2018.

❖ Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0

- Launched in **December 2019.**
- **Aims:**
 - To boost the routine immunization coverage in the country.
 - Immunizing 272 districts in 27 States and at block level (652 blocks) in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar because of its hard to reach and tribal populations.

❖ Intensified Mission Indradhanush 3.0

- Launched in **2021.**
- **Aims:**
 - To reach those children and pregnant women who have been missed out or been left out of the Routine Immunization Programme.
 - To accelerate the full immunization of children and pregnant women through a mission mode intervention.
 - It is being **conducted in pre-identified 250 districts/urban areas** across 29 States/UTs in the country.
 - Focus of the IMI 3.0 was on the children and pregnant women who had missed their vaccine doses during the Covid-19 pandemic.



HelioSwarm and MUSE

❖ Context

- Recently **NASA has selected two science missions** – the Multi-slit Solar Explorer (MUSE) and HelioSwarm.

❖ Key Highlights

- These missions will help **improve the understanding of the dynamics of the Sun, the Sun-Earth connection, and the constantly changing space environment.**
- These missions will **provide deeper insights into the universe** and offer critical information to help protect astronauts, satellites, and communications signals such as GPS.

❖ About MUSE

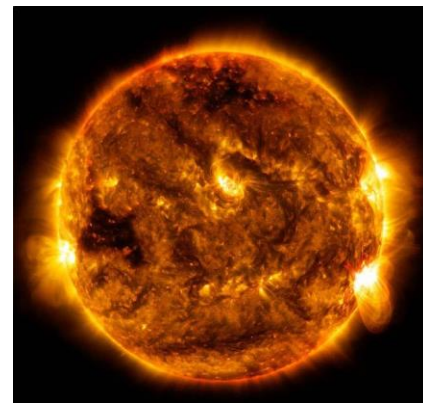
- The MUSE mission will **help scientists understand the forces driving the heating of the Sun's corona and the eruptions in that outermost region** that are at the foundation of space weather.
- The mission will offer deeper insight into the physics of the solar atmosphere by using a powerful instrument known as a **multi-slit spectrometer.**
 - It will observe the Sun's extreme ultraviolet radiation and obtain the highest resolution images ever captured of the solar transition region and the corona.

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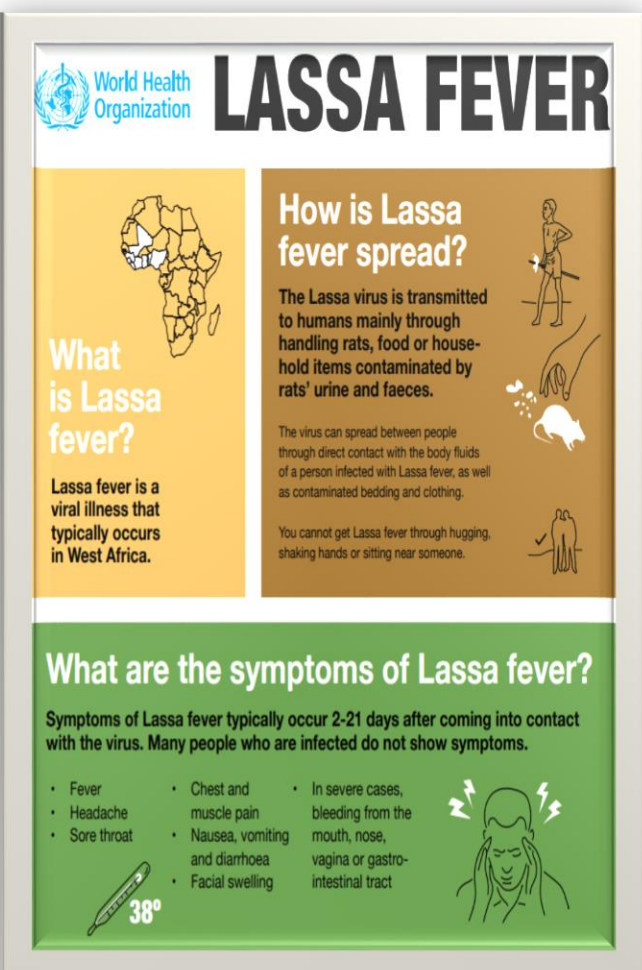
❖ About HelioSwarm

- The HelioSwarm mission is a constellation or “swarm” of nine spacecraft that will capture the first multiscale in-space measurements of fluctuations in the magnetic field and motions of the solar wind known as solar wind turbulence.
 - The Sun’s outermost atmospheric layer, the heliosphere, encompasses an enormous region of the solar system.
 - Solar winds spread through the heliosphere, and their interactions with planetary magnetospheres and disruptions such as coronal mass ejections affect their turbulence.
- This mission will provide a unique ability to investigate turbulence.



News in Between the Lines

Lassa Fever



❖ Context

- Recently, One of the **three persons diagnosed** with Lassa fever in the UK has died on February 11.
- The cases have been linked to travel to **west African countries**.

❖ Key Highlights

- Origin of the Virus**
 - The Lassa fever-causing virus is **found in West Africa** and was first discovered in 1969 in Lassa, Nigeria.
- Transmission**
 - The fever is **spread by rats**. It is primarily found in countries in West Africa including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and Nigeria where it is endemic.
 - A person can become infected if they come in contact with household items of food that is contaminated with the urine or feces of an infected rat.
 - Person-to-person transmission of Lassa fever has occurred in health care settings after exposure to blood and secretions of infected patients.
- Symptoms**
 - Symptoms **typically appear 1-3 weeks after exposure**.
 - Mild symptoms include **slight fever, fatigue, weakness and headache**.
 - More serious symptoms include bleeding, difficulty breathing, vomiting, facial swelling, pain in the chest, back, and abdomen and shock.
 - Death can occur from two weeks of the onset of symptoms, usually as a result of multi-organ failure.
- Ways to avoid getting infected**
 - Maintaining hygiene to prevent rats from entering the house, keeping food in rat-proof containers and laying down rat traps.

Riverbed Sand Mining



❖ Context

- Recently, Environment clearance issued to as many as 60 mining areas has paved the way for legal mining of bajri (riverbed sand) in Rajasthan.

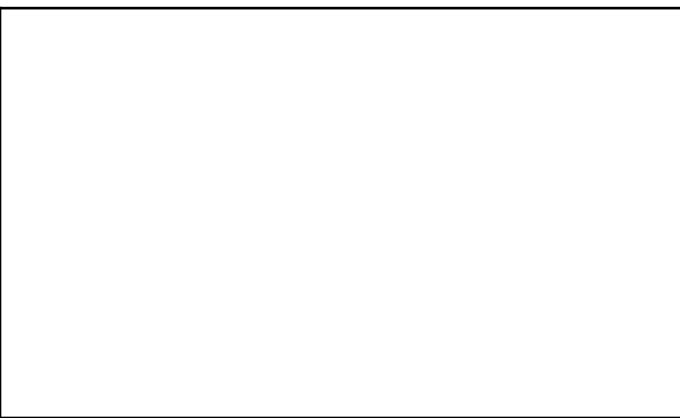
❖ Key Highlights

- The Supreme Court had banned the sand mining activities four years ago in riverbeds until a scientific replenishment study was completed.
- The apex court later appointed a **Central Empowered Committee (CEC)** to look into the issue of illegal sand mining.

❖ About Riverbed Sand Mining

- Sand mining is the process of **extracting sand through an open pit** but sometimes **mined from inland dunes from oceans, riverbeds and beaches**.
- It is defined under section 3(e) of the **mines and mineral development and regulation act,1957**.





- **Impact of Sand Mining from rivers.**
 - Excessive sand mining can **alter the river bed**, force the river to change course, erode banks and lead to flooding.
- **Damage River Biodiversity.**
- **Alter Sediment Budget.**
 - Sediment budget refers to the balance between sediment added to and removed from the coastal system.
- **Lead to poor water quality.**

River Devika Project



- ❖ **Context**
 - Recently, Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said that the historic River Devika project, built at the cost of over Rs 190 crore, will be complete by June this year.
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
 - The work on the project was started in March 2019 under the National River Conservation Plan (NRCP).
 - **Under the project-**
 - Bathing “ghats” (places) on the banks of the Devika River will be developed,
 - Encroachments will be removed
 - Natural water bodies will be restored
 - Catchment areas will be developed along with cremation ground
 - Small hydropower plants and three solar power plants shall also be developed.
 - The project will lead to reduction in pollution and improvement in water quality.
 - **About River Devika**
 - It is also known as Devika Nagari.
 - The river **originates from the hilly Suddha Mahadev temple** in Udhampur and flows down towards western Punjab (now in Pakistan),
 - Where it merges with the Ravi river.
 - The Devika River holds religious significance as it is revered by Hindus as the sister of the Ganga.

Agri cess

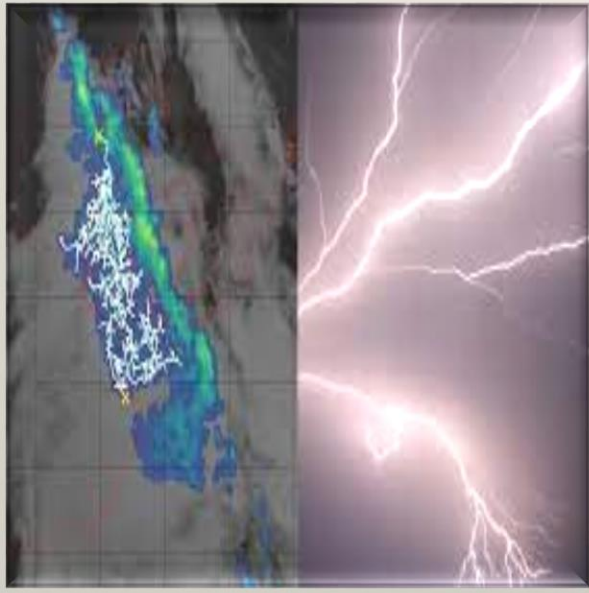


- ❖ **Context**
 - The Centre has reduced the Agri-cess **on crude palm oil (CPO) from 7.5 per cent to 5 per cent.**
- ❖ **Key Highlights**
 - It aims to provide further **relief to consumers** and to **keep in check any further rise in the prices of domestic edible oils** due to rise in the prices of edible oils globally The **Budget for 2021-22** had introduced the Agri cess — **Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess.**
 - The new cess was levied on 29 products, prominent among which are gold, silver, imported apple, imported alcohol (excluding beer), imported pulses, imported palm oil, imported urea, and petrol/diesel including branded ones.
 - Cess is a kind of special-purpose tax which is levied over and above basic tax rates. Under **Articles 270 and 271** of the Constitution, the **Centre collects cess and deposits it in the Consolidated Fund of India.** However, the **money is then supposed to be transferred to a segregated fund** to be used for specific purposes.
 - The AIDC is used to **improve agricultural infrastructure** aimed at not only boosting production but also in helping conserve and process farm output efficiently. The **money collected through cess and surcharge are not part of the divisible pool**, from which devolution of Central taxes takes place to the States. Thus, when customs duty or excise is replaced by cess, the share of states tax reduces.

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Megaflash



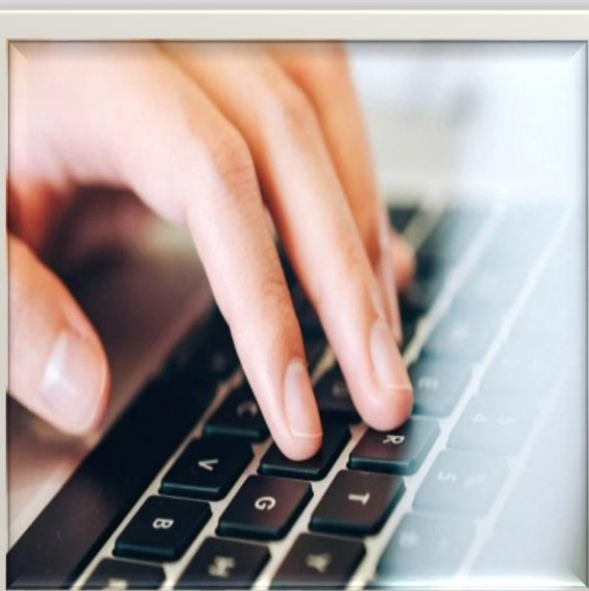
❖ Context

- The **WMO's committee of experts on weather and climate extremes** have recorded new longest distance and longest duration lightnings

❖ Key Highlights

- The longest lightning bolt has been measured **768 kilometres**. The megaflash struck the **southern US**, across Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas on April 29, 2020.
- The length is equivalent to the distance between New York City and Columbus, Ohio; London and the German city of Hamburg; or **Delhi and Ahmedabad**.
- It also reported a new world record for the duration of a lightning flash. A single flash that developed continuously through a thunderstorm **over Uruguay and northern Argentina** June 18, 2020, lasted for **17.1 seconds**.
- The two regions where these extraordinary bolts were detected are among the few places on earth known to experience intense storms known as **Mesoscale Convective System thunderstorms**, or mega flashes.
- The **technology used to detect the length and duration** of lightning flashes has **improved dramatically** in recent years, enabling records far greater than what was once the norm. The previous assessments used data collected by ground-based **Lightning Mapping Array (LMA) networks**.
- The new lightning records use new instruments include the Geostationary Lightning Mappers on the R-series **Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites (GOES-16 and 17)**.
- The **space-based lightning mapping** offers the ability to measure flash extent and duration continuously over broad geospatial domains.
- A mesoscale convective system (MCS) is a **complex of thunderstorms** that **becomes organised** on a scale **larger than the individual thunderstorms** but **smaller than extratropical cyclones**, and normally persists for several hours or more.
- They may be **round or linear in shape**, on the order of 100 kilometres (62 mi) or more across in one direction.

Swarajability



❖ Context

- **Swarajability: India's first AI-based job portal for persons with disabilities launched.**
- **The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT-Hyderabad)** has launched the beta version of '**Swarajability**', a job portal powered by artificial intelligence that helps people with disabilities acquire relevant skills and find jobs.

❖ Key Features

- There are about 21 million persons with disabilities in the country. About 70 per cent of them are estimated as either unemployed or underemployed.
- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 has put an emphasis on the rights of a person with a disability (PwD) to education and employment.
- Though the legislation provides an avenue for PwDs to get skilled and linked to jobs, one major challenge PwDs face is most of the existing job platforms being inaccessible and not customised to their special needs.
- The customised job platform is named "**Swarajability**" as it offers independence to PwDs. The effort using cutting-edge technology allows PwDs from all walks of life to join and explore job opportunities.
- Youth are given training that is tailored to their skills and knowledge. It is a **one-stop-shop** for organisations that want to hire persons with disabilities.
- It supports NGOs, educational institutions, and governments in their efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.

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