India to host the 8th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics in New Delhi

What’s in the News?

The Ministry of Agriculture will be hosting the 8th International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS-VIII) in New Delhi.

Background:

- ICAS is a series of conferences that started in 1998 based on the overarching need for agricultural data worldwide.
- The conference is conducted once every three years.
- The last conference was held in 2016 in Rome.

Details:

- The conference will be inaugurated by the Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
- The Chief Guest will be Bill Gates.
- The conference will be organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, ISI-CAS, FAO, the USDA, ADB, World Bank, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Eurostat, AfDB and various other organizations.
- The theme of this year’s ICAS is Statistics for the Transformation of Agriculture to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals.
- A conference in the field of agriculture statistics is happening for the first time in the country.
- Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra commented that the conference is held with an aim to address various challenges faced in producing data to report on the SDGs and various leading research and also to deliberate and finalize the best practices in the field of agriculture statistics.

Inference:

- Sufficient discussions are not happening in the field of statistics in the country despite the availability of a large amount of data.
- The available data should be utilized effectively in the agriculture sector with the help of modern methods and practices by taking inputs from the conference.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh inaugurates Sisseri River bridge

What’s in the News?

- The Sisseri River bridge at Lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh was inaugurated by Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh.
- He asked for strengthening the border infrastructure.

Background:
• The 200-metre long bridge between Jonai-Pasighat-Ranaghat-Roing road will provide connectivity between Dibang Valley and Siang.
• The Sisseri River bridge was constructed by Project Brahmank of Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
• It provides connectivity to Tinsukia through the Dhola-Sadia bridge.

Details:

• The Government has adopted the Border Area Development Programme (BADP).
  o The Raksha Mantri said that, “Infrastructural upgradation is necessary for the security of the North-East and the entire country.”
• The government is committed to the establishment of a strong system of transportation i.e railways, roadways, waterways and digital network in the region. Some of the projects taken up by the government for ensuring that are:
  o Operationalisation of Pasighat airport
  o Hollongi airport
  o Construction of the Sela-Pass tunnel
  o The proposed Bhalukpong – Tenga - Tawang railway line.

Inference:

• The construction of Sisseri River bridge would cut down the travel time from Pasighat to Roing by about five hours.
• The Sisseri River bridge would help the development of Lower Dibang Valley and East Siang.
• The Act East Policy would result in rapid infrastructural development in the North-East, especially in Arunachal Pradesh.
• The strong infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh would also act as a bridge between India and South-East Asian countries.
• This bridge is also strategically important from military viewpoint and will be a part of Trans Arunachal Highway.
• The bridge will play an important role in the overall development adding that it would open more avenues in the fields of employment, trade & tourism.

Minister of Minority Affairs inaugurates “Hunar Haat”

What’s in the News?

• The Minister of Minority Affairs inaugurates “Hunar Haat” at Pragati Maidan during the 39th India International Trade Fair in 2019.
• The Ministry of Minority Affairs has been working on a war-footing to establish “Hunar Hubs” in every state of the country.
• This effort is directed to train and encourage indigenous talent of master artisans, craftsmen according to the need of the markets.

Background:

• Hunar Haat has become the Hub to encourage and promote traditional master artisans and craftsmen from across the country.
• Training would be provided to master artisans, craftsmen and traditional culinary experts according to modern needs in these Hunar Hubs.
The Ministry of Minority Affairs had sanctioned 100 “Hunar Hubs” in different parts of the country.

The Hunar Haat was organised by the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

The “Hunar Haat”, to be organised in 2019 and 2020 will be based on the theme of “Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat”.

Some of the crafts being displayed at Pragati Maidan are:
- Barmer Applique
- Cane and Bamboo
- Chikankari
- Dhakai Silk and Golden Grass, etc.

Importance of Hunar Haat:

- These Hunar Haats encourage the artisans practicing indigenous talent or crafts.
- These Hunar Haats provide for business worth crores of rupees for handmade rare exquisite products of master artisans and craftsmen.
- Provides employment opportunities to lakhs of artisans, craftsmen and traditional culinary experts.

Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah to Inaugurate the 15 Days’ “Aadi Mahotsav 2019”

What’s in the News?

- Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah will be inaugurating the National Tribal Festival “Aadi Mahotsav” at Dilli Haat.

Details:

- The theme of the Mahotsav is: “A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Craft, Cuisine and Commerce”.
- This festival will be featuring an exhibition-cum-sale of tribal handicrafts, art, paintings, fabric, jewellery and much more.
- TRIFED, an organisation of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, has started a new concept of organising “Aadi Mahotsav – National Tribal Festival”.
- 26 such festivals are planned to be organised of which 8 have been organised.

Inference:

- The Mahotsav is displaying the rich digital commerce and e-commerce being promoted by Tribes India.
- The Aadi Mahotsav is an effort to take tribal commerce to the next level of digital and electronic transactions.
- This has become a platform to showcase the electronic and digital skills of the tribals as a special attraction.
- Aadi Mahotsav – National Tribal Festival is to provide a direct market access to the tribal master-craftsmen and women in large metros and State capitals.
- The concept of organising Aadi Mahotsav in major cities is to eliminate the middleman and provide direct access to large markets, otherwise impossible for tribal artisans.
Dr. Harsh Vardhan calls for developing innovative cooling solutions

What’s in the News?

- Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare, addressed an Award Ceremony to announce the finalists of the ‘Global Cooling Prize’.
- The minister called for the development of innovative cooling solutions which are energy efficient.

Background:

- A global coalition (Department of Science and Technology, Government of India; and Rocky Mountain Institute) and Mission Innovation (a global initiative of 24 countries and the European Union) launched the Global Cooling Prize in November, 2018.
- The aim was to accelerate the development of a radically more efficient, climate-friendly residential cooling solution.

Details:

- Dr. Harsh Vardhan has commented on how India has been leading from the front in the global campaign to tackle Global Warming and Climate Change.
- Energy efficient and climate friendly cooling solutions are the Government’s priority currently.
- The Mission Innovation programme was coined by Shri Narendra Modi, as a step towards India’s agenda during the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris.
- Stress was placed on the world’s need for an extremely efficient cooling technology, a solution that can sustainably meet the comfort-cooling needs of our growing population without contributing to runaway climate change or costly stresses on already burdened electricity systems.
- The goal is to cut carbon footprint by as much as 80 percent and reduce energy consumption by half.
- Dr. Harsh Vardhan presented awards to the eight finalists of the GCP.
- The eight selected teams showcased a wide range of technology ideas, from hybrid designs of vapour compression technology to hybrid designs of evaporative cooling to solid-state cooling technologies with application of low or no global warming potential refrigerants.
- The Prize has received overwhelming international participation, since its launch, from over 95 countries.

Importance:

- This kind of solution is very relevant for a country like India which is on the path of economic growth and has relatively low penetration of air conditioning.
- While the household ownership of ACs in India today is a mere 7%, the demand for comfort cooling is expected to drive the total stock of room ACs in India to over 1 billion by 2050 — a 40-fold growth from 2016.
- Growth in the demand for cooling will be dramatic, particularly in urban areas, due to the underlying need for a solution to the problem of heat stress.

Household Consumer Expenditure Survey

What’s in the News?

https://byjus.com
The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation carried out an all-India survey on household consumption expenditure.

**Background:**

- The NSS Consumer Expenditure Survey generates estimates of household Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) and the distribution of households and persons over the MPCE classes.
- It is designed to collect information regarding expenditure on consumption of goods and services (food and non-food) consumed by households.
- The results are used for rebasing of the GDP and other macro-economic indicators.

**Details:**

- The survey was carried out during the period July 2017 to June 2018.
- The media reports regarding consumer expenditure survey by the NSS stated that consumer spending is falling and the report had thus been withheld due to its ‘adverse’ findings.
- The ministry justified by saying that, “all submissions which come to the Ministry are draft in nature and cannot be deemed to be the final report.”
- The results of the survey:
  - Upon examination it was noted that there was a significant increase in the divergence in not only the levels in the consumption pattern but also the direction of the change when compared to the other administrative data sources such as production of goods and services.
  - Concerns were raised about the ability/sensitivity of the survey instrument to capture consumption of social services by households especially on health and education.
  - The matter was referred to a Committee of experts which noted the discrepancies and came out with recommendations such as refinement in the survey methodology and improving the data quality aspects on a concurrent basis.
  - The Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics has also recommended that 2017-18 is not an appropriate year to be used as the new base year.
  - The Ministry has decided not to release the Consumer Expenditure Survey results of 2017-2018 due to data quality issues.
- The ministry is examining the feasibility of conducting the next Consumer Expenditure Survey in 2020-2021 and 2021-22 after incorporating all data quality refinements in the survey process.

**Ministry of Tourism participates in the 3 day China International Travel Mart**

**What’s in the News?**

- The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is participating in the China International Travel Mart (CITM) at Kunming, China.
- The India Pavilion at CITM was inaugurated in November, 2019.

**Background:**

- CITM is one of the largest travel shows in Asia that offers innovative ideas and concepts for travel in Asia.
- The objective of the large India Pavilion set up at CITM is to promote India’s varied tourism products and services including the Buddhist Circuit.
Details:

- A strong 35 member delegation is visiting CITM comprising of prominent Indian tourism players.
- The Indian heritage will be showcased at the India Pavilion during CITM 2019 through classical dance performances and Yoga.
- The Government of India is keen to attract more travellers from China as part of its “Act East” and “China Ready” strategies.

Importance of CITM:

- A vital link between India and China is Tourism. The CITM will attract Chinese travellers to visit India creating a strong circuit of tourists.
- CITM will also help in promotion of varied tourism products and services of India.
- It will help to strengthen tourism and trade between both countries and facilitate Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Government (B2G) meetings.
- The event will bring together various tour operators from India and other service providers like travel agents and hotel operators and allow communication between their counterparts.

WCD Ministry to announce Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh

What’s in the News?

- The Union Minister of Women and Child Development (WCD) and Textiles, Ms. Smriti Zubin Irani, will announce Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh (BPKK).
- The BPKK will be a repository of diverse crops across 128 agro-climatic zones in India for better nutritional outcomes.

Background:

- Poshan Abhiyaan is a scheme for Holistic Nutrition to reduce malnutrition through a multi-sectoral results-based framework, and offers India an opportunity to reduce malnutrition.
- The Mission aims at targeted reduction of stunting, undernutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies.
- A novel feature of the POSHAN Abhiyaan is its focus on social and behavioral change among parents and for improving linkages between communities and the health systems towards paving the way for a mass movement to promote transformative change.

Read more on the Poshan Abhiyaan at the linked article.

Details:

- The Government of India’s efforts towards better nutrition has revolved around providing nutritional supplement and other supply side schemes.
- Effort required to complement the Government’s efforts are:
  - Addressing the challenge of malnutrition at such a vast scale requires a basic understanding of the social, behavioral and cultural practices promote and reinforce healthy dietary behaviours both at the individual and community level keeping in mind variation in practices across India.
- Creation of a database that helps in linking relevant agro-food system data at the district. This has to be done with an aim to map the diversity of native crop varieties that will be more cost-effective and sustainable over the long run.

- The Harvard Chan School of Public Health through its India Research Center and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will document and evaluate promising regional dietary practices and the messaging around them and develop a food atlas on regional agro-food systems.

- The project team will be selecting around 12 high focus states which are representative of the geographical, social, economic, cultural and structural diversities of India.

- The team will then identify a local partner organization, in each of the state, which has relevant work experience in Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) and nutrition.

Inference:

- The efforts are aimed at mobilizing the diverse sectors of the society with regards to the awareness of the targeted problems such as malnutrition by bringing about a change in the social, behavioral and cultural practices and providing cost-effective and sustainable solutions for the same.

NITI Aayog to release the report “Health System for a New India: Building Blocks-Potential Pathways to Reform”

What’s in the News?

- NITI Aayog will release “Health System for a New India: BuildingBlocks - Potential Pathways to Reform” Report.
- The report is a synthesis of all the discussions and efforts initiated at the national-level workshop on “Development Dialogue”.

More on the NITI Aayog here.

Details:

- The report reveals India’s health system as a story of multiple fragmentations at the level of payers and risk pools, healthcare services and at digital backbone running it.
- It integrates viewpoints on the concerted efforts required for strengthening the existing fractured health system.
- The report is based on the data collected and provided by ACCESS Health International for the public sector and by PWC India for the private sector.
- Consultations as a part of the ‘Development Dialogues’ series have been initiated to generate debate and discussions on the vision of the nation.
- The dialogue engaged international and national experts and key stakeholders to engender an informed discussion and debate on the trajectory of India’s health system.

Inference:

- NITI Aayog aims to facilitate multi-sectoral and stakeholder conversations on a systematic approach to reforming healthcare in India through the Dialogues.
- The report is an attempt to bring together all the valuable findings of these studies, including supporting data from the analysis.
- It also incorporates the discussions from the Development Dialogue wherein the authors have presented their work to wide multi-sectoral audience.
- The report acts as a menu of strategic choices available before India to steer its health system especially in the context of health systems reforms launched by the Government of India.