10 Aug 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

1. Connecting Chennai - Andaman and Nicobar Islands (CANI)

Context:

Prime Minister inaugurated the first-ever undersea optical fibre cable project for Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Details:

- The submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) connecting Andaman & Nicobar Islands to the mainland was launched.
- The project had started in December 2018 and the laying of the 2300 km submarine cable undersea was completed in record time by BSNL.
- The submarine cable is expected to help the islands in getting cheaper & better connectivity and all the benefits of Digital India, especially in improving online education, telemedicine, banking system, online trading and in boosting tourism.
- It will provide high-speed broadband connections in the union territory at par with services in the mainland.
- The PM said that all the Islands of India would be playing an important role under India's new trade strategy for the Indo-Pacific region.
- He also opined that under the Act-East policy, the role of Andaman and Nicobar in India's strong relations with East Asian countries and other countries connected to the sea is very high and is going to increase.

Island Development Agency (IDA):

- GOI had constituted the IDA in 2017 for the holistic development of the islands of the country.
- The IDA functions under the aegis of the Home Ministry.
- The meetings of the IDA are convened by the NITI Aayog's CEO and chaired by the Union Home Minister.
- Other members of the Agency include the secretaries of tourism, tribal affairs, home and environment ministries and the Cabinet Secretary.

2. Human-elephant conflict

Context:

Compendium on Best practices of Human-Elephant Conflict Management in India launched on the eve of World Elephant Day.

World Elephant Day:

- World Elephant Day is observed internationally on 12th August every year.
- It is dedicated to the preservation and protection of the world's elephants.
- The goal of the World Elephant Day is to create awareness on elephant conservation, and to share knowledge and positive solutions for the better protection and management of wild and captive elephants.

- The idea of celebrating this day was conceived by Canadian filmmakers Patricia Sims and Michael Clark, and Sivaporn Dardarananda, Secretary-General of the Elephant Reintroduction Foundation in Thailand.
- Officially, the day was launched in 2012 by Patricia Sims and the Elephant Reintroduction Foundation.

Human-elephant conflict:

- Globally, wild Asian elephants are present in 13 countries and India holds the largest population of wild Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) with nearly 30,000 animals (60% of the global species population).
- Human habitation is impinging on the boundary of many Protected Areas and shrinking space, shortage of food often forces wild animals towards populated areas.
- Each year, human-elephant conflict results in about 500 human deaths and damage to thousands of houses and millions of hectares of crops, while over 100 elephants die due to human-related activities, which include poaching for ivory or meat, poisoning, electrocution and collision with trains.
- Despite widespread reverence for wild elephants, human-elephant conflict is on the rise as local people attempt to protect their livelihoods.
- To tackle such conflicts and avoid losses on both sides, it is important to strengthen the human-elephant coexistence by active management interventions by the State Forest Departments, the involvement of various stakeholders and sensitization and generating awareness in local communities of forest fringe areas.
- **Read more on the Asian Elephant in PIB dated Feb 20, 2020.**
- The compendium released includes some best practices such as:
  - o Retaining elephants in their natural habitats by:
    - Developing and maintaining perennial water holes.
    - Having solar-powered borewells for ensuring water supply throughout the year.
    - Creating fodder plantations.
    - Managing fire for controlling conflicts.
    - Building elephant-proof trenches, hanging fences, rubble walls, etc.
  - o Habitat management activities:
    - Grasslands management (Karnataka)
    - Vayal management (Kerala) – Vayals are microhabitats forming an ecological niche and marshy meadows surrounded by forests. Vayals may be managed to reduce the threat of infestation of exotic/invasive weeds.
    - Removal of weeds, wattles and other invasive species.
  - o Habitat improvement activities:
    - Bamboo planting/restocking.
    - Intensive soil working – to improve habitats by adding fodder and canopy.
  - o Monitoring elephants by drones, radio-collaring and placing watchtowers.
  - o Strengthening elephant corridors:
    - Relocation of villages from corridors.
    - Securing corridors.
  - o Guiding elephants back into their natural habitats.
  - o Emergency measures to mitigate human-elephant conflicts:
    - Emergency response teams.
    - Open communication channel between the community and the forest department.
    - Capacity building and awareness drives.

Also read: Project Elephant - List of elephant reserves

3. National Infrastructure Pipeline

Context:

Finance Minister launches an Online Dashboard for the National Infrastructure Pipeline.

To know more about the National Infrastructure Pipeline, check PIB dated April 29, 2020.

4. UMANG App

Context:

EPFO ensures hassle-free service delivery through UMANG during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Read more about the UMANG App in the linked article.

5. World Biofuel Day

Context:

World Biofuel Day is observed on 10th August every year.

About World Biofuel Day:

- This day is observed to create awareness about the importance of non-fossil fuels as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels and to highlight the various efforts made by the government in the biofuel sector.
- World Biofuel Day is being celebrated by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas since 2015.
- World Biofuel Day theme 2020: "Biofuels Towards Atmanirbhar Bharat".

Also read: National Policy on Biofuels 2018

6. Himalayan Geothermal Springs

Context:

Himalayan Geothermal Springs release a huge amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

A study by the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology, Govt. of India, investigated and characterized the gas emissions from these springs.

Details:

- The Himalayas hosts about 600 geothermal springs having varied temperature and chemical conditions.
- Carbon outflux from Earth's interior to the exosphere through volcanic eruptions, fault zones, and geothermal systems contribute to the global carbon cycle that affects the short and long term climate of the Earth.
- The study found that the Himalayan geothermal springs, which cover about 10,000 square km in the Garhwal region of the Himalayas, show a significant discharge of carbon dioxide (CO_2) rich water.
- The study suggested that CO_2 in these thermal springs are sourced from metamorphic decarbonation of carbonate rocks present deep in the Himalayan core along with magmatism and oxidation of graphite.
- Most of the geothermal water is dominated by evaporation followed by weathering of silicate rocks. Isotopic analyses further point towards a meteoric source for the geothermal water.

Geothermal springs:

- A geothermal spring is a spring produced by the emergence of geothermally heated groundwater that rises from the Earth's crust.
- They are also called hot springs or hydrothermal springs.
- They form when water deep below the Earth's surface is heated by rocks or other means, and rises to the Earth's surface.