

KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

2ND JANUARY, 2021

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHTS

- In some path-breaking suggestions to promote inclusion of marginalised groups in science, a new draft policy on science and technology proposes that at least 30 per cent representation be ensured for women in all decision-making bodies, as well as “spousal benefits” be provided to partners of scientists belonging to the LGBTQ+ community.
- In an ambitious attempt to make scientific knowledge and data available to all, the government has proposed an 'open science policy' that will ensure that the results of, and information generated by, all publicly-funded research is freely accessible by everyone.
- Covishield, the vaccine candidate from the Pune-based Serum Institute of India, was approved by a subject expert committee (SEC) of the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of six Light House Projects in six cities as part of the Global Housing Technology Challenge India (GHTCIndia) initiative.
- With the government refusing to call the winter session of Parliament, the Rajya Sabha sat for just 33 days in 2020, its lowest ever tally of sittings in a year. There are only three other occasions when the sittings were below 50 days in a year.
- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has adapted itself to the new environment in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and will strive to provide a 'malleable regulatory framework' within the confines of the insolvency law, according to its Chairperson M.S. Sahoo.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constructed a composite Digital Payments Index (DPI) to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.

VAZHAKULAM PINEAPPLES

1. Mauritius variety of Vazhakulam pineapples from Kerala had **got the geographical indication(GI) tag in 2009.**
2. It is **grown in the districts of Ernakulam, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta** and the low elevation areas of Idukki district in Kerala.
3. Vazhakulam pineapple is unique in aroma, flavour and sweetness due to its high sugar content and low acidity. It has a shelf life of around 10-15 days.

CONSORTIA FOR MEDICINAL PLANTS

1. National Medicinal plants Board (NMPB) launched consortia for medicinal plants to deliberate on quality planting material, research and development, cultivation and trade of medicinal plants.
2. In the first phase, consortia is proposed for medicinal plant species-**Ashwagandha(Withania somnifera), Pippali(Piper longum), Aonla(Phyllanthus emblica), Guggulu(Commiphora wightii), Satavari(Asparagus racemosus).**

PARADIP PORT

1. Cabinet approved a project Deepening and Optimization of Inner Harbour Facilities including Development of Western Dock to handle cape size vessels at Paradip Port.
2. **Project would help in decongesting the port, reducing sea freight, thereby making coal imports cheaper and creating jobs.**
3. Paradip is one of the Major Ports of India situated in Odisha.
4. Other major Ports are Kundala, Mumbai JNPT, Mormugao, New Mangalore, Cochin, Kolkata, Visakhapatnam, Ennore, Chennai, and Tuticorin.

KALA-AZAR OR VISCERAL LEISHMANIASIS

1. Minister of Health and Family Welfare **reviewed status of Kala-Azar in UP, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.** In India disease is endemic to these states.
2. Kala-azar is a tropical disease **characterized by irregular fever, weight loss, anemia and swelling of the spleen and liver.**
3. It is caused by a protozoan Leishmania parasite and is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected female sandflies.
4. Kala-azar elimination is on top priority under WHO neglected Tropical disease.

PONG DAM LAKE

1. More than 750 migratory birds have been found dead under mysterious circumstances at the Pong Dam lake in recent days.
2. Pong Dam lake has been **constructed on the river Beas in the land of Shivalik hills of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh,** which has been named as Maharana Pratap Sagar.
3. It is located in the trans-Himalayan fly path of various migratory birds.
4. It was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1983, and is now also a Ramsar site.

PROXIMA CENTAURI

1. Astronomers looking for alien life have recently picked up an intriguing radio wave emission from the direction of Proxima Centauri.
2. Proxima Centauri is nearest star to the Sun. It is 4.2 light-years away from the Sun.
3. Its mass is about an eighth of the Sun's, and it is too dim to be seen with the naked eye from Earth.