

NEWS TODAY

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (MoEFCC) UNVEILS NEW RULES TO REGULATE EXOTIC ANIMAL TRADE

- MoEFCC has issued an advisory **to streamline the process of importing and possessing exotic live species in India.**
 - > Exotic live species are both **plants and animals that are moved from their source (original) habitat to a new one** mainly due to human intervention.
- **New rules**
 - > Owners and possessors of such animals and birds must also **register their stock with Chief Wildlife Warden** of their States.
 - ⇒ Currently, **Directorate-General of Foreign Trade** oversees its trade.
 - > Wildlife Department will prepare an **inventory of such species** and have right to inspect facilities of such traders.
 - > Exotic live species will mean **animals named under Appendices I, II and III of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**. It will not include species from Schedules of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
 - ⇒ CITES is a **legally binding international agreement** to protect plants and animals.
- **Why important?**
 - > Financial Action Task Force described **wildlife trafficking as a "global threat"**, which also has links with other organised crimes.
 - > Outbreak of COVID-19 has also raised **global concern about link between illegal wildlife trade and zoonotic diseases.**

NITI AAYOG TO WORK ON ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ODR) FRAMEWORK

- As India fights COVID crisis, NITI Aayog has decided to work with the key stakeholders to develop **ODR as a viable and sustainable form of dispute avoidance and dispute resolution.**
 - > COVID-19 has **impacted the businesses' ability to meet their contractual obligations** due to stoppage of production, labor shortages etc. This has led to commercial disputes arising out of contractual violations.
- ODR is the **resolution of disputes, particularly small and medium-value cases, using digital technology** and techniques of alternate dispute resolution (ADR) such as mediation and arbitration.
- **Benefits of ODR**
 - > It has the **potential to reduce high volume of disputes** outside the courts and to facilitate access to justice. It will allow courts to focus more on complex cases or that of high public interest.
 - ⇒ Banks, NBFCs and Microfinance institutions (MFIs) can prioritize ODR before they approach debt recovery tribunals.
 - ⇒ Families could take recourse to ODR to address sensitive issues.
 - > It will provide **expeditious resolution of disputes**, and it will also be far less expensive.

WORLD BANK (WB) PROJECT TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF INDIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

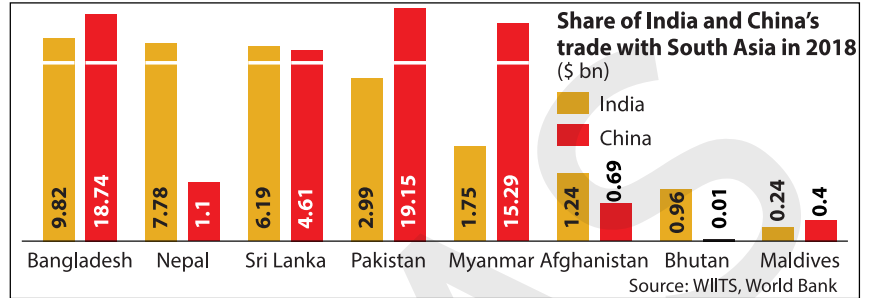
- WB approved a **\$500 million Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Program (STARS)** which aims to improve quality and governance of **school education in six States.**
 - > States include **Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan.**
 - > It will provide benefit to **25 crore students and 1 crore teachers** in 15 lakh schools.
- STARS will support **following reform initiatives.**
 - > Focusing on delivery of education services by **providing customized local-level solutions** towards school improvement.
 - > Addressing demands from stakeholders, especially parents, for **greater accountability and inclusion** by
 - ⇒ Producing better data to assess the quality of learning;
 - ⇒ Giving special attention to students from vulnerable sections
 - ⇒ Delivering a curriculum that keeps pace with the rapidly evolving needs of the job market.
 - > Individualized, **needs-based training** for teachers.
 - > **Strengthening foundational learning for children in classes 1 to 3** and preparing them with the cognitive, socio-behavioral and language skills to meet future labor market needs.
- At the national level, through **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**, and in partnership with the 6 states, it will **help improve**
 - > learning assessment systems;
 - > strengthen classroom instruction and remediation;
 - > facilitate school-to-work transition;
 - > strengthen governance and decentralized management.

CONCERNS RAISED OVER DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) NOTIFICATION

- Experts are saying that draft EIA fosters **non-transparency, encourages environmental violations.**
 - > In March 2020, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) had proposed a **draft EIA notification to replace EIA notification 2006.**
- EIA process **scrutinises the potential environmental impact and negative externalities of a proposed project** and determines whether it can be carried out in the form proposed, or whether it is to be abandoned or modified.
- **Key changes proposed and concerns**
 - > Draft **expands the list of projects exempted** from public consultation before they seek environment clearance including projects of "**other strategic considerations**".
 - ⇒ However, **Strategic Projects are not defined** giving them discretionary powers.
 - > **Reduces time for public consultation** from 30 days to 20 Days.
 - ⇒ This might lead to lack of adequate time for preparation of views etc.
 - > Project owners are to **submit environmental compliance reports every year** (earlier, every 6 months).
 - ⇒ Due to this, certain **irreversible consequences of project could go unnoticed** because of extended reporting time.
 - > It allows for **ex-post-facto clearance route**, under which **projects started without prior environmental clearance** are allowed to continue with penalties.

INDIA LAGS CHINA IN SOUTH ASIAN TRADE DESPITE FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

- India's **trade with countries in South Asia has remained less than 4% of its global trade** since the late 1980s.
 - This has happened despite **regional and bilateral FTAs** like
 - **Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA)** under which India had extended tariff concessions on 3,142 items to members (Bangladesh, China, India, South Korea, Lao and Sri Lanka).
 - **SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area)**, a free trade arrangement between SAARC countries.
 - Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Agreement.
 - **Reasons:** protectionist policies, high logistics cost, lack of political will and a broader trust deficit.
- On the other hand, China has **increased its exports to the region by 546%**, from \$8 billion in 2005 to \$52 billion in 2018.
 - **Recent instances of China's trade diplomacy** with India's neighbours
 - Announced tariff exemption for almost **97% of exports from Bangladesh**.
 - Planning to lay a **strategic railway network connecting Kathmandu and Shigatse** in Tibet.
 - Offered **Nepal four ports for supply of goods** to reduce reliance on India.
- **Steps to help improve India's regional trade:**
 - revisiting and redoubling the focus on FTAs,
 - eliminating barriers and other protectionist policies,
 - enhancing cross-border infrastructure such as integrated check posts.



ALSO IN NEWS

Supreme Court (SC) dismisses review petition on adultery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC has refused to review its 2018 judgment which decriminalised adultery, section 497 of Indian Penal code (IPC). • SC held section 497 as unconstitutional and struck down penal provisions associated with it. SC stated that section 497 treated a married woman as the commodity of her husband.
Marginal standing facility (MSF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under MSF, scheduled banks can borrow funds overnight from RBI against government securities. • Earlier, RBI had increased the borrowing limit under the MSF from 2% to 3% of their deposits, amid COVID-19 pandemic. • This relaxation has now been extended till September 30, from June 30.
Dexamethasone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government has approved use of dexamethasone for managing moderate to severe cases of COVID-19. • Dexamethasone is a corticosteroid drug used in a wide range of conditions for its anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressant effects. • It was tested in hospitalized patients with COVID-19 in United Kingdom and was found to have benefits for the critically ill patients. • It is part of the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) and is widely available.
S-400 missile system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, Russia has agreed to look at advancing S-400 delivery to India. • S-400 is an integrated air defence system featuring radars, command and control equipment and four types of surface-to-air missiles. • They have ranges varying from 40km to 400km and can shoot down aircraft, drones, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles. • It is developed by Russia.
Kuiper Belt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a region of the Solar System that exists beyond the eight major planets, extending from orbit of Neptune. • It is similar to the asteroid belt, as it contains many small bodies, all remnants from the Solar System's formation. However, it is much larger than asteroid belt.
Gynandromorphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gynandromorphs are individual animals that have both genetically male and female tissues and often have observable male and female characteristics. • They may be bilateral, appearing to divide down the middle into male and female sides, or they may be mosaic, with patches characteristic of both the sexes. • Gynandromorphs occur in insects, spiders, crustaceans, and other arthropods as well as in birds, but they are extremely rare. • It is recently documented in a dragonfly in Kerala.
Sankalp Parva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Culture will be celebrating Sankalp Parva from 28th June to 12th July 2020. • Under this, Ministry expects all its Subordinate Offices, Academies, Attached Institutions, and Affiliated Institutions to plant trees in its campus or at the surroundings wherever it is possible. • Five trees recommended are Bargad, Awla, Pepal, Ashok, Bel.

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