

NEWS TODAY

THIRD ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA) HELD VIRTUALLY

Key highlights:

- **India and France re-elected as President and Co- President** of the ISA for a term of two years.
- Four Vice-Presidents were chosen to represent the **four regions of ISA** i.e. Asia Pacific Region; Africa Region; Europe and others Region; and Latin America & Caribbean Region.
- **Initiatives launched:**
 - > **Coalition for Sustainable Climate Action (CSCA)** for institutionalizing ISA's engagement with the private and public corporate sector.
 - > **Seventh Programme on Solarizing Heating and Cooling systems**, which significantly draws its energy from traditional power sources.
 - > For the first time, following **Solar awards** were conferred.
 - **Visvesvaraya award**, recognizes the countries with maximum floating solar capacity in each of the four regions of ISA.
 - **Kalpna Chawla award** recognises outstanding contribution of scientists and engineers working in the field of solar energy.
 - **Diwakar award** recognizes organisations & institutions that have been working for the benefit of differently-abled people and have maximised the use of solar energy.
 - > In the wake of the global pandemic, ISA set up **ISA CARES**, an initiative dedicated to **deployment of solar energy in healthcare sector** in LDC/SIDS ISA Member countries.

PLACE IN THE SUN

International Solar Alliance takes shape

WHAT IS ISA?

70-nations bloc between Tropics of Cancer & Capricorn **Most** countries in Africa or South America

HEADQUARTERS

200-acre NISE campus in Gurugram

WHAT ISA WILL DO

- Promote solar technologies
- Ensure solar light for households by 2022
- Mechanisms to reduce cost of capital
- e-portal to share experiences & practices

• Recently, ISA Framework Agreement allowed all the Member States of United Nations to join ISA, including those beyond the Tropics.

GLOBAL TUBERCULOSIS (TB) REPORT 2020 RELEASED BY WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO)

- Report aims to **provide a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of the TB epidemic**, and of progress in prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the disease, at global, regional and country levels.
- TB is caused by the **bacillus Mycobacterium tuberculosis**, which is spread when people who are sick with TB expel bacteria into the air.

Highlights of the report

- Globally, an estimated **10.0 million people fell ill with TB in 2019**, slowly declining in recent years.
- Approximately **1.4 million people** died from TB-related illnesses in 2019.
 - > TB is the **leading cause for death of people with HIV**.
- There was still a **large gap of 2.9 million** between number of **people diagnosed and reported** and the estimated cases.
 - > Gap is due to a combination of **underreporting of people diagnosed with TB and underdiagnosis**.
- **India** (26%- highest Tb burden in the world), **Indonesia, the Philippines and South Africa**-account for 44% of global TB cases.
- **COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse recent progress** in reducing the global burden of TB disease.
- **It recommends** to ensure essential services for both TB & COVID-19 and multisectoral action to end TB etc.

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) ON 16 OCTOBER 2020

- FAO is a **specialized agency of United Nations (UN)** that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
 - > It was **established in 1945** and has 194 Member countries. **India is a founding member**.
 - > FAO's **goal is to achieve food security for all** and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food.

Some Achievements of FAO

- **Eradication of Rinderpest** (viral disease that affects cattle) in 2011.
- **Treaty on Plant Genetic resources for Food and Agriculture** to protect and share seeds and other genetic material equitably.
- **Codex Alimentarius** (international standards for safe food) to protect consumer health and ensuring fair practices in global trade.
- **Legal instruments for responsible fisheries** to improve the conservation, management and development of fishing and aquaculture.
- **Guidelines on tenure of land, fisheries and forests** for management of natural resources.
- **Agricultural market information system (AMIS)** makes food commodity markets more transparent.

Challenges faced in 21st Century

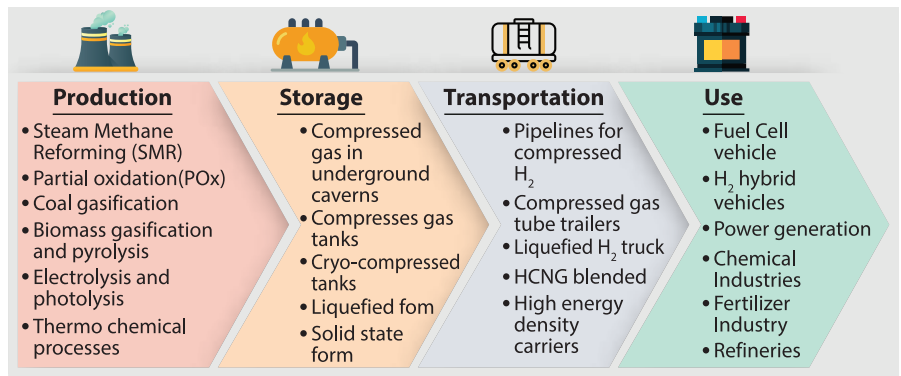
- **Ending hunger and malnutrition** and ensuring food access for all.
- The **climate change threat**: Between 2006 and 2016, agriculture bore the brunt of 26% of the total damage and loss caused by climate-related disasters in developing countries.
- **Natural resources under pressure**: biodiversity and water.
- **Transforming food systems** for achieving the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals of eliminating poverty and hunger.
- **Conflict and food security** as surge in conflict is driving greater food insecurity, fuelling violence and creating new tensions.
- **Combatting rural poverty**.

CABINET APPROVES RS. 5718 CRORES 'STRENGTHENING TEACHING-LEARNING AND RESULTS FOR STATES (STARS) PROJECT'

- STARS is a **World bank aided project**, to be implemented as a new **Centrally Sponsored Scheme under Ministry of Education (MOE)**.
 - > It envisions **improving the overall monitoring and measurement activities in the Indian School Education System** through interventions.
 - > Project is **aligned with objectives of National Education Policy 2020**.
- **It covers 6 States**: Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha.
 - > States will get support in developing, implementing, evaluating and improving **interventions with direct linkages to improved education outcomes** and school to work transition **strategies for improved labour market outcomes**.
- Project **has two major components**:
 - > **At the national level, it envisages**:
 - **Strengthening MOE's national data systems** to capture robust and authentic data on retention, transition and completion rates of students.
 - **Strengthening of learning assessment systems**.
 - **Establishing a National Assessment Center (PARAKH)** for continuous tracking of learning, and data-driven decision making leading to examination reforms.
 - > **At the State level, it envisages**:
 - **Strengthening Early Childhood Education** and Foundational Learning.
 - **Strengthen classroom instruction, Vocational education**.
 - **Governance and decentralized management** for Improved Service Delivery.

INDIA COUNTRY STATUS REPORT ON HYDROGEN AND FUEL CELLS LAUNCHED BY DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DST)

- Report is a **compilation of ongoing research activities related to hydrogen** being carried out by several scientists, industry, utilities, and other stakeholders.
 - Hydrogen economy includes **hydrogen production, storage, transport and utilization** (see infographic).
- Hydrogen (H₂) rarely exists alone, therefore it is **produced by extracting it from its compound**.
 - Hydrogen produced from renewables is considered as the cleanest energy source.** It is achieved through an Electrolyser, a device that splits water into hydrogen and oxygen using electricity.
- Advantages of Hydrogen over conventional fuels:** abundance, high energy density, ease of transportation over long distance, better combustion characteristics, non-polluting nature etc.
- Benefits:** Addressing climate change issue, reducing dependency on oil imports, decarbonise a range of sectors including transport, iron and steel etc., reducing emissions, help improve air quality and strengthen energy security.
- Challenges faced:** New material development, electrolytes, storage, safety, lack of code and standards etc.
- Steps taken for Hydrogen development**
 - National Hydrogen Energy Roadmap (2006)** for the long-term public and private efforts for hydrogen energy development.
 - Hydrogen and Fuel Cell program** by DST.



ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Global Initiative on Data Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> China has launched this initiative to address global data security issues, a countermove to the US “clean network” programme that is aimed at discouraging other countries from using Chinese technology. Under the initiative, China would call on all countries to handle data security in a “comprehensive, objective and evidence-based manner” and maintain an open, secure and stable supply chain for information and communications technology and services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It opposes undermining key infrastructure, or data theft by using information technology and forcing firms to store data generated overseas in their home country.
<p>National Logistics Portal (NLP-Marine)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Shipping plans to develop a NLP- Marine to help exporters, importers and service providers exchange documents seamlessly and transact business in a transparent and quick manner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan is to scale up the current Port Community System (PCS 1x). It will perform activities such as domestic tracking of the shipment, undertake Customs clearance on their own, online transaction with custodians etc. It is being developed to facilitate ease of doing business and make India one of the most cost-effective and competitive countries in terms of carrying international trade.
<p>2020 State of Climate Services report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was released by World Meteorological Organization (specialised agency of UN). Report provides a basis for understanding how to strengthen protection for the most vulnerable, including through mechanisms such as the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative. Findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the past 50 years, more than 11,000 disasters have been attributed to weather, climate and water-related hazards, involving 2 million deaths. In 2018, globally, around 108 million people required help from the international humanitarian system as a result of storms, floods, etc. By 2030, it is estimated that this number could increase by almost 50%.
<p>System for Integrated modelling of Atmospheric composition (SILAM)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SILAM model is a chemical transport model, that provides information about atmospheric composition and air quality. Recently, Indian Meteorological Department operationalised SILAM model for India as Advanced high-resolution Air Quality Early Warning System. Also, very high-resolution city scale model ENFUSER (ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION FUSION SERVICE) for Delhi has been operationalized to identify the air pollution hotspots and pollution up to street level. Both, SILAM and ENFUSER have been developed in technical collaboration with Finnish Meteorological Institute.
<p>Nilgiris Elephant Corridor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supreme Court upheld a 2011 order of the Madras High Court on the Nilgiris elephant corridor, affirming the right of passage of the animals and the closure of resorts in the area. This corridor is situated in the ecologically fragile Sigur plateau, near the Mudumalai National Park in the Nilgris district, Tamil Nadu which connects Western and Eastern Ghats. It has the Nilgiri hills on its southwestern side and the Moyar river valley on its northeastern side. It is the largest protected forest area in India, spanning across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.
<p>Opposition event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposition is the event when sun, Earth and an outer planet (Mars in this case) are lined up, with the Earth in the middle. The time of opposition is the point when the outer planet is typically also at its closest distance to the Earth for a given year. And because it is close, the planet appears brighter in the sky. Due to opposition event, Mars will outshine Jupiter, becoming the third brightest object (moon and Venus are first and second, respectively) in the night sky during the month of October.

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