

NEWS TODAY

FARMERS BEGIN PRO- GENETICALLY MODIFIED (GM) CROP AGITATION

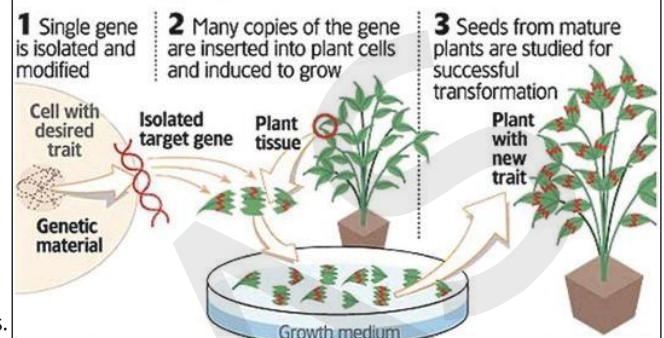
- In the current kharif season, **farmers would undertake mass sowing of GM seeds** for maize, soyabean, mustard brinjal and herbicide tolerant (Ht) cotton, which are not approved in India.
 - This action aims to draw attention **to need for introduction of GM crops**, which farmers contend reduces cost of production by cutting down on use of pesticides.

About GM crops

- These crops are derived by altering genetic material (DNA) through **introduction of a gene from a different organism to get desired traits**.
- Benefits:** Improved resistance to diseases, pests; increase yield and thus income; solutions to food security etc.
- Issues:** Long-lasting effects of GM crops are yet to be studied hence it can be **harmful to humans in long run**.
- Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee** (under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change) is the apex body that allows for commercial release of GM crops.
 - In 2002, GEAC had allowed the commercial release of **Bt cotton, only GM crop that is allowed in India**.
 - Use of **unapproved GM variant** can attract a jail term of 5 years and fine of Rs 1 lakh under **Environmental Protection Act, 1986**.

Genetic engineering

Researchers isolate a gene from an organism that has the trait they want to impart to a plant.



SC ASKS NHRC TO FRAME GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTION & REHABILITATION OF VICTIMS OF BONDED LABOUR

- SC was hearing a petition for implementing **May 11 order of National Human Rights Commission to rescue bonded labourers** working in brick kilns in UP & Bihar.

Bonded labour in India

- ILO defines **forced or compulsory labour** as: all work or service which is exacted from any person under threat of penalty and for which person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.
 - Bonded labour is a type of forced labour.**
- Global Slavery Index 2016 estimates **1.8 crore Indians in modern slavery, including bondedness**.
- Bonded labour is **prohibited under Articles 21 and 23** and **Bonded Labour Abolition Act (BLSA), 1976**.
 - BLSA is supported by other legislations** like Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970; Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979; Minimum Wages Act, 1948.
- Centre has adopted a three-pronged strategy** for abolition of bonded labour:
 - BLSA, 1976 empowers **executive magistrates to exercise powers of judicial magistrate** of first or second class for trial of offences.
 - Vigilance committees at district and sub-divisional levels** to identify and rehabilitate bonded labourers.
 - Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labour** under which different beneficiaries are provided different financial assistance.

CHINA REACHES ACCORD WITH INDIA ON LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL (LAC) SPAT

- A day after Indian and Chinese troops begun a partial disengagement from some of the stand-off points, **China said it had reached agreement with India on the ongoing tensions along LAC**.
 - Standoff started last month following a violent clash in Pangong Tso**, triggered by China's opposition to India laying a key road around Pangong Tso Lake and another road connecting **Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie road in Galwan Valley, Ladakh**.
- Both sides reached agreement on properly handling the situation** in the west section of India-China boundary.
 - As per the agreement, a **series of ground-level talks would be held over the next 10 days**, with four other points of conflict identified at Patrolling point (PP) 15, PP17, Chushul and north bank of Pangong Lake.
- Earlier treaties & protocols to address such border disputes between India and China**
 - 1993 agreement of maintenance of peace and tranquility along LAC
 - 2005 protocol on the modalities of confidence-building measures in the military field along the LAC
 - 2012 agreement on the establishment of a working mechanism for consultation and coordination on India-China border affairs.
 - 2013 border defence cooperation agreement.

MUMBAI TO GET MEGACITY URBAN FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM

- This will be second such warning system for any city in India after Chennai.
 - It was jointly conceived by **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, India Meteorological Department and National Centre for Coastal Research, Chennai**.
 - It will provide **early warnings for heavy rain in flood prone areas** in Mumbai.
 - It will also **provide rainfall information, tide levels, storm surge, and issue alerts** for affected low-lying areas, which should be avoided during natural disasters such as cyclones and extremely heavy rain events.
- Urban flooding** is significantly different from rural flooding as urbanisation leads to developed catchments which increases flood peaks from 1.8 to 8 times and flood volumes by up to 6 times. Consequently, flooding occurs very quickly due to faster flow times, sometimes in a matter of minutes.
 - Major reasons for increased urban flooding:** bad urban planning, encroachment of water bodies, increase in extreme weather events and lack of preparedness.
 - NDMA guidelines for Urban flooding** includes Establishing Technical Umbrella for Urban Flood Forecasting and Warning (At the State Level), National Hydro-meteorological Network, Local Networks for Real-Time Rainfall Data, Doppler Weather Radars etc.



BHARATMALA PARIYOJANA (BMP) PHASE-I TO GET DELAYED BY 4 YEARS: ICRA

- As per ICRA rating agency, BMP Phase-I is likely to be **completed by FY2026 instead of earlier envisaged FY2022.**
- This is due to reasons like**
 - prevailing uncertainty due to Covid-19 like limited labour availability and productivity loss and the consequent impact on valuations could **delay asset monetisation plan of NHAI** through toll-operate-transfer (TOT) auctions and launch of infrastructure investment trust (InvIT).
 - higher cost of project, funding shortages, delays in land acquisition, delay in detailed project report (DPR) preparation etc.
- BMP Phase-I was launched in 2017 for optimizing **efficiency of freight and passenger movement across the country by bridging critical infrastructure gaps.**
 - Key Features of project include:** Improving the quality of roads, development of Multimodal Logistics Parks and elimination of choke point to improve efficiency, use of technology, focus on improving connectivity in North East and leveraging synergies with Inland Waterways etc.
 - As on March 2020, **about 21% of BMP execution** is completed and around 47% of BMP was pending to be awarded.
 - Main agencies tasked with construction are **National Highways Authority of India, National Highway and Industrial Development Corporation and State Public Works Department.**

COMPONENTS

- Economic corridors development**
▶ Length-km **9,000** ▶ Outlay Rs crore- **1,20,000**
- Inter-corridor & feeder roads**
▶ Length-km **6,000** ▶ Outlay Rs crore- **80,000**
- National Corridors Efficiency improvements**
▶ Length-km **5,000** ▶ Outlay Rs crore- **1,00,000**
- Border & International connectivity roads**
▶ Length-km **2,000** ▶ Outlay Rs crore- **25,000**
- Coastal & port connectivity roads**
▶ Length-km **2,000** ▶ Outlay Rs crore- **20,000**
- Expressways Length**
▶ Length-km **800** ▶ Outlay Rs crore- **40,000**
- Around 24,800 km will be taken up in Ph-1 of Bharatmala, in addition to 10,000 kms of balance road works under National Highways Development Project (NHDP) taking the total to 34 800 km at an estimated cost of approx Rs 5,35,000 cr.

ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Economic Outlook by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> World economy is likely to contract by 6% or 7.6% in 2020 depending on whether it experiences a single-hit or a double-hit scenario due to COVID-19. India's economy could contract by as much as 7.3% in FY21 if a second wave of coronavirus sweeps the country Apart from the pandemic, Key risks highlighted are heightened financial market instability, resulting from the deterioration in balance sheets of the government, corporates and banks.
<p>Centre liberalises coal swapping regulations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The coal linkages from coal companies have been rationalized in order to reduce the distance in transportation of coal from the coal mines to the consumer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The exercise shall help in reducing the load on the transportation infrastructure and easing the evacuation constraints. Ministry of Coal issued Methodology for Rationalization of Linkages/ Swapping of Coal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Arrangement shall be allowed only within the same sector viz. NRS (non-regulated sector) with NRS and Power (regulated sector) with Power. The savings accrued in the process shall be transferred to Indian Railways/DISCOM(s).
<p>Naku La, Sikkim</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recently, Indian and Chinese troops engaged in a face-off at Naku La. It is a pass located at an altitude of 19000 feet in the state of Sikkim. Other passes located in Sikkim are Nathu La Pass and Jelep La Pass. Other passes between India and China: Shipki La (HP), Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand).
<p>Challenger Deep</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench, is the deepest known spot in world's oceans, which is 11 kms below the surface of the Pacific Ocean. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mariana trench is trough that cuts across Pacific Ocean floor, and is 2,550 kms long and 69 kms wide on average. Information from deep ocean areas can potentially reveal new sources for medical drugs, food, energy resources and other products. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It can also help to predict earthquakes and tsunamis.
<p>Asiatic Lion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to 2020 census, there are an estimated 674 Asiatic lions (increased by 29% in last 5 years) in Gir forest region, Gujarat and other revenue areas of coastal Saurashtra. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographically, distribution area is also up by 36%. They face the usual threats of poaching and habitat fragmentation. IUCN status: Endangered. Asiatic lions are slightly smaller than African lions (IUCN status: Vulnerable).
<p>Guidelines for import of exotic species</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines were released by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for dealing with import of exotic species and to assess existing scale of possession within country. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Exotic live species" are animals or plant species moved from their original range (location) to a new one. This is a step towards curbing illegal wildlife trade as outbreak of COVID-19 has raised global concern about illegal wildlife trade and zoonotic diseases.

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