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Saturday

Current Affairs

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1. CORRIDOR OF HOPE

- The Union Cabinet has approved the building and development of the **Kartarpur** corridor from **Dera Baba Nanak** in **Gurdaspur district** to the **international border in Pakistan**.
- The demand for Kartarpur Corridor had gathered momentum in 1995.
- The main aim of the **visa-free** corridor is to facilitate pilgrims from India to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur on the banks of the Ravi River in Pakistan.
- Shri Guru Nanak Dev had spent eighteen years of his life at Kartarpur.
- The 4-km-long Kartarpur corridor would initiate meaningful confidence-building measure (CBM) between the two nations.
- The initiative can also help other communities to fulfil their demand. **Kashmiri Pandits**, who have long demanded for access to visit the Sharda Peeth in the Neelum Valley in PoK, **Sufis** in Pakistan who wish to visit the **dargah** of **Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti** in **Ajmer**, Rajasthan and **Sikhs** in India and Pakistan wanting to visit important shrines on both sides of the border will also get benefit out of the corridor.

2. STATUTE IN BRAILLE TO MARK CONSTITUTION DAY

- The Constitution of India will be made available in **Braille** for the first time on the occasion of **the Constitution Day on November 26**.
- The project will be jointly carried out by The Buddhist Association for the blind along with **Saavi Foundation** and Swagat Thorat.
- **Swagat Thorat** has started India's first Braille newsletter **Sparshdnyan**.
- The Constitution will be made available in five parts in Braille for the benefit of visually challenged individuals.
- The official copy of the Constitution, which has been translated into Braille, was taken from the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute (BARTI).
- The first of the five parts will be published on November 25 and the next part of the series will be released after two months.
- These parts will contain explanations about the Schedules of the constitution, additional information which can be of help of UPSC aspirants and lawyers from the blind community.

3. FINANCE MINISTRY MAY STICK TO CAPITAL INFUSION PLAN FOR PSU BANKS

- The Finance Ministry is expected to finalise **capital infusion** of about **₹54,000 cr.** to the public sector banks in the next few weeks.
- The RBI has extended the deadline for meeting the Countercyclical Capital Buffer of 2.5% until March 2020 under Basel-III norms.

- According to rating agency Crisil, this could reduce the burden of PSBs by ₹35,000 crore this fiscal.
- At present the CCB stands at 1.875 per cent and the remaining 0.625 per cent was to be met by March 2019.
- Countercyclical Capital Buffer (CCB) is aimed to protect the banking sector against losses that could be caused by cyclic systematic risks. The banks have to add capital at times when credit is growing rapidly so that the buffer can be reduced when the financial cycle turns.
- The finance ministry will finalise capital infusion of about ₹54,000 crore after assessing the requirement of each bank.

4. **LUNAR LANDER FACES CRUCIAL TEST**

- The Chandrayaan-2 lunar lander's sensors are undergoing a pivotal test in the next few days as the mission is planned to take-off in around two months.
- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will fly the sensors on an aircraft over its **artificial lunar site at Challakere (Karnataka)** to see how they will function and guide the Chandrayaan-2 landing craft when it starts descending on the lunar terrain.
- For the test, a **prototype module** carrying the sensors will be flown on one of ISRO's two small aircrafts.
- As the plane descends from around 7 km to about 1 km over the artificial terrain, the sensors must show how they will **guide the soft landing** of the lunar craft at the right spot, speed and position.
- Until the mission is launched, all systems will be tested continuously after every integration.
- The orbiter carrying the lander and a rover is scheduled to be sent to the Moon from Sriharikota on January 31 and expected to reach there sometime in February 2019.

Chandrayaan-2 mission:

- **Chandrayaan-2** is India's second mission to the Moon and a totally indigenous mission comprising of an Orbiter, Lander and Rover.
- The highly autonomous or pre-programmed mission uses a large number of sensors.
- Among them are those that help the lander to precisely assess its height from the landing spot, decide its speed and help it to steer clear of any boulders or uneven surface.
- After reaching the 100 km lunar orbit, the Lander comprising the Rover will get separated from the Orbiter.
- The Lander will have a soft landing on the lunar surface with the help of sensors at a specified site and deploy a Rover.
- The sensors on the rover will observe the lunar surface and send back data. This will be useful for the **analysis of the lunar soil**.
- The Chandrayaan-2 with a weight around **3290 kg** orbit around the moon and perform the objectives of **remote sensing the moon**.
- The organs will collect scientific information on lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, lunar exosphere and signatures of hydroxyl and water-ice.

Litmus test
The Chandrayaan-2 lander's sensors are all set to be tested at Challakere, Karnataka

HOW WILL SENSORS HELP THE LANDER?

- Assess height from the landing spot
- Decide speed of lander
- Help lander navigate boulders or uneven surfaces

SCALED-DOWN VERSION OF LANDER

NOV. 24, 2018: Test flight scheduled

JAN. 31, 2019: Targeted launch of rover and lander

FEB. 2019: Expected time lander and rover will reach the moon

For the test, sensors need to guide ISRO's small aircraft to a soft landing on an artificial lunar surface

5. INDIA TO STUDY MARIJUANA-DERIVED DRUGS

- The researchers are planning to promote research in herbal drugs, which involves deriving new drugs from marijuana.
- The researchers belonging to the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (**CSIR**), the Indian Council for Medical Research (**ICMR**) and the Department of Biotechnology (**DoB**) will test whether strains of marijuana grown at the CSIR-IIIM campus in Jammu could be effective in the treatment of breast cancer, sickle-cell anaemia.
- The study aims to check if the “**feelings of bliss**” induced by cannabis could be detected at the cellular level.
- The effect of bhang (marijuana consumed orally) is known to induce a state of bliss.
- Uttarakhand, Jammu and Uttar Pradesh have allowed restricted cultivation of the plant for medical research.
- The organisations have formally applied to the **Drug Control General of India** for permissions.
- Marijuana or hemp is not permitted for commercial cultivation in India though it grows as weed in several parts of the country.
- The U.S. FDA also recently approved Epidiolex (cannabidiol) [CBD] oral solution for the treatment of seizures associated with two rare and severe forms of epilepsy, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome and Dravet syndrome.

Marijuana:

- Marijuana is the dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds obtained from the *Cannabis sativa* or *Cannabis indica* plant.
- The main element in marijuana is the mind-altering chemical nemed**delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)**.
- Users experience euphoria, hallucinations and paranoia when they consume Marijuana.

Drug Control General of India (DCGI):

- **Drug Control General of India (DCGI)** under Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) is responsible for **approval of licenses** of specified categories of drugs such as blood and blood products, vaccines, IV fluids and sera in India.

- **Drug Control General of India (DCGI)** lays down standards and quality of manufacturing, selling, import and distribution of drugs in India.
- DCGI acts as an **appellate authority** in case of any dispute regarding the quality of drugs.
- **Drug Control General of India (DCGI)** prepares and maintains **national reference standard**.
- **Drug Control General of India (DCGI)** brings about uniformity in enforcement of **Drugs and Cosmetics Act**.
- It **trains the Drug Analysts** deputed by **State Drug Control Laboratories** and other Institutions.