

# **The Hindu**

## **States**

### **Vitamin D3-rich weed among 18 plants stifling Kaziranga (Page no. 3)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Environment)**

A vitamin D3-rich weed and shrub with roots wild boars love to gorge on are among 18 invasive plants stifling the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, the best-known address of the greater one-horned rhinoceros on earth. Kaziranga has had to deal with encroachment, poaching, and annual floods for decades. But none of these has been as damaging to the health of the 1,300 sq. km tiger reserve as the green invaders that have gone under the radar until now. Soon after taking over as Kaziranga's field director a few months ago, Jatindra Sarma began identifying the invasive plants and documented 18 of them silently taking over the landscape at the cost of indigenous grasses, shrubs and trees the herbivores of the park sustain on.

The list he submitted to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) did not contain the "usual culprits" of many protected areas in India – parthenium and lantana that threaten more than 40% of India's tiger reserves, according to a global study in 2020.

It did mention ipomoea (Ipomoea carnea) and mimosa (Mimosa himalaica) but marked them as largely controlled and not much of a worry now.

### **MGNREGA workers hit streets in Bengal, seek pending wages (Page no. 4)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Welfare Scheme)**

Dipali Mahato was among the hundreds of workers who gathered in front of the District Magistrate's office in Purulia, demanding wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

I have not received wages amounting to ₹8,000. The last time I worked under a 100 days employment scheme was in January this year".

A mother of two daughters, the 35-year-old resident of Podlara village in Purulia I block said that her husband had migrated to Ranchi for work as there was no payment for work under the job guarantee scheme.

Hundreds of workers whose wages for MGNREGA work are pending like Dipali, hit the streets in Purulia in West Bengal under the banner of Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity (PBKMS).

Anuradha Talwar of PBKMS said that workers have to suffer because of the tussle between the Centre and West Bengal government on the MGNREGA scheme.

Wages of workers amounting to ₹2,800 crore are pending with the Centre. The wages are directly transferred to the account of beneficiaries. In this case, work has already been completed. The workers are suffering because of non-payment of wages.

## **Editorial**

### **The advent of 'app-solute' chaos in NREGA (Page no. 6)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Welfare Scheme)**

In May 2021, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) launched the National Mobile Monitoring Software (NMMS) app, a new application meant for "improving citizen oversight and increasing transparency" in National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) works.

It is to be deployed by NREGA Mates, local women at the panchayat level who are selected and trained to monitor NREGA worksites.

The main feature of the app is the real-time, photographed, geo-tagged attendance of every worker to be taken once in each half of the day.

We spoke to Mates, NREGA workers, and activists across multiple States to understand their experience of the app.

While such an app may be useful in monitoring the attendance of workers who have fixed work timings, in most States, NREGA wages are calculated based on the amount of work done each day, and workers do not need to commit to fixed hours.

This flexibility has been key to NREGA's widespread demand. However, marking attendance on the app mandates that workers are at the worksite the entire day. This causes significant difficulty for NREGA workers.

Priya Devi from Rajasthan finishes her NREGA work by 9 a.m., and then sets up a stall in the local haat to sell the produce she grows in her kitchen garden.

Since the introduction of the NMMS app, she either needs to be present at the worksite all day or travel twice to mark her attendance.

Ms. Devi expressed concern about losing customers at her stall in her absence. Another worker from Andhra Pradesh said her daughter was now missing school frequently because she had to take over some of her mother's chores.

### **Brick by brick (Page no. 6)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, International Relation)**

The 14th BRICS Summit, which concluded on June 24, revealed much about the grouping of five emerging nations. That this bloc of five disparate countries has not only made it to its 14th summit, but has been able to demonstrate some concrete, albeit modest, outcomes of cooperation, such as the emergence of the New Development Bank (NDB), suggests there remains a strong convergence of interests amid undeniable differences. Indeed, ever since the first summit in Yekaterinburg in 2009, BRICS has had more than its fair share of naysayers, particularly in the West, and has been derided as a talk shop.

In his address to the summit on June 23, which was hosted by China this year and held virtually, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the binding glue as “a similar approach to global governance”.

That approach, according to the lengthy joint Beijing Declaration that followed, was premised on “making instruments of global governance more inclusive, representative and participatory”.

That is certainly a laudable goal. However, the NDB, which has since its launch in 2015 funded around \$30 billion worth of projects in emerging nations, still remains for the grouping an isolated example of their common interests translating into tangible outcomes.

That points to another summit take-away: despite a tall agenda, the bloc remains constrained by differences. For instance, on two key issues for the grouping — UN reforms and terrorism — members India and China have found themselves on opposing sides of the debate.

## **News**

### **NCPCR drafts norms for child actors (Page no. 8)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Governance)**

The apex body for child rights, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, has issued draft guidelines for the employment of children in the entertainment industry which require producers to obtain permission from the District Magistrate, ensure a safe environment as well as provide private tutors for child artistes required to skip school for shoots.

The latest draft regulatory guidelines replace the earlier ones of 2011 to include provisions of new laws and amendments such as the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015; Child Labour Amendment Act, 2016; Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012; and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

These guidelines also apply to over-the-top platforms such as Netflix and Amazon, as well as engagement of children for creating content on social media platforms such as Instagram.

The draft guidelines require producers to seek permission from the District Magistrate for engaging children for a programme.

The latter will have to issue a permit after the worksite has been inspected, which will be valid for a period of six months. Producers will also have to ensure that children are not cast in a role where they are exposed to ridicule, insults or harsh comments that could affect their emotional health, and neither should they be shown to consume alcohol, smoke or display nudity.

## **Business**

### **RBI extends date for card tokenization (Page no. 12)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Economy)**

The Reserve Bank of India has extended the card-on file tokenisation deadline by three months to September 30, given various representations received from industry bodies.

Card-on-file, or CoF, refers to card information stored by payment gateway and merchants to process future transactions.

In a circular, the RBI said the industry stakeholders have highlighted some issues. These issues are being dealt with in consultation with the stakeholders, it said while extending the timeline of June 30 by three more months to September 30.

**Gadkari approves draft car safety scheme (Page no. 12)  
(GS Paper 2, Governance)**

Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari approved a draft notification that paves the way for the country to have its own crash-linked safety performance star rating system for cars.

The five star-rating system under the Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (Bharat NCAP) would assign cars between one to five stars based on how well they perform in crash tests with zero star indicating lowest safety standards.

The overall assessment is based on the vehicle's performance under three categories adult, child-occupant protection and safety-assist technologies.