

Insights Daily Current Affairs + PIB: 05 March 2019

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Relevant articles from PIB:

Paper 2:

| Topics Covered:

1. Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

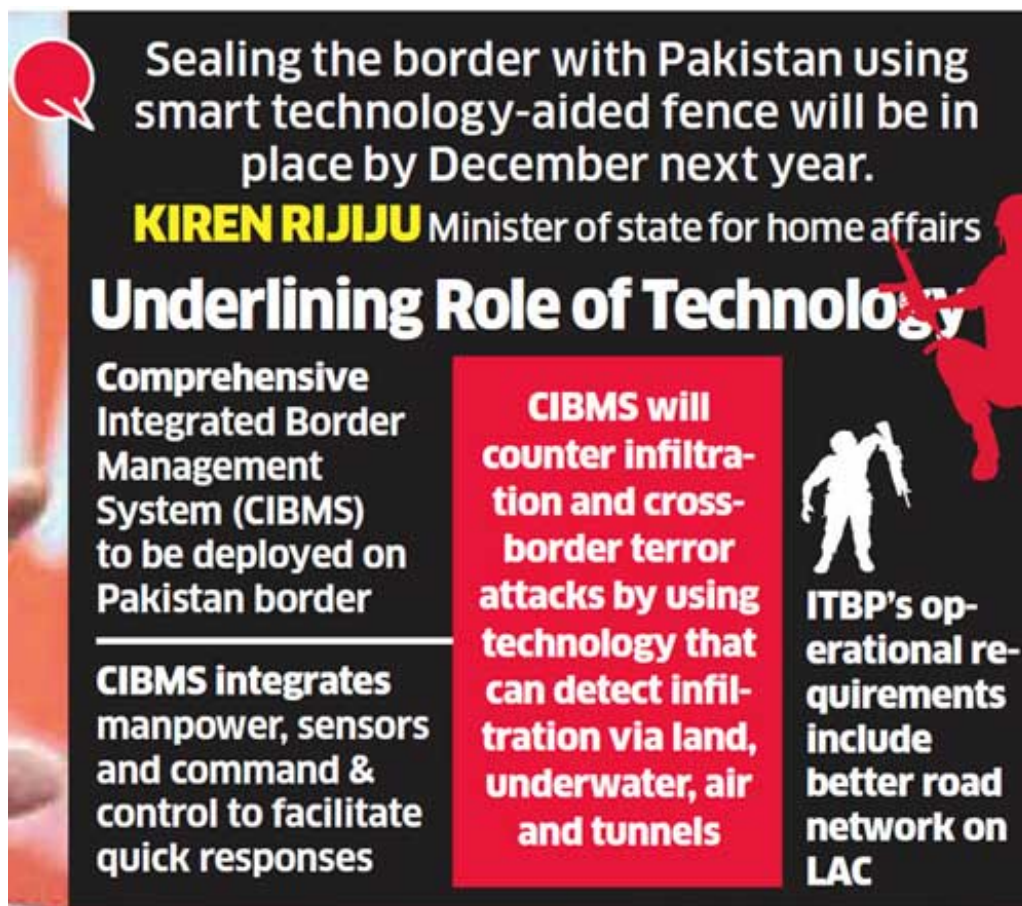
BOLD-QIT project

What to study?

- ***For Prelims: BOLD-QIT project and CIBMS- key features.***
- ***For Mains: Concerns associated with security management at borders and use of latest technologies to secure our borders.***

Context: Project **BOLD-QIT (Border Electronically Dominated QRT Interception Technique)** under **CIBMS (Comprehensive Integrated Border Management system)** has been inaugurated on **India-Bangladesh border in Dhubri District of Assam**.

BOLD-QIT is the project **to install technical systems under the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS)**, which enables BSF to equip Indo-Bangla borders with different kind of sensors in unfenced riverine area of Brahmaputra and its tributaries.



What is CIBMS?

The concept of CIBMS is the ***integration of manpower, sensors and command and control to improve situational awareness and facilitate quick response to emerging situations.***

Among major components of CIBMS is the ***'virtual fence'***. The second component is the ***command and control***, which will help in optimum use of resources for border management. Another component is ***power management*** to keep CIBMS running.

Need for BOLD- QIT project:

Border Security Force is responsible for safeguarding of 4,096 Km long International Border with Bangladesh. At various places, it is not possible to erect Border Fence due to the geographical barriers. The 61 Kms of Border area in District Dhubri, Assam where River Brahmaputra enters into Bangladesh is consisting of vast char lands and innumerable river channels thus making border guarding in this area, a daunting task especially during rainy season.

The implementation of this project will not only ***help BSF to curb all type of cross border crimes but also provide respite to the troops from round the clock human surveillance.***

Significance and the need for smart borders:

Smart borders on one hand ***allow seamless movement of authorized people and goods, while on the other, minimise cross-border security challenges using innovation and technology enablement.*** Over the long term, smart border

management will also have to incorporate systems that digitally monitor patterns of activity through and around border areas to root out organised crime and anti-national events.

Mains Question: A smart combination of creativity, capacity-building and collaboration can provide answers to technology-driven challenge to India's border security. Analyze.

Paper 2 and 3:

| Topics covered:

1. Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.
2. Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

World Wildlife Day

What to study?

- ***For Prelims: Significance of World Wildlife Day, themes, CITES.***
- ***For Mains: Significance, performance and potential of these conventions.***

Context: World Wildlife Day was ***celebrated on March 3rd.***

Theme: 'Life below Water: for People and Planet'.

The theme aligns with ***goal 14 of UN Sustainable Development Goals.***



Relevance of theme:

Significance of oceans:

1. The ocean contains nearly 200,000 identified species, but actual numbers may be in the millions.
2. Globally, the market value of marine and coastal resources and industries is estimated at US\$3 trillion per year, about 5% of global GDP.

3. Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods. Marine wildlife has sustained human civilization and development for millennia, from providing food and nourishment, to material for handicraft and construction. It has also enriched our lives culturally, spiritually, and recreationally in different ways.

Concerns and the need for conservation:

1. The capacity of life below water to provide these services is severely impacted, as our planet's oceans and the species that live within it are under assault from an onslaught of threats.
2. As much as 40% of the ocean is now heavily affected by the most significant and direct threat of over exploitation of marine species as well as other threats such as pollution, loss of coastal habitats and climate change.
3. These threats have a strong impact on the lives and livelihoods of those who depend on marine ecosystem services, particularly women and men in coastal communities.

Background:

On 20 December 2013, at its 68th session, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed ***3 March, the day of signature of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as UN World Wildlife Day*** to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild animals and plants.

About CITES:

The ***Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)*** is an ***international regulatory treaty between 183 party states***.

It was ***formed in 1973 and regulates the international trade in over 35,000 wild species of plants and animals***.

The focus of the convention is not solely on the protection of species. It ***also promotes controlled trade that is not detrimental to the sustainability of wild species***.

How does CITES work?

The convention works primarily through a system of classification and licensing.

Wild species are ***categorised in Appendices I to III***. This often reflects species' threat status on the Red List of the IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species first created in 1964.

1. ***Appendix I*** prohibits trade in species classified as highly endangered.
2. ***Appendix II*** allows trade under very specific conditions. This requires exporting countries obtain a permit, but not the importing country.
3. ***Appendix III*** species require only a certificate of origin to be traded.

National CITES management authorities may issue permits once scientific authorities show non-detriment findings. In other words, scientific evidence must demonstrate that species sustainability will not be adversely affected by trade. Where data is lacking, the precautionary principle applies.

CITES is legally binding on state parties to the convention, which are obliged to adopt their own domestic legislation to implement its goals.

Paper 3:

| Topics Covered:

1. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

PSBloansin59minutes.com

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Key features and significance of the portal.

Context: **PSBloansin59minutes.com** launched three months ago has emerged as the **largest online lending platform**, according to a report by global financial firm Credit Suisse.

About the Portal “PSBloansin59min”:

The portal was launched in November **to provide credit of up to Rs 1 crore to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in just 59 minutes.**

It is one of its kind platforms in MSME segment which **integrates advanced fintech to ensure seamless loan approval and management.** The loans are undertaken without human intervention till sanction and or disbursement stage.

How it works?

1. The Portal sets a new benchmark in loan processing and reduces the turnaround time from 20-25 days to 59 minutes. Subsequent to this in principle approval, the loan will be disbursed in 7-8 working days.
 2. The solution uses sophisticated algorithms to read and analyse data points from various sources such as IT returns, GST data, bank statements, MCA21 etc. in less than an hour while capturing the applicant's basic details.
 3. The system simplifies the decision making process for a loan officer as the final output provides a summary of credit, valuation and verification on a user-friendly dashboard in real time.
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Paper 2:

| Topics Covered:

1. Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-

governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)

What to study?

- ***For Prelims: Key features of NCMC.***
- ***For Mains: Significance of and the need for NCMC.***

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently launched a **National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)**.

Key features:

1. Dubbed as '**One Nation One Card**', the inter-operable transport card would **allow the holders to pay for their bus travel, toll taxes, parking charges, retail shopping and even withdraw money.**
2. **This card runs on RuPay card.** With the advent of this indigenously-developed and one-of-its-kind card, the country is no longer required to be dependent on foreign technology.
3. **The stored value on card supports offline transaction across all travel needs** with minimal financial risk to involved stakeholders.
4. **Ministry of housing & urban affairs** brought to the fore the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) to enable seamless travel by different metros and other transport systems across the country besides retail shopping and purchases.

Need for and significance of NCMC:

- Public transport is extensively used across India as the economical and convenient mode of commuting for all classes of society. Cash continues to be the most preferred mode of fare payments across the public transport.
- **However, there are multiple challenges associated with the cash payment such as cash handling, revenue leakages, cash reconciliation etc.**
- Various initiatives have been taken by transit operators to automate and digitize the fare collection using Automatic Fare Collection System (AFC).
- The introduction of closed loop cards issued by these operators helped to digitize the fare collection to a significant extent. **However, the restricted usability of these payment instruments limits the digital adoption by customers.**

Relevant articles from various News Papers:

Paper 2 and 3:

| Topics Covered:

1. Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.
2. Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology

and developing new technology.

ISRO's Young Scientist programme

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Key features and significance of ISRO's Young Scientist programme.

Context: ISRO has launched a special programme for school children called Yuva Vigyani Karyakram or Young Scientist Programme.

Highlights of the programme:

1. The programme aims at ***imparting basic knowledge on space technology, space science and space applications to the younger ones*** with the intent of arousing their interest in the emerging areas of space activities.
2. Under the programme, ***three students each will be selected to participate in it every year from each state and union territory***, covering CBSE, ICSE and state syllabus.
3. ***The eligibility for being chosen for the programme includes those students who have finished 8th standard and are currently studying in the 9th standard.***
4. The selection will be based on the academic performance and extracurricular activities of the students, as per the selection criteria already circulated to the chief secretaries of the states and administrators of Union Territories.
5. The students belonging to rural areas have been given special weightage under the selection criteria set by ISRO.

Sources: toi.

Paper 3:

| Topics Covered:

1. Conservation related issues.

The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: About the Declaration on Asian Rhinos, related facts on Asian Rhinos, the need for their conservation.

Context: India and four rhino range nations have signed a declaration '***The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019***' for the conservation and protection of the species at the recently held Second Asian Rhino Range Countries meeting.

2nd Asian Rhino Range Countries meeting was held at New Delhi and organised by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of Government of India in collaboration with the IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group, WWF- India and Aaranyak.

Key facts:

- India will collaborate with Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia to increase the population of three species of Asian rhinos, including the Greater one-horned rhinoceros found in the Indian sub-continent.
- The declaration was signed to conserve and review the population of the Greater one-horned, Javan and Sumatran rhinos every four years to reassess the need for joint actions to secure their future.
- The declaration includes undertaking studies on health issues of the rhinos, their potential diseases and taking necessary steps; collaborating and strengthening wildlife forensics for the purpose of investigation and strengthening of transboundary collaboration among India, Nepal and Bhutan for the conservation and protection of the Greater one-horned rhino.

The twelve point strategic actions outlined the following actions:

1. To collaborate to strengthen protection regimes, strategic information gathering, and real time sharing of actionable information on rhino crime and its horn trade to secure the rhino population within and between range countries.
2. To initiate research on various habitat parameters including invasive species threatening the suitable habitats of Asian rhinos and take appropriate steps to optimally manage the habitats.
3. To explore possibilities of expanding rhino ranges within country or between rhino range countries for optimal population management.
4. To strengthen transboundary collaboration among India, Nepal, and Bhutan for the greater one-horned rhino conservation and protection.
5. To identify connectivity and corridors across international boundaries and keep them functional, safe and secure for free movement of Asian rhinos and other wildlife.
6. To increase the engagement of the local communities as stewards to secure the future of rhinos in range countries.
7. To initiate proactive monitoring on potential adverse impacts of climate change on rhino health and their habitats in range countries.
8. To undertake studies on Rhino health issues & potential diseases and take necessary steps for management intervention.
9. To regularly organize exposure visits for managers and frontline staffs of the rhino range countries and to document the best practices for wider dissemination.
10. To collaborate and strengthen wildlife forensics for the purpose of investigation.
11. To accelerate natural and conservation breeding of critically endangered Sumatran rhino including best use of all available individuals and technologies.
12. To call to the attention of all countries that possible opening of international trade of rhino horn and other derivatives will have a severe detrimental impact on rhino populations in Asian rhino range countries.

Key facts:

The greater one-horned rhinoceros is the largest of the three Asian rhinos and, together with African white rhinos, is the largest of all rhino species. It is ***listed as Vulnerable*** on the IUCN Red List. With at least half of the total population, India's Kaziranga National Park remains the key reserve for this species.

Two species of rhino in Asia—Javan and Sumatran—are critically endangered.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3:

| Topics Covered:

1. Conservation and pollution related issues.

Crop burning raises risk of respiratory illness threefold, says IFPRI study

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Crop burning- why, concerns, effects on environment and health, their regulation and the need for a comprehensive policy on this.

Context: The burning of agricultural residue — a contributor to north India's winter pollution — increases the risk of respiratory illnesses threefold for those who experience it. It may also be responsible for an annual \$30 billion (approximately ₹2 trillion) loss in terms of days of work lost in States affected by crop burning, according to a study by the ***International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)***.

The findings were based on a study of the health records of 250,000 people in Haryana (which sees a spike in crop burning episodes in winter), and Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, which don't see similar burning episodes. The study is to appear in the peer-reviewed International Journal of Epidemiology.

Highlights of the study:

- In Haryana, 5.4% of surveyed individuals reported suffering from ARI (Acute Respiratory Infection) whereas the reported ARI symptoms in southern States was only 0.1%.
- Among those who reported suffering from ARI, 83% also reported receiving treatment for ARI at a private or public medical facility.
- Whereas high-intensity fire exposure was virtually absent in south India, 17.5% of individuals in Haryana lived in a district where 100 or more fires per day were observed by the satellite.

Background:

For about a decade now, Delhi has been complaining about the practice of stubble burning, holding it responsible for the abysmal air quality in the capital in winter. In 2013, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) issued a directive to Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, asking them to ban stubble burning.

The Environment Ministers of these States as well as top officials at the Centre declared a ***“zero tolerance” policy on the burning of stubble***, which has been estimated to contribute anywhere from 7% to 78% of the particulate matter-emission load in Delhi during winter.

What is stubble burning?

Stubble burning is a common practice followed by farmers to prepare fields for sowing of wheat in November as there is little time left between the harvesting of paddy and sowing of wheat. ***Stubble burning results in emission of harmful gases such carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide along with particulate matter.***

Concern of the Farmers: Why stubble burning?

- Even though farmers are aware that the burning of straw is harmful to health, ***they do not have alternatives for utilising them effectively.***
- ***The farmers are ill-equipped to deal with waste because they cannot afford the new technology*** that is available to handle the waste material.
- Experts say that with less income due to crop damage, farmers are likely to be inclined to light up their fields to cut costs and not spend on scientific ways of stubble management.
- It costs Rs 1,500-3,000 per acre for stubble management, depending on the equipment and method.

Alternative solutions that can avoid Stubble Burning:

- ***There is great potential for making investments in paddy straw-based power plants*** which can help avoid stubble burning to a large extent and also create employment opportunities.
- ***Incorporation of crop residues in the soil can improve soil moisture and help activate the growth of soil microorganisms*** for better plant growth.
- ***Convert the removed residues into enriched organic manure through composting.***
- ***New opportunities for industrial use such as extraction of yeast protein can be explored through scientific research.***

Need of the hour:

- Unless Financial assistance is to be provided by the Centre for boosting farm mechanisation, it is difficult to completely stop stubble burning.
- States needs to make alternative arrangements for consumption of paddy straw into the soil as per the directions of the NGT.

Sources: the hindu.

Mains Question: What is stubble burning? What measures can be undertaken so that stakeholders are persuaded against undertaking such a practice? Discuss.

Facts for Prelims:

Red Flag 2019:

Context: Red Flag 19 military drill is being held in the US.

Exercise Red Flag is an advanced aerial combat training exercise held several times a year by the United States Air Force. The exercise offers realistic air-combat training for military pilots and other flight crew members from the U.S., NATO and other allied countries.

Summaries of Important Editorials:

Solar powerhouse:

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/solar-powerhouse/article26432189.ece>.

Summary: The editorial discusses about India's rooftop solar power potential, why the outreach among residential consumers is low and what needs to be done.

Context: In February, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved phase 2 of the **grid-connected rooftop solar programme**, with a focus on the residential sector.

Its outreach:

India has set an ambitious target of achieving 40 GW of rooftop solar capacity by 2022. However, while there has been progress on rooftop solar installations among industries and commercial consumers, the uptake among residential consumers has been slow.

Why uptake among residential consumers has been slow?

They don't have enough information about it. There is no single source to access information, evaluate benefits and disadvantages, and examine if any government support (such as a financial subsidy) is available.

Need of the hour:

1. **Devise simple, well-designed and creative ways to disseminate information.** Information must be made easily available to the consumers on the amount of shadow-free roof area needed for generating a unit of electricity and pricing; operating the system, after-sales maintenance and support; and reliable rooftop solar vendors.
2. **The local electricity linesmen, electricity inspectors, and other nodal officials in the electricity department also have key roles to play.** Building their capacities to disseminate such information and handle consumer queries and concerns, and providing basic training in billing and metering for solar power can go a long way in improving consumers' experience.

3. **Objective information must be put out through various avenues**, so that it is accessible to all segments of the population and in local languages. Such awareness drives will reach larger audiences.
4. **Information kiosks** can be set up in public institutions like banks to offer information on the technology, as well as on practical issues such as guidance on selecting vendors.
5. **A robust feedback mechanism** can be put in place for consumers to share their experiences with others.
6. **Resident welfare associations (RWAs) can tie up with vendors to organise demonstration programmes**, so that consumers can observe, operate and understand how the system works.
7. Awareness building sessions need to be **socially inclusive and should take place during periods when consumers are likely to be at home**.