

## **General Studies-2**

### **Civil Services Day**

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today addressed Civil Servants on the occasion of Civil Services Day. He said the occasion is one of Appreciation, Evaluation and Introspection. He described the Prime Minister's Award as a step towards motivating civil servants, and congratulated the awardees. He said the awards also indicate the priorities of the Government.

#### ***About the Civil Services Day:***

- The Government of India celebrates April 21 every year as 'Civil Services day' as an occasion for the civil servants to rededicate themselves to the cause of citizen and renew their commitments to public service and excellence in work.
- This date is chosen to commemorate the day when first Home Minister of Independent India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel addressed the probationers of Administrative Services Officers in 1947 at Metcalf House, Delhi.
- As part of Civil Servant Day, Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration are presented to Districts/Implementing Units for implementation of Priority programme and innovation categories.

### **Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance**

#### **Why in News?**

President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday night promulgated Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance that will allow the government to confiscate properties and assets of loan defaulters who flee the country.

#### **About the Ordinance:**

- The provisions of the ordinance will apply for economic offenders who refuse to return, persons against whom an arrest warrant has been issued for a scheduled offence as well as willful bank loan defaulters with outstanding of over ₹100 crore.
- It provides for confiscating assets even without a conviction and paying off lenders by selling off the fugitive's properties.
- Such economic offenders will be tried under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).
- The ordinance defines a fugitive economic offender as a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued for committing offence like counterfeiting government stamps or currency, cheque dishonour for insufficiency of funds, money laundering, and transactions defrauding creditors.

According to the ordinance, a director or deputy director (appointed under the PMLA, 2002) may file an application before a special court (designated under the 2002 Act) to declare a person as a fugitive economic offender.

Appeals against the orders of the special court will lie before the high court.

### **General Studies-3**

#### **Sunderban to get Ramsar tag**

The Sunderban Reserve Forest, spread of 4,260 sq. km. with over 2,000 sq. km. of mangrove forests and creeks, is likely to be declared a Ramsar Site soon.

Being conferred the status of a wetland of international importance will not only be a matter of pride for the Sunderbans but also bring a lot of international scientific attention and intervention to the area.

#### **About Sunderban Reserve:**

The Indian Sunderbans, with 2,114 sq. km. of mangrove forests, comprise almost 43% of the mangrove cover in the country according to a 2017 Forest Survey of India report.

Other than the forests, home to about 100 Royal Bengal tigers, the creeks and river systems of the Sunderbans are also part of the reserve forest and once conferred a Ramsar site status, it will be the largest protected wetland in the country.

Other than threats such as climate change, sea level rise, widespread construction and clearing of mangrove forests for fisheries is posing a danger to the Sunderbans.

#### **About Ramsar Sites:**

A **Ramsar Site** is a wetland site designated of international importance under the **Ramsar Convention**.

The Convention on Wetlands, known as the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental environmental treaty established in 1971 by UNESCO, and coming into force in 1975. It provides for national action and international cooperation regarding the conservation of wetlands, and wise sustainable use of their resource.

Ramsar identifies wetlands of international importance, especially those providing waterfowl habitat.

In 2016 there are 2,231 Ramsar Sites, protecting 214,936,005 hectares (531,118,440 acres). 169 national governments are currently participating.

There are currently 26 sites in India recognised as Ramsar wetland sites of international importance, including the East Kolkata Wetlands also in West Bengal

## **Sulphur removal with Bacterial Help:**

Using novel bacterial strains, scientists have successfully removed sulphur from fossil fuels such as petroleum and coal.

Sulphur is one of the major pollutants emitted during the combustion of fossil fuels.

Scientists from CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) in Bhubaneswar used four bacterial strains that use dibenzothiophene (an organic sulphur compound which is a major contaminant of fossil fuel) as an energy source thereby getting rid of the sulphur.

The selected bacteria were grown in a medium supplemented with dibenzothiophene and other nutrients required for growth.

They found that four bacteria were able to use almost 99% of the sulphur compound in just 10 days

The new process is also eco-friendly and economical, and these new bacterial strains can be potentially explored for the removal of sulphur from fossil fuels on a commercial scale.

## **Earth Day**

### **Why in News?**

'On EarthDay, PM addressing the nation asked to reaffirm our commitment towards creating a better planet for our future generations.

He asked to work together to mitigate the menace of climate change. This would be a great tribute to our beloved Mother Earth.

### **About Earth Day**

**Earth Day** is an annual event celebrated on April 22.

Worldwide, various events are held to demonstrate support for [environmental protection](#).

First celebrated in 1970, Earth Day events in more than 193 countries. are now coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network.

This year focus is on beating *plastic pollution*.

## **Lunar "Gateway" program.**

### **Why in News?**

National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (Nasa) goal of returning to the moon should see a major push in early 2019, when the agency awards its first contract for the lunar "Gateway" program.

### **About the Programme:**

- The Lunar Orbital Platform-Gateway is Nasa's planned "staging" area intended for studies of the moon and the deep-space environment.
- Eventually, it will function as a way station for astronauts travelling to and from Mars.
- The Gateway would also further Nasa's goal of another human landing on the moon and will help determine whether water near the surface could be used to manufacture propellant for deep-space missions.
- The moon's gravity could also help a spacecraft reduce the blistering speeds used for six-month voyages back-and-forth to Mars, thus facilitating re-entry to Earth's atmosphere.
- Trips to the "gateway" will be aboard the Orion, a spacecraft being assembled by Lockheed Martin Corp., with the service module being supplied by the European Space Agency.
- The Orion's first flight, without crew, is scheduled for next year. The craft will serve as the command deck when it's docked with the platform.