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General Studies-1

Government to team up with Google for flood forecasting

Central Water Commission (CWC), India's apex technical organization in the field of Water Resources, has entered into a Collaboration Agreement with Google.

What are the Arrangements?

CWC would use state-of-the-art advances made by Google in the in the field of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and geo spatial mapping for effective management of water resources particularly in the field of flood forecasting and dissemination of flood related information to the masses widely using the dissemination platforms developed by Google.

This initiative is likely to help crisis management agencies to deal extreme hydrological events in a better manner.

Under this Agreement, CWC and Google will share technical expertise in the fields of artificial intelligence, machine learning, geospatial mapping and analysis of hydrological observation data to collaborate on

- (i) improving flood prediction systems, which will help provide location-targeted, actionable flood warnings,
- (ii) high priority research project utilizing Google Earth Engine to help visualize and improve flood management and
- (iii) a cultural project to build online exhibitions on the Rivers of India .

Benefits:

The initiative on flood forecasting is likely to meet the much awaited demand of the inhabitants of the flood prone areas for inundation warnings with sufficient lead time.

Till 2016, CWC was disseminating flood levels with maximum lead time of one day.

The collaborative arrangement is likely to result in saving of crore of rupees which otherwise would have to be spent by the government on acquiring high resolution DEM, high end computational resources and developing dissemination platforms widely used by the masses.



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This would enable the Government as well as disaster management organisations to identify well in advance the locations and population, which are at risk from floods and require warnings and information.

This collaborative initiative is expected to be a milestone in flood management and in mitigating the flood losses.

About Central Water Commission:

- Central Water Commission is a premier Technical Organization of India in the field of Water Resources and is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.
- The Commission is entrusted with the general responsibilities of initiating, coordinating and furthering in consultation of the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for purpose of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply and Water Power Development. It also undertakes the investigations, construction and execution of any such schemes as required.

NATIONAL YOGA OLYMPIAD-2018 organized by NCERT begins in New Delhi today

A 3-day National Yoga Olympiad was inaugurated at the National Council of Educational Research and Training in CIET in New Delhi today by Mr. Eric Falt, Director and UNESCO Representative of the New Delhi Cluster Office for India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, the Maldives and Sri Lanka.

This is the third consecutive year of National Yoga Olympiad of NCERT and this year about 500 students from 26 States and 4 RIEs are participating in the Olympiad as compared to the participation of students from 25 States/UTs last year.

Importance of Initiative:

Professor Saroj Yadav Dean, NCERT narrating the journey of Yoga Olympiad highlighted the importance of yoga in the development of physical, mental and spiritual health. She elaborated about the objectives, target group, yogic practices included and the criteria for judging.



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She stressed that Yoga Olympiad is an instrument to generate awareness about yoga among children and building team spirit and confidence.

Two books – **Joy of Theatre** and **Sangeet**— training packages were released on the occasion.

General Studies-2

International Classification of Diseases

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday released its new International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11).

About ICD:

The ICD is the foundation for identifying health trends and statistics worldwide, and contains around 55,000 unique codes for injuries, diseases and causes of death.

It provides a common language that allows health professionals to share health information across the globe.

It enables WHO to understand so much about what makes people get sick and die, and to take action to prevent suffering and save lives.

It is completely electronic and has a much more user-friendly format. And there has been unprecedented involvement of health care workers who have joined collaborative meetings and submitted proposals.

What is NEW about ICD?

ICD-11 will be presented at the World Health Assembly in May 2019 for adoption by Member States, and will come into effect on 1 January 2022.

The new ICD-11 also reflects progress in medicine and advances in scientific understanding.

The new ICD also includes new chapters, one on traditional medicine: although millions of people use traditional medicine worldwide, it has never been classified in this system.



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Another new chapter on sexual health brings together conditions that were previously categorized in other ways (for instance gender incongruence was listed under mental health conditions) or described differently.

Gaming disorder has been added to the section on addictive disorders.

About WHO:

The **World Health Organization** is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health.

It was established on 7 April 1948, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

The WHO is a member of the United Nations Development Group. Its predecessor, the Health Organization, was an agency of the League of Nations.

Its current priorities include communicable diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, Ebola, malaria and tuberculosis; the mitigation of the effects of non-communicable diseases such as sexual and reproductive health, development, and aging; nutrition, food security and healthy eating; occupational health; substance abuse; and driving the development of reporting, publications, and networking.

The WHO is responsible for the World Health Report, the worldwide World Health Survey, and World Health Day.



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Indo-US 2+2 Meet:

High-stake agreements

Of the three foundational defence pacts between India and the United States, only one has been signed

COMCASA: The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement facilitates transfer of encrypted communication systems, and is a key requirement for the U.S. to share high tech military hardware

COMCASA and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (**BECA**), which facilitates exchange of geospatial information, are pacts not signed yet due to severe criticism

- It was feared that signing these agreements would mean compromising India's age-old military ties with Russia and access to their weaponry systems

LEMOA: Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement. India signed the pact in 2016. The agreement gives militaries of both the nations access to each other's military facilities, without making it automatic or obligatory, mostly for the purposes of refuelling and replenishment



Indian and U.S. experts began a three-day consultations on Monday to find meeting points in bilateral relations in preparation for the first-ever meeting of the Ministers for External Affairs and Defence (2+2 Format) with their U.S. counterparts next month.

Key focus areas of the meeting

Finding a breakthrough in concluding the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), one of the four foundational agreements that helps the U.S. to intensify its defence cooperation with a partner nation.

Indications emerging from the U.S. side is that they are keen to stress the importance given to India in its Indo-Pacific strategy.

Apart from the foundational agreements, the U.S. is also keen on a broad based intelligence-sharing agreement with India as the two countries have vastly expanded their counter-terror cooperation.



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In this context, the fourth foundational agreement, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA), will be significant.

COMCASA and BECA are the two foundational agreements that India is yet to sign.

It has already signed the General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).

Benefits to India:

The most significant of them is LEMOA, which gives both nations access to each other's military facilities. But it does not make it automatic or obligatory

The COMCASA will facilitate transfer of encrypted communications systems.

The agreements are a key requirement by Washington for sharing hi-tech military hardware, especially armed drones which the U.S. is willing to supply to India.

Sale of armed drones is high on the agenda of the 2+2 dialogue.

There have been widespread expectations that a broad understanding could be reached ahead of the 2+2 dialogue.

Progress Made:

As part of improving high tech cooperation, India and the U.S. announced the ambitious Defence Technology and Trade Initiative and India was designated a major defence partner.

The U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) was recently renamed Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), symbolic of the significance U.S. attaches to India in the region.

About 2+2 Dialogue:

- In foreign policy parleys, 'Two plus Two' is the term used for the institutionalisation of a dialogue mechanism between two countries consisting of the key ministries of defence & external affairs.



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- The 2+2 format draws on a framework Japan used for its strategic interactions with the US, France, Russia and Australia.
- India & Japan too have a similar mechanism between them since 2010.

General Studies-3

RBI alters 'relative' definition

Why in News?

Concerned over funds sent abroad under the 'maintenance of close relative' category of the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has narrowed the definition of relatives to check the flow of funds.

The new definition:

RBI has aligned the definition of 'relative' with the definition given in Companies Act, 2013 instead of Companies Act, 1956. Hence, funds under the 'maintenance of close relative' category can be sent only to immediate relatives such as parents, spouses, children and their spouses.

What necessitated this move?

Outward remittances under maintenance of close relatives shot up to almost \$3 billion in 2017-18 from a mere \$174 million in 2013-14. In fact, funds sent under this category have more than doubled since 2015-16. Overall outward remittances under LRS went up to \$11 billion from \$1 billion in the same period.

About Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS):

Under LRS, all resident individuals can freely remit \$250,000 overseas every financial year for a permissible set of current or capital account transactions.

Permitted: Remittances are permitted for overseas education, travel, medical treatment and purchase of shares and property, apart from maintenance of relatives living abroad, gifting and donations. Individuals can also open,



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maintain and hold foreign currency accounts with overseas banks for carrying out transactions.

Not permitted: However, the rules do not allow remittances for trading on the foreign exchange markets, margin or margin calls to overseas exchanges and counterparties and the purchase of Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds issued by Indian companies abroad. Sending money to certain countries and entities is also barred. Under LRS, people can't send money to countries identified as 'non cooperative' by the Financial Action Task Force. Remittances are also prohibited to entities identified as posing terrorist risks.

Fifth Data Center to be Opened:

The Centre will set up the country's biggest data centre in Bhopal with a capacity to host five lakh virtual servers, Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said on Monday.

The data centre, which will take about two years to come up, will be set up by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

This will be the fifth National Data Centre after the ones at Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Hyderabad and Pune. These National Data Centres host government websites, services and applications.

What is the Need for Data Center?

India's digital ecosystem has got a momentum of its own and this process is going to be irreversible.

- As far as data privacy is concerned, we have always said that data must be protected, and India should become a good centre of data analysis..
- With the increased expectations from citizens for online services and the number of e-Governance Projects being launched by the Government, the Data Centre requirements are growing exponentially. There is a need to set up strategic infrastructure that facilitates high availability, quick scalability, efficient management & optimized utilization of resources.



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- *To fulfil this requirement, NIC has set up state-of-the-art National Data Centres to provide services to the Government at all levels. These Data Centres combine round-the-clock operations and management of systems with onsite skilled personnel. The National Data Centres host Government websites, services and apps.*

About NIC

NIC, under the Department of Information Technology of the Government of India, is a premier Science and Technology Organization, at the forefront of the active promotion and implementation of Information and Communication Technology(ICT) solutions in the government.