

Dragon cultivation

- Following in the footsteps of the Gujarat and Haryana governments, the Centre has decided to promote the cultivation of dragon fruit, known as a “super fruit” for its health benefits.
- The Centre feels that considering the cost effectiveness and global demand for the fruit due to its nutritional values, its cultivation can be expanded in India.
- The Gujarat government recently renamed dragon fruit as kalam [lotus] and announced an incentive for farmers who cultivate it
- The fruit is considered good for diabetic patients, low in calories and high in nutrients like iron, calcium, potassium and zinc
- The benefit is that this fruit can be cultivated in degraded and rainfed land, the fruit plant doesn't need much water and can be cultivated on dry land.

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

- Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root &

tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa, and bamboo.

- While Government of India (GOI) contributes 85% of the total outlay for developmental programmes in all the states except the states in North East and Himalayas, 15% share is contributed by State Governments.
- In the case of North Eastern States and Himalayan States, GOI contribution is 100%. Similarly, for development of bamboo and programmes of National Horticulture Board (NHB), Coconut Development Board (CDB), Central Institute for Horticulture (CIH), Nagaland and the National Level Agencies (NLA), GOI contribution will be 100%.

Main objectives of Mission

- Promote holistic growth of horticulture sector, including bamboo and coconut through area based regionally differentiated strategies, which includes research, technology promotion, extension, post harvest management, processing and marketing, in consonance with comparative advantage of each State/region and its diverse agro-climatic features;

- Encourage aggregation of farmers into farmer groups like FIGs/FPOs and FPCs to bring economy of scale and scope.
- Enhance horticulture production, augment farmers, income and strengthen nutritional security;
- Improve productivity by way of quality germplasm, planting material and water use efficiency through Micro Irrigation.
- Support skill development and create employment generation opportunities for rural youth in horticulture and post-harvest management, especially in the cold chain sector.

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(Bharat-NCAP)

- Bharat New Car Assessment Program (Bharat-NCAP).
- It would accord vehicles a star rating based on their performance in crash tests.
- They are intended to increase the export-worthiness of vehicles and competition on safety parameters among manufacturers, as well as instill consumer confidence in their safety.
- “Bharat NCAP will prove to be a critical instrument in making our

automobile industry Aatmanirbhar with the mission of making India the Number 1 automobile hub in the world,”

What is the purpose of an NCAP?

- New Car Assessment Programs (NCAP) provides globally reliable information about the crash safety of a vehicle based on certain common criteria and procedures.
- This then helps vehicles acquire a foothold in international markets
- A car may have attained a good rating elsewhere but it might not be the case in another geography because of potentially separate manufacturing origins and quality.

How would the vehicles be evaluated?

- The voluntary Bharat NCAP would assign vehicles between one and five stars on parameters such as Adult Occupant Protection (AOP), Child Occupant Protection (COP), and Safety Assist Technologies (SAT).
- Bharat NCAP would conduct its frontal-offset crash testing at 64 kmph instead of the prevailing 56 kmph norm.
- Offset collisions are those where one side of a vehicle’s front and not the full width hits the barrier.

- Even though the existing regulations adhere to United Nations Regulation 94 for collision testing, its absence in domestic testing norms, and inadequate side protection in vehicles (such as airbags), have been often cited as reasons for the poor performance of Indian vehicles at NCAPs.
- If the Bharat NCAP is implemented, domestic testing agencies would conduct tests for M1 category of vehicles, that is, passenger vehicles having not more than eight seats in addition to the driver's seat, and weighing less than 3.50 tonnes imported or domestically manufactured.
- If cleared, it would be applicable from April 1, 2023.
- Since May, SpiceJet saw incidents of cracked windshield, an engine shut down and an engine failure, smoke in cabin, a bird strike, a pressurisation snag and a glitch in the weather radar.
- It also saw an accident, when the airline's Boeing 737-800 flew into turbulence resulting in injuries to several passengers.

How are incidents and accidents classified?

- The Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017 categorize occurrences into "accidents", "serious incidents" and "incidents".
 - An accident is one where a passenger is fatally or seriously injured, or when the aircraft sustains structural damage or if the aircraft is missing or inaccessible.
 - However, not all kinds of physical damage to the aircraft are considered accidents such as when only one of the two engines fail, damage to propellers, wingtips, antennas, probes, vanes, tires, brakes, wheels, panels, landing gear doors, wind screens, the aircraft skin or minor damages to main rotor blades, tail rotor blades, landing gear, and those resulting from hail or bird strike.
- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Wednesday served a show-cause notice on SpiceJet following at least eight mid-air incidents and an accident since May.
 - The DGCA has blamed "poor internal safety oversight" and "inadequate maintenance actions" for the fall in safety standards.

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Aeroplane safety

- A “serious incident” means an occurrence where there is a high probability of an accident and an "incident" is one which could affect the safety of flight operations.

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Amendment to environment laws

- The Union Environment Ministry, tasked with safeguarding India’s forests and its environmental assets, proposes to amend sections of key environmental legislation and make them less threatening to potential violators.
- India has eight cornerstone pieces of legislation that define a regulatory framework to ensure that natural resources are not wantonly exploited, acts of pollution are apprehended and there is a mechanism to punish and deter violators.
- Under provisions in the existing legislation, violators are punishable with imprisonment up to five years or with a fine up to one lakh rupees, or with both.
- Were violations to continue, there is an additional fine of up to ₹5,000 for every day during which such failure or contravention continues after the conviction.
- There is also a provision for jail terms to extend to seven years.
- Under the new amendments proposed, the Ministry says it wants to weed out “fear of imprisonment for simple violations”, and therefore have such violations invite only monetary fines.
- However, serious environmental crimes that cause grave injury or death would invite imprisonment under the Indian Penal Code.
- These penalties would be decided by an ‘adjudication officer’ and transferred to an ‘Environment Protection Fund’.
- Moreover, the quantum of potential fines has been raised from beyond the one lakh rupees to as much as five crore rupees.
- The proposed amendments do not cover the destruction of forests and wildlife, which make up a substantial fraction of environmental crime, and would continue to invite existing penal provisions.
- Research on environmental crime in the United States and Europe suggests that fining is the most common mode of punishment
- An analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment found that Indian courts took between 9-33 years to

clear a backlog of cases for environmental violations. Starting with 2018, close to 45,000 cases were pending for trial and another 35,000 cases were added in that year.

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Monsoon getting Hotter

- The monsoon has usually meant respite from the heat, but temperatures during these months June to September are seeing a rise, says an analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), an environment group
- At an all-India level, average temperatures during the season are 0.3 degrees Celsius higher than the average summer temperatures (March to May) when compared from 1951 to 1980.
- In the past decade, 2012-2021, this anomaly has risen to 0.4 degrees Celsius. India's average temperature has risen 0.62 degrees Celsius from 1901 to 2020
- India's average temperature has risen 0.62 degrees Celsius from 1901 to 2020, according to India Meteorological Department records.
- However, in a breakdown of this rise, the CSE analysis shows it has

translated to summer temperatures rising slower than not only monsoon but even post-monsoon (October-December) and winter (January and February) temperatures.

- The increase in these two seasons are 0.79 degrees and 0.58 degrees, respectively, whereas summer temperatures has risen only 0.49 degrees.

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