

Monsoon and mountains

- Monsoon rainfall over India is 8% more than what is usual for this time of the year.
- While this might bode well for agriculture in some regions, it also means floods and concentrated downpours with devastating consequences.
- The monsoon compresses around 75% of India's annual rainfall into four months and unevenly waters the country's highly diverse terrain.
- It is, therefore, inevitable that some spots are far more vulnerable and bear a disproportionate impact of climate fury.
- A recent report released by Himachal Pradesh's Department of Environment, Science, and Technology underline that mountain areas are highly vulnerable to natural disasters, where development over the years has compounded the problem by upsetting the ecological balance of various physical processes.
- Monsoon rain patterns are being disrupted leading to a rise in cloudburst-like events as well as a rise in the frequency of high-energy cyclones and droughts.
- One strategy adopted by the government has been to improve the system of early warning forecasts
- In recent years, improvements in early warnings for incoming cyclones have helped state agencies evacuate and rehabilitate the most vulnerable, but such success has not been observed for floods.
- While the inherent risks of infrastructure development in hills and unstable terrain is well understood, these are often elided by authorities in the name of balancing the demands of the people for better infrastructure and services.
- The increased risk and cost to such projects and infrastructure should be factored in when they are tendered out by the government, and scientific advice regarding development ought to be strictly adhered to.

THE HINDU

Kerala Savari

- Kerala has soft launched 'Kerala Savari', the country's first online taxi service owned by a State government, to ensure fair and decent service to passengers along with fair remuneration to auto-taxi workers.

- Operated by the Motor Workers Welfare Board under the aegis of the Labour Department, the Kerala Savari ensures safe travel for the public at 'government approved fares' without any 'surge pricing.'
- Kerala Savari only charges an 8% service charge in addition to the rate set by the government.
- Of the 8% service charge, 6% will go to the technical partner, and the remaining 2% will go to the implementation of this scheme and for providing promotional incentives to passengers and drivers.

Why has the State government decided to launch this initiative?

- The alleged unfair trade practices and violation of consumer rights by private app-based cab aggregators have come as a major concern for governments.
- Recently, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) had issued notices to cab aggregators Ola and Uber for unfair trade practices and violation of consumer rights.
- Passengers often complain about the deficiency in services including charging exorbitant fares during peak hours, unprofessional behavior from the part of drivers, lack of proper response from customer support, and undue levy of cancellation charges despite the cab driver refusing to accept the ride booked by the passenger etc.
- It is against this backdrop that the Kerala government has decided to come up with an app-based platform to offer auto-taxi service for the public.
- Kerala Savari is a safe and reliable online service for women, children, and senior citizens.
- A police clearance certificate is mandatory for drivers joining the scheme apart from the required proper training.

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Natural farming

- Natural Farming is a chemical-free alias traditional farming method.
- It is considered as agroecology-based diversified farming system which integrates crops, trees, and livestock with functional biodiversity.
- In India, Natural farming is promoted as Bharatiya Prakritik Krishi Paddhati Programme (BPKP) under centrally sponsored scheme- Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).
- BPKP is aimed at promoting traditional indigenous practices

which reduces externally purchased inputs.

- It is largely based on on-farm biomass recycling with major stress on biomass mulching, use of on-farm cow dung-urine formulations; periodic soil aeration and exclusion of all synthetic chemical inputs.
- According to HLPE Report, natural farming will reduce dependency on purchased inputs and will help to ease smallholder farmers from credits burden.
- The BPKP programme has been adopted in State of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala.
- Several studies have reported the effectiveness of natural farming-BPKP in terms of increase in production, sustainability, saving of water use, improvement in soil health and farmland ecosystem.
- It is considered as a cost- effective farming practices with scope for raising employment and rural development.

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Tomato flu

- A new infection dubbed tomato flu, or tomato fever, has been detected in India mostly among children

younger than five, according to a report in the Lancet Respiratory Journal.

- The primary symptoms of tomato flu are similar to those of chikungunya, which include high fever, rashes, and intense pain in the joints.
- As with other viral infections, further symptoms include fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, dehydration, swelling of joints, body aches, and common influenza-like symptoms, which are similar to those manifested in dengue.
- As tomato flu is similar to chikungunya and dengue as well as hand, foot, and mouth disease, the treatment is also similar.
- Similar to other types of influenza, tomato flu is very contagious and children are at an increased risk of exposure as viral infections are common in this age group and the spread is likely to be through close contact, the report noted
- “The ‘tomato flu’ is caused by Coxsackie virus A 16.
- It belongs to Enterovirus family.
- Coxsackievirus 16 (CA16) is one of the major pathogens associated with hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) in infants and young children
- CA16 was first isolated in South Africa in 1951.

- It is a member of Human enterovirus A (HEV-A) species of the Enterovirus genus of Picornaviridae.

THE HINDU

India Iran sign pact

- As talks over the development of Chabahar Port gain momentum, India and Iran on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) mutually recognising certificates of competency in unlimited voyages of seafarers from both the nations.as per the provisions of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping for Seafarers, 1978
- The signing of the MoU is aimed at smoothening the movement of seafarers from both countries.

Importance of Chabahar Port

- Chabahar Port is slated to be India's gateway for trade with central Asian and European nations, along with increased engagement with Russia, once its potential is leveraged by linking it to INSTC.
- It was developed with Indian assistance and is currently operated by state-owned India Ports Global.

- The role of Chabahar as a trade multiplier for the region.
- India Ports Global Private Ltd. (IPGPL) assumed the operations of Shahid Beheshti Port, it has handled over 4.8 million tonnes of bulk cargo.
- With close cooperation between India's IPGPL and Iranian stakeholders including Iran's Port and Maritime Organisation, Iranian Customs Administration and the Chabahar Free Zone Authority, the Shahid Beheshti Port Authority & other stakeholders, the port is likely to act as a catalyst to unlock the huge trade potential in the region.
- ULV pesticides to Iran via the Chabahar port in an effort to mitigate locust threat to agriculture and enhance food security in the region.

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