

May – 17

TNPSC BITS

- ❖ The United Nations Security Council's 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee has imposed sanctions on ISIS-Khorasan.
 - ISIS-K is a terror group which was formed in 2015 by a Pakistani national and is also known as South Asian branch of ISIS.
- ❖ An integral part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS) holds the largest tiger population in Kerala. Of the total 176 tigers in the State, 75 were identified from the WWS.
 - This biodiversity hotspot is bounded by protected area network of Nagarhole and Bandipur of Karnataka in the northeast and Mudumalai of Tamilnadu on the southeast.
- ❖ Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has started a pilot scheme to extend financial assistance of up to ₹10 crore to new-age fintech non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) engaged in financing small businesses and other income-generating activities.
 - Fintech NBFCs are digital loan companies. They leverage information technology to provide fast and convenient access to funding.
- ❖ Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sunil Lanba inaugurated Indian Navy's first full-fledged Service Selection Board (SSB) at Diamond Harbour, near Kolkata.
 - Vice Admiral Karambir Singh, the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, has attended the inauguration.
- ❖ Scientists have found traces of radioactive carbon in marine organisms that inhabit the Mariana Trench, the deepest spot on Earth.
 - This radioactive carbon was released into the atmosphere from 20th-century nuclear bomb tests.
- ❖ National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), HCL Foundation and Indian National Trust for Art and Culture Heritage (INTACH) have signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Plantation of Rudraksha Trees in Uttarakhand under the 'Namami Gange' Programme.



NATIONAL

Project Sparrow

- ❖ Government of India has now launched a new initiative called Project Sparrow.
- ❖ SPARROW stands for Smart Performance Appraisal Report Recording Online Window.
- ❖ It aims for
 - Online writing of Annual Performance Appraisal Reports (APARs) for over 46,000 Group B & C officers of Central Board of Indirect Tax and Customs
 - Enhancing the overall efficiency and morale of the huge workforce working in Central GST and Customs formations of CBIC.
- ❖ Online writing of APARs in SPARROW for IRS (C&CE) Officers has already been implemented in 2016-17.

Child Mortality Rate

- ❖ Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health have published a new study in the Lancet Global Health on the deaths among children under five in India.
- ❖ In 2015 the total number of children under five who died was 1.2 million (47.8 per 1,000)
- ❖ It is the highest in the world.
- ❖ Highest mortality rate was in Assam at 73.1 per 1,000 children. It was 9.7 in Goa.
- ❖ Major causes of death were preterm complications and preventable infectious diseases.
- ❖ Steps like vaccine coverage, improving childbirth and neonatal care can prevent such deaths.

INTERNATIONAL

Underweight Babies

- ❖ According to new research published in the Lancet Global Health, more than 20 million babies were born with a low birthweight (2500 grams or 5.5 pounds).
- ❖ South Asia has almost half of the world's low birthweight livebirths with an estimated 9.8 million in 2015.

- ❖ More than 80% of the world's 2.5 million newborns who die every year are low birthweight.
- ❖ India has made progress in improving newborn care by building 834 newborn care units in the last decade.

Cause and Effect

- ❖ Low birthweight is due to being born too soon (preterm or before 37 weeks of pregnancy) or too small (growth restricted in utero) or both.
- ❖ Causes of low birthweight are
 - maternal age (both adolescents and older women)
 - infections, obesity or undernutrition
 - smoking and environmental exposures
 - multiple pregnancies and non-medical Caesarean sections.
- ❖ Low birthweight babies who survive have a greater risk of stunting and poor development.

Christchurch Call

- ❖ The French President Emmanuel Macron and New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern will launch a new initiative called "Christchurch Call".
- ❖ It is a non-binding set of agreements that a group of governments and major tech companies will sign.
- ❖ It is a first-of-its-kind document as it is signed by both private companies and major governments.
- ❖ It will ask signatory nations to pledge to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content on social media and other online platforms.
- ❖ India has signed it.
- ❖ The Christchurch mosque shootings were two consecutive terrorist attacks at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, during Friday Namaz on 15 March, 2019.

ECONOMY

Digital Effect

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India has put out its vision document for the “Payment and Settlement Systems in India” outlining the roadmap for 2019-2021.
- ❖ The core theme of the vision is ‘Empowering Exceptional (e)Payment Experience’.
- ❖ RBI plans to achieve a highly digital and cash-lite society.
- ❖ It expects payment systems like UPI/IMPS to register average annualised growth of over 100% and NEFT at 40% over the vision period.
- ❖ It projects that the 2,069 crore digital transactions in December 2018 may rise to 8,707 crore in December 2021.
- ❖ Payment Systems Vision 2021 has 36 specific action points and 12 specific outcomes.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

New Gen Plastic

- ❖ A team of US scientists from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory have created new generation recyclable plastic.
- ❖ It is named as Poly Diketoenamine or PDK Plastic.
- ❖ It can be fully recycled into new materials of any colour, shape, or form, without loss of performance or quality.

How is it different?

- ❖ Conventional plastic is made up of polymers.
- ❖ Polymers are composed of repeating units of shorter carbon-containing compounds called monomers.
- ❖ Additional chemicals added to these monomers creates unbreakable bond.
- ❖ Even the most recyclable plastic, PET (polyethylene terephthalate) is only recycled at a rate of 20-30 per cent.
- ❖ But the monomers in PDK plastic can be fully separated from compounded additives by dunking the material in a highly acidic solution.



STATES

No Onion No Garlic No Egg

- ❖ Karnataka government has contracted the Akshaya Pathra foundation to provide nutritious mid-day meals to school children.
- ❖ The foundation has avoided egg, onion and garlic in food on Hindu religious grounds.
- ❖ The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) has submitted a report to government favouring the organisation.
- ❖ Activists are against the report and the poor-quality nutritious food provided to children.

About NIN

- ❖ NIN was founded by Sir Robert McCarrison in the year 1918 at the Pasteur Institute, Coonoor.
- ❖ NIN is recognized for its pioneering studies on various aspects of nutrition research, with special reference to protein energy malnutrition (PEM).
- ❖ It was shifted to Hyderabad in 1958.

MISCELLANEOUS

Voynich Manuscript

- ❖ Gerard Chesire of the University of Bristol has finally claimed to have decoded the Voynich manuscript.
- ❖ He claims it to be proto-Romance language used in the Mediterranean during the Medieval period.
- ❖ It was compiled by Dominican nuns as a source of reference for Queen of Aragon, Spain.



Why is it unique?

- ❖ Voynich is a 15th century illustrated codex written in an extinct language.
- ❖ It is written on vellum (calf skin) with text and illustrations.
- ❖ Cryptographers, linguists and computer programmes could not decipher it for nearly a century.
