

## Current Affairs of the Day

### PAPER 2:

#### ➤ Polity & Governance:

1. India participates in PMNCH Accountability Breakfast
2. About PMNCH
3. Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) Movement

### PAPER 3:

#### ➤ Economy:

1. ESG Funds Becoming Popular in India
2. About ESG Fund
3. Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2020 passed

#### ➤ Environment & Biodiversity:

1. Wetlands being identified in Rajasthan to protect biodiversity

#### ➤ Health:

1. Arsenic-affected Habitations Increased
2. Arsenic Poisoning

## India participates in PMNCH Accountability Breakfast

- The Union Ministry for Health and Family Welfare participated in the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) 'Accountability Breakfast' to discuss the issues of maternal and child health.
- The event was co-hosted by the White Ribbon Alliance (WRA) and Every Woman Every Child (EWEC).
- **Theme of the Event:** Protecting gains in Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health from the Covid pandemic.

### Value Added Information

#### PMNCH:

- It is a global health partnership founded in 2005.
- It is hosted at the WHO in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The Accountability Breakfast aims to convert talk into action for the health and rights of women, children and adolescents.

#### Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) Movement:

- **Launched by:** United Nations during the United Nations Millennium Development Goals Summit in September 2010.
- It is a global movement that mobilizes and intensifies international and national action by governments, the private sector, and civil society to address the major health challenges facing women, children, and adolescents around the world.

## ESG Funds Becoming Popular in India

- The ESG funds are increasingly becoming popular in the mutual fund industry in India.

### Value Added Information

#### ESG Fund:

- ESG is a combination of three words – Environment, Social and Governance.
- It is a kind of mutual fund.



- Its investing is used synonymously with sustainable investing or socially responsible investing.
- The ESG fund focuses on companies with environment-friendly practices, ethical business practices and an employee-friendly record while other funds don't.
- The fund is regulated by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- As ESG funds gain momentum in India, companies will be forced to follow better governance, ethical practices, environment-friendly measures and social responsibility.
- The first ESG mutual fund was launched by the State Bank of India – SBI Magnum Equity ESG Fund.

## Wetlands being identified in Rajasthan to protect biodiversity

- The wetlands, which play an important role in the storage of sediment and nutrients, are being identified in Rajasthan for ensuring their utilisation and enabling the local authorities to maintain them.

### Key takeaways:

- While six wetlands are already identified in the State, 52 more have been earmarked for time-bound development.
- Wetlands would be strengthened for increasing vegetation of aquatic plants and protecting biodiversity.
- No waste would be allowed to be dumped at the wetlands and effective steps would be taken for water conservation
- Strict action would be taken against those running submersible pump sets for illegal salt mining in the Sambhar Lake.
- The State Government's Directorate of Environment and Climate Change will function as the secretariat of the State Wetland Authority.
- The fresh and saline lakes supporting unique ecosystems in the State would be protected with the strict implementation of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2019.



## Value Added Information

### About Wetlands:

- They are highly productive ecosystems that provide the world with nearly two-thirds of its fish harvest.
- They play an integral role in the ecology of the watershed.
- They provide an ideal environment for organisms that form the base of the food web and feed many species of aquatic animals.
- They help in carbon sequestration (removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere).
- They provide habitat for animals and plants and support plants and animals that are found nowhere else.
- They are also an important source of ground water recharge.

### Threats to Wetlands:

- Urbanization
- **Agriculture:** Construction of a large number of reservoirs, canals and dams have altered the hydrology of the associated wetlands.
- **Pollution:** Due to mercury from industrial sources
- **Climate Change:** Increased air temperature; increased frequency of storms, droughts, and floods; increased sea level rise
- **Dredging and sand mining:** Dredging of streams lowers the surrounding water table and dries up adjacent wetlands.
- **Exotic Species:** Exotic introduced plant species such as water hyacinth and salvinia clog waterways and compete with native vegetation.

## Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2020 passed

- Lok Sabha has passed the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which decriminalises a number of technical and filing-related corporate offences.

### Key takeaways:

- It allows direct listing of Indian companies on foreign stock exchanges.



- It revokes the criminal provisions added to the Companies Act for violations of provisions of corporate social responsibility rules.
- 48 sections of the Companies Act, 2013 will be amended to decriminalise various offences.
- However, there will be no relaxation for serious offences, including fraud, deceit and those that cause injury to the public.
- There will also be a new chapter on producer organisation which will be helpful for farmer producer organisations (FPOs) in the country.
- 17 provisions in the Companies Act, 2013, have also been amended which paves way for easy and user friendly fulfilment of statutory compliances.

## Arsenic-affected Habitations Increased

- According to data shared in the Parliament, the number of arsenic-affected habitations in India has increased by 145% in the last five years (2015-20).

### Key takeaways:

- India had 1,800 arsenic-affected habitations in 2015.
- This increased to 4,421 habitations as of September 2020.
- Most of the arsenic-affected habitations lie in the Ganga and Brahmaputra alluvial plains – Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh (UP).
- Assam had the highest share of such habitations (1,853), followed by West Bengal (1,383).
- However, the number of fluoride affected habitations has significantly come down.

### Value Added Information

#### Arsenic Poisoning:

- It is naturally present at high levels in the earth's crust and groundwater in a number of countries.
- It is highly toxic in its inorganic form.



- Contaminated water used for drinking, food preparation and irrigation of food crops poses the greatest threat to public health from arsenic.
- Long-term exposure to arsenic can cause cancer, skin disease, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- In early childhood exposure, it may cause reduced cognitive development and increased deaths in young adults.
- According to the WHO's guidelines for drinking water quality (2011), the permissible limit of Arsenic in groundwater is 0.01 mg per litre.

### Fluoride Toxicity:

- Excessive fluoride intake usually occurs through the consumption of groundwater naturally rich in fluoride, particularly in warm climates.
- Such exposure may lead to dental fluorosis (tooth decay) or crippling skeletal fluorosis.