

Current Affairs of the Day

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1. 'Blue Flag' tag for Kasarkod, Padubidri beaches



'Blue Flag' tag for Kasarkod, Padubidri beaches

- Two beaches in Karnataka are among the eight in India that have bagged the coveted eco-label 'Blue Flag' from the international agency, Foundation for Environment Education, Denmark.
- The two are Kasarkod beach near Honnavar in Uttara Kannada and Padubidri beach near Udupi.

Key takeaways:

- Earlier, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had embarked upon a programme for 'Blue Flag' certification for 13 beaches in the country.
- According to the Ministry, a 'Blue Flag' beach is an eco-tourism model to provide tourists clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, safe and healthy environment and sustainable development of the area.
- The certification is awarded by the Denmark-based agency based on 33 stringent criteria in four major heads: environmental education and information, bathing water quality, environment management and conservation and safety and services in the beaches.
- Kasarkod and Padubidri beaches have grey water treatment plants, solid waste management plants, disabled-friendly equipment to enable them to enter seawater, seating arrangements, clean drinking water, washroom, changing room, bathing facility, disabled-friendly and general toilets, parking facilities, solar power plant, etc.

China backs Iran nuclear deal, calls for new West Asia forum

- China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has called for a new forum to defuse tensions in the West Asia after a meeting with his Iranian counterpart where he reiterated Beijing's support for Tehran.
- Mr. Wang and Javad Zarif also reaffirmed their commitment to **Iran's 2015 nuclear deal** with world powers, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, an implicit rebuke of the U.S. for abandoning the accord during their Saturday meeting in China's southwestern Tengchong city.



- Iran has been locked in an acrimonious relationship with Saudi Arabia, the other major West Asian power, over the war in Yemen, Iranian influence in Iraq and Saudi support for Washington's sanctions on Tehran.

Regional multilateral dialogue platform:

- China proposes to build a regional multilateral dialogue platform with equal participation of all stakeholders.
- The forum would "enhance mutual understanding through dialogue and explore political and diplomatic solutions to security issues in the West Asia", the statement added.
- Support for the Iranian nuclear deal, negotiated by the Obama administration but ultimately abandoned by Donald Trump, would be a precondition of entry to the forum.

U.S. turns focus on Dhaka for Indo-Pacific strategy

- Bangladesh is expected to be the focus of the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific strategy when Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun arrives in Dhaka for a visit from October 14 to 16.
- The visit by the senior American official is the first such attempt by the U.S. administration to engage Dhaka directly ever since Beijing undertook several proactive measures to help the South Asian country deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Significance:

- The Deputy Secretary's engagement in Bangladesh will focus on advancing our common vision of a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and secure Indo-Pacific region with shared prosperity for all, U.S.-Bangladesh cooperation on COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, and sustainable economic development.
- The visit of the senior American official is the clearest sign so far of Trump administration's desire to draw Bangladesh closer as a key Indo-Pacific partner.
- Bangladesh has not hosted a senior U.S. diplomat of this stature since the visit of Secretary of State John Kerry in August 2016 during the last phase of the Obama administration. Mr Biegun's visit to Dhaka will be followed by his interactions in New Delhi. Mr. Biegun will arrive in India on Monday.



Property Cards to be distributed under SVAMITVA scheme

- Indian Prime Minister will launch the physical distribution of Property Cards under the SVAMITVA Scheme on October 11, 2020 to transform rural India.

Value Added Information

Above SVAMITVA scheme:

- It was launched in April 2020.
- **Aim:** To provide the record of rights to village household owners in rural areas and issue Property Cards.
- It is being implemented across India in a phased manner over a period of four years.
- It will cover around 6.62 lakh villages
- The launch will enable around 1 lakh property holders to download their Property Cards through the SMS link delivered on their mobile phones.
- This would be followed by physical distribution of the Property Cards by the respective State governments.
- The move will pave the way for using property as a financial asset by villagers for taking loans and other financial benefits.

Contraction in GDP of India in 2020-21: World Bank

- Recently, the World Bank has released its South Asia Economic Focus report which estimated that India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) can contract by 9.6% for the year 2020-21.

Key takeaways:

- This estimate is lower than the earlier forecast of 3.2% contraction which was made in June, 2020.
- It is due to the impact of the national lockdown against the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Households and small urban service firms experienced income shock.
- The manufacturing and exporting industries may face reduced growth.



- The construction sector may also face slowdown.
- These disruptions to jobs will increase the poverty rate. 2020 rates may go back to levels in 2016.
- The economic slowdown could lead to rising loan non-repayment and risk aversion impacting the financial markets also.
- However, India's growth is estimated to rebound to 5.4% in 2021-22.