



## Current Affairs of the Day

### GS Paper - I

1. WWF identifies 100 cities, including 30 in India, facing 'severe water risk' by 2050

### GS Paper - II

1. Next round of talks likely this week
2. Academic credit banks, degree with entry and exit option soon
3. India, Maldives sign four MoUs to boost ties

### GS Paper - III

1. Brown carbon 'tarballs' that hasten glacial melt found in the Himalayan atmosphere: Study

### Prelims

1. COVID-19 vaccine could be 90% effective: Pfizer



## WWF identifies 100 cities, including 30 in India, facing 'severe water risk' by 2050

### GS I: Urbanization, problems and their remedies.

A hundred cities worldwide, including 30 in India, face the risk of 'severe water scarcity' by 2050, according to a recent report by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

#### Highlights:

1. The cities would face a 'grave water risk' by 2050 due to a dramatic increase in their population percentage to 51 per cent by 2050, from 17 per cent in 2020, according to a press statement by WWF-India.
2. The cities include global hubs such as Beijing, Jakarta, Johannesburg, Istanbul, Hong Kong, Mecca and Rio de Janeiro.
3. Thirty Indian cities are also included in the list. More than half of the identified cities are from China and India.

#### Way Forward:

1. Cities needed to invest more in nature-based solutions and enhance the health of river basins, watersheds and wetlands to build resilience to water risks.
2. To manage these initiatives, a public funding pool needed to be created in collaboration with the private sector to invest, reduce risk and generate returns and fuel sustainable economic growth.
3. The future of India is in its cities. The need for sustainable growth would only increase with the increase in urbanisation.
4. To re-evolve and re-imagine their future, Indian cities needed to break away from the current set of issues by looking into developing more nature-based solutions.
5. WWF also launched an online tool called the WWF Water Risk Filter to help cities imagine future water risks and plan a better and sustainable future facilitating climate and water resilience.



## Next round of talks likely this week

### GS II: India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

At the Corps Commander talks last week, India and China made broad proposals for disengagement in eastern Ladakh and another round of talks is likely to take place later this week to discuss them further.

#### Highlights:

1. China has deployed around 50,000 troops along with tanks, armoured vehicles and air defences along the disputed boundary since the stand-off began in early May and this has been matched by India.
2. With several rounds of military and diplomatic talks remaining inconclusive, both sides have built habitats and stocked up essentials to house the thousands of troops through the harsh winter.
3. As the Indian Army occupied several dominating features that were lying vacant on the south bank of Pangong Tso (lake) in August, China has been pressing for discussing the south bank first and other friction areas later. However, this has been rejected by India.
4. A joint statement stated that both sides agreed to “earnestly implement” the consensus reached by leaders of the two countries, ensuring their “front-line troops to exercise restraint and avoid misunderstanding and miscalculation”.

## Academic credit banks, degree with entry and exit option soon

### GS II: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

The first National Agricultural Education Policy is set to bring academic credit banks, experiential learning and 4-year degree programmes with multiple entries and exit options to the 74 universities focussed on crop sciences, fisheries, veterinary and dairy training and research.

#### Challenges:

1. The Student READY (Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana) programme requires all students to undertake a six-month internship,



usually in their fourth year, to gain hands-on training, rural awareness, industry experience, research expertise and entrepreneurship skills.

2. One major challenge is how to ensure that this experiential learning is made available to all students if we implement the multiple entry-exit systems. Even if a student leaves after two or three years, even with a diploma, he should not miss out on it.
3. Another major challenge for agricultural universities could be the push for multidisciplinary.
4. Our universities have been modelled on the land grant pattern, with a focus on research and extension, and deep community connections, driven by the philosophy that farmers need holistic solutions to their problems.
5. However, in recent years, several domain-specific universities in horticulture, veterinary science and fisheries sciences have come up.
6. How to incorporate humanities and social sciences into these settings, that could be a big challenge.

## India, Maldives sign four MoUs to boost ties

### GS II: India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

New Delhi and Male on Monday signed four agreements, including a \$100 million Indian grant for an ambitious connectivity project.

#### Highlights:

1. In addition to two MoUs for “high impact” community development projects, the countries signed an MoU on cooperation in sports and youth affairs and another for the \$100 million grant, which is part of India’s “\$500 million packages” for the Greater Male Connectivity Project(GMCP).
2. Amid New Delhi’s growing concern over China’s growing influence in the region, the ties with the Maldives have remained under sharp focus.
3. The Maldives has ‘India First’ foreign policy. This is reciprocated in full measure by our ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy in which the Maldives enjoys a very special and central place.



## Brown carbon 'tarballs' that hasten glacial melt found in the Himalayan atmosphere: Study

### GS III: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Nearly 28 percent of particles collected from the air samples from a research station in the Himalaya-Tibetan Plateau were tarballs, a recent study has found.

#### Tarballs:

1. Tarballs are small light-absorbing, carbonaceous particles formed due to burning of biomass or fossil fuels that deposit on snow and ice.
2. The percentage of the tarballs increased on days of higher levels of pollution and could contribute to the hastening of glacial melt and global warming, the study said.
3. The data revealed that a dense array of active fire spots — corresponding to large-scale wheat-residue burning on the Indo-Gangetic Plain — occurred along the pathways of air masses that reached the Himalayan research station during sampling.

## COVID-19 vaccine could be 90% effective, claims Pfizer

### Prelims

Pharma major Pfizer said on Monday that an early peek at the data on its coronavirus vaccine suggests the shots may be a robust 90% effective at preventing COVID-19. It may apply for emergency use nod in the U.S.

#### Highlights:

1. The finding puts the company on track to apply later this month for emergency-use approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
2. However, many questions are still to be answered, including how long the vaccine's effects last and whether it protects older people as well as younger ones.