

14 to 20 – 04 – 2022

News: Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)

- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** has approved continuation of the revamped **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** of **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)** for implementation during the period from **1st April 2022** to **31st March 2026**.
- The scheme is now co-terminus with the **15th Finance Commission** period.

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)

- **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)** is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** launched by **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** for a period of **4 years** initially (**2018-2022**).
- This scheme **extends to all States and UTs of the Country** and will also include institutions of rural local government in non-Part IX areas, where Panchayats do not exist.
- **RGSA** will help more than **2.55 lakh Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** to develop governance capabilities to deliver on **SDGs** through inclusive local **governance** with a focus on optimum utilization of available resources.

- The scheme will **strengthen Gram Sabhas to function as effective institutions with social inclusion of citizens particularly the vulnerable groups.**
- The scheme has both **Central Component** - National Level activities including "National Plan of Technical Assistance", "Mission Mode project on e-Panchayat", "Incentivization of Panchayats" **and State component** - Capacity Building of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
- The **Central Component will be fully funded by the Government of India.** However, Centre: State funding pattern for State Component will be **60:40** for all States, except North East and the Hill States where Centre: State funding pattern will be 90:10.

News: Oil Bonds

- Recently, the Finance Minister has countered criticism of high oil prices by claiming that the government cannot bring down taxes – and thus oil prices because it has to pay for oil bonds issued by the Previous Government.

Oil Bonds

- Oil bonds are special **securities issued by the government to oil marketing companies in lieu of cash subsidy.**

- These bonds are typically of a **long-term tenure like 15-20 years** and oil companies are **paid interest**.
- Governments resort to such instruments **when they are in danger of breaching the fiscal deficit target due to unforeseen circumstances** that lead to a collapse in revenues or a surge in expenditure.

News: Vaquita Porpoise

- According to the United States Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), **Vaquita porpoise is nearing extinction** and immediate measures are needed to save the remaining population.

Vaquita Porpoise

- The vaquita is the **world's smallest cetacean**. Its name means "**little cow**" in Spanish.
- It has a **dark ring around the eyes as its most striking feature**, along with a **proportionally large dorsal fin**.
- It is unique among the porpoises as it is the **only species of that family found in warm waters**, and the size of the dorsal fin is believed to be an adaptation to that, allowing for extra body heat to dissipate.

- Like many other species of porpoise, **vaquita tend to be shy and elusive, avoiding boats when approached.**

Habitats

- **Found only in the northern Gulf of California** (Sea of Cortez) in Mexico. Most commonly seen in shallow waters up to 50 metres deep.

Threats

- The vaquita population has been in sharp decline for decades, recently accelerated by **illegal fishing** with gill-nets for the vulnerable totoaba, a large fish sought after for its swim bladder.
- The small animal frequently gets caught in fixed fishing nets (gill-nets), as by-catch.

Protection Status

- IUCN Red List: **Critically Endangered.**
- CITES: **Appendix I.**

News: NATPOLREX – VIII

- Recently, the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** has conducted the 8th edition of two-day **National Level Pollution Response Exercise, ‘NATPOLREX-VIII’**, off Mormugao harbour, Goa.

NATPOLREX-VIII

- The exercise consisted of a **two-day programme** featuring **table-top exercise, pollution response workshop on marine Oil and HNS (Hazardous and Noxious Substances) spill** followed by exercise at sea.
- During the exercise, **various components of NOSDCP (National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan)** were invoked to validate and improve the contingency plans and evaluate the preparedness of the resource agencies as well as stakeholders to meet any marine spill disaster at sea.
- The exercise is being attended by more than **85 participants from 50 agencies, including 29 observers from 22 friendly foreign countries & International Organisations** and two Coast Guard ships from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Objectives

- To enhance the **preparedness and response capability of all the stakeholders in combating marine spills.**

- It aims at validating the procedures and guidelines as contained in the NOSDCP at the national and regional levels under the aegis of SACEP (South Asian Cooperative for Environment Protection), to which India is a member state.