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Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report

- In 2021, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced the Business Responsibility & Sustainability Report (BRSR).
 - BRSR will replace Business Responsibility Reporting (BRR).
- BRSR is a standardised reporting format that will give a **baseline to draw comparison** between Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) goals across companies and sectors.
- BRSR is framed around three aspirations:
 1. Adapting to and mitigating climate change impact,
 2. Inclusive growth and
 3. Transitioning to a sustainable economy.
- BRSR seeks disclosures from **listed entities** on their performance against the 9 principles of the 'National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGBRCs).'
- Disclosures under BRSR have been segregated into 3 sections consisting of 9 principles in total):
 1. General disclosures,
 2. Management disclosures and
 3. Principle-wise performance disclosures.
- The reporting under each principle is divided into
 1. Essential indicators (to be reported on a mandatory basis),
 2. Leadership indicators (to be reported on a voluntary basis).
- **Applicability** - Filing of BRSR is voluntary for the financial year 2021-22 for the top 1000 listed companies (by market capitalization).
- But filing of BRSR shall be mandatory from the FY 2022-2023.

Importance of Disclosure

- Investors as well as other stakeholders place the non-financial disclosures paramount to the financial disclosures of an industry.
- While financial disclosures are mandatory in nature, non-financial ones are reported voluntarily and on increased demand by stakeholders.
- Several reporting standards are accepted internationally for reporting non-financial parameters. These include,
 1. Global Reporting Initiative (GRI),
 2. Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB),
 3. Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), among others.
- Such disclosures help entities identify risks, opportunities and possible trajectories for sustainable and inclusive growth.
- These disclosures may help 'strengthen the climate commitments, accelerate decarbonisation and attract green investment' for businesses.

Reference

1. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/climate-change/brsr-disclosure-pathway-to-green-companies-indian-industry-lobby-at-cop26-80251>
2. https://www.sebi.gov.in/legal/circulars/may-2021/business-responsibility-and-sustainability-reporting-by-listed-entities_50096.html

Cervical Cancer

On Day of Action for Cervical Cancer Elimination, the WHO said that 9 out of 10 women who die of cervical cancer live in low- & middle-income countries.

These countries also have low rates of vaccination against the human papilloma virus (HPV), which causes the cancer.

- Cervical cancer develops in a woman's cervix (the entrance to the uterus from the vagina).
- It is **preventable and curable**, as long as it is detected early and managed effectively. Yet it is the fourth most common cancer in women.
- **Causes** - Almost all cervical cancer cases (99%) are caused due to high-risk HPV, a highly common virus transmitted through sexual contact.
- Other risk factors include many sexual partners, early sexual activity, other sexually transmitted infections, a weakened immune system, smoking, exposure to miscarriage prevention drug, etc.
- **Symptoms** - Vaginal bleeding after intercourse, between periods or after menopause, and pelvic pain or pain during intercourse
- Watery, bloody vaginal discharge that may be heavy and have a foul odor
- **Prevention** - Effective primary (HPV vaccination) and secondary prevention approaches (screening for, and treating precancerous lesions) will prevent most cervical cancer cases.

Global Strategy for Cervical Cancer Elimination

- In 2020, the WHO adopted this strategy in order to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem.
- To eliminate cervical cancer, all countries must reach and maintain an incidence rate of below four per 100 000 women.
- Achieving that goal rests on 3 key pillars and their corresponding targets:
 1. Vaccination: 90% of girls fully vaccinated with the HPV vaccine by the age of 15;
 2. Screening: 70% of women screened using a high-performance test by the age of 35, and again by the age of 45;
 3. Treatment: 90% of women with pre-cancer treated and 90% of women with invasive cancer managed.
- Each country should meet the **90-70-90 targets by 2030** to get on the path to eliminate cervical cancer within the next century.

Reference

1. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/cervical-cancer-90-deaths-in-low-and-middle-income-countries-with-least-access-to-hpv-vaccine-screening-80248>
2. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/cervical-cancer>
3. <https://www.who.int/initiatives/cervical-cancer-elimination-initiative>

4. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cervical-cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-2035250>
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Mid-Year Trends Report 2021

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released the Mid-Year Trends Report 2021.

‘Forcibly displaced populations’ encompass refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people and Venezuelans displaced abroad.

It includes refugees and other displaced people not covered by UNHCR’s mandate and excludes other categories such as returnees and non-displaced stateless people.

Internally displaced person is someone who is forced to leave their home but who remains within their country's borders.

They don’t fall under the legal definitions of a refugee.

- According to the report, 50.9 people were internally displaced across 33 countries due to conflict and violence in the first 6 months of 2021.
- The trend of rising forced displacement continued from 2020 into 2021, with global numbers now exceeding 84 million, an increase from 82.4 million at the end of 2020.
 - This resulted largely from internal displacement.
- Much of the new internal displacement was in Africa.
- **Causes** - Violence, persecution and human rights violations, effects of climate change, COVID-19, poverty, food insecurity, etc
- The lethal mix of the above factors has compounded the humanitarian plight of the displaced, most of whom are hosted in developing regions.
- **Returning** - Returning home in safety and dignity based on a free and informed choice is the preferred solution for the world’s refugees.
- While the number of returnees did increase compared to the same period of 2020, it remained well below pre-COVID-19 levels during the same period of 2019.

Reference

1. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/africa/nearly-51-million-internally-displaced-in-33-countries-in-first-half-of-2021-un-80198>
2. <https://www.unhcr.org/mid-year-trends.html>

Kyhytysuka sachicarum

An international team of researchers has discovered a new marine reptile named Kyhytysuka sachicarum.

- It is a new species of Cretaceous hyper-carnivorous ichthyosaur.
- It evolved a unique dentition that allowed it to eat large prey; where as other ichthyosaurs had small teeth for feeding on small prey.
 - The dentary is the longest bone of the species.
- This species was mostly found in shallow waters.

- It was named as Kyhytysuka which translates to 'the one that cuts with something sharp' in an indigenous language from the region in central Colombia where the fossil was found.
- It was named so as to honour the ancient Muisca culture that existed in that region for millennia.

Reference

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/what-is-kyhytysuka-sachicarum-7649998/>
2. <http://www.sci-news.com/paleontology/kyhytysuka-sachicarum-10319.html>

Update on Global Fuel Economy Initiative

The International Energy Agency's (IEA) has given an update on the Global Fuel Economy Initiative (GFEI) 2021.

Fuel economy measures the distance a vehicle can travel per unit of a particular fuel, such as kilometre per litre.

It is a key indicator of greenhouse gas and pollutant emissions from the use of cars.

- GFEI 2021 report presents the latest update to the Global Fuel Economy Initiative's biannual benchmarking report on light-duty vehicle sales.
- The report tracks the progress of fuel economy of new light-duty vehicles from 2005 to 2019.
- According to GFEI 2021, the global goal to halve the fuel consumption of new light-duty vehicles by 2030 from 2005 levels is stalling.
- The average rated fuel consumption of new light-duty vehicles fell by only 0.9% between 2017 and 2019.
- The 3 major car markets - China, the European Union and the US - accounted for 60% of global sales of light-duty vehicles in 2019, which totalled 90 million, down 7% from 2017.
- Total improvements are lower than the 2.8% yearly fuel economy improvements needed to meet the target.
- A number of factors were responsible for the slowing pace of improvement between 2017 and 2019. These included,
 - a. Stagnating fuel economy standards in the US and the EU up to 2019
 - b. The rising market share of SUVs, which can use almost one-third more fuel than a medium-sized car
 - c. The rising cost of squeezing out further efficiency gains from mature technologies
 - d. The slow adoption of electric cars to compensate for larger vehicles
- The report says that for internal combustion engine cars, most emissions occur at their tailpipe ('tank to wheel'), while less than 20% of overall emissions are related to the production of their fuels ('well to tank').
- By contrast, for battery electric and fuel cell electric vehicles, almost all the emissions are incurred in producing and delivering the electricity or hydrogen on which they run.
- **Battery electric vehicles had the lowest emissions** in 2019, followed by plug-in hybrids and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles.
- Hybrid vehicles have the lowest well-to-wheel emissions among vehicles with internal combustion engines using gasoline, diesel or compressed natural gas.
- Fuel consumption should fall 4.3% per year on average from 2019 to 2030, to halve the fuel consumption of new light-duty vehicles.
 - This is triple the average annual pace of improvement since 2005.

Global Fuel Economy Initiative

- The Global Fuel Economy Initiative is collaboration between the UNEP, IEA, the University of California, International Council on Clean Transportation, International Transport Forum and the FIA Foundation.
- GFEI promotes fuel efficiency in cars and light duty vans, through the adoption of the cost effective fuel efficiency technologies.
- The objective of the GFEI is to help stabilize greenhouse gas emissions from the global light duty vehicle fleet through a **50% improvement of vehicle fuel efficiency worldwide by 2050**.
- GFEI promotes the introduction of cleaner, more energy efficient vehicles in developing and transitional countries.
- It offers support to governments to develop fuel economy policies.

Reference

1. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/pollution/target-to-halve-global-fuel-consumption-by-2030-is-stalling-iea-report-80098>
2. <https://www.globalfueleconomy.org/about-gfei>
3. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=7519>
4. <https://www.iea.org/reports/global-fuel-economy-initiative-2021>



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