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A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

Prelim Bits 12-06-2018

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

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- Government has provided cash incentives to nearly 23.6 lakh beneficiaries out of an estimated 51.6 lakh a year under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana.

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- The scheme was approved by the Union Cabinet in 2017 and is implemented by Ministry of Women and Child Development.

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- Under the scheme, pregnant women and lactating mothers are offered a cash incentive of Rs. 6,000 on the birth of their first child as partial compensation for wage loss.

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- It was done to reduce maternal mortality and malnutrition levels among children.

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- Many States like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal have not yet implemented the scheme.

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- These states account for 25 percent of the beneficiaries.

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- Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal have their own maternity benefit schemes and have been reluctant to implement the PMMVY.

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Initiatives of the Ministry of Coal

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- Some of the important initiatives of Ministry of Coal are discussed below.

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- UTTAM App has been launched for ensuring transparency and efficiency in coal quality monitoring process.
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- Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyala Transparently in India (SHAKTI), for auction and allotment of coal linkages, will lead to affordable power and transparency in allocation of coal.
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- Commercial Coal Mining, most ambitious coal sector reform ever, will help in creating direct and indirect employment through higher investment and better technology.
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- The reforms in the country's coal sector have contributed to enhancing energy capacity, efficiency, and security showcasing Government's philosophy of "Saaf Niyat, Sahi Vikas".
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Iceberg B-15

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- Iceberg B-15 broke away from Antarctica's Ross Ice Shelf 18 years ago in 2000.
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- It measured about 296 km long and 37 km wide.
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- It is the largest iceberg ever recorded and could be nearing the end of its voyage.
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- The iceberg may not be tracked if it splinters into smaller pieces.
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- B-15 has since fractured into numerous smaller bergs, and most have melted away.
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- Melting and breakup would not be surprising, given the berg's long journey and northerly location.
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- Currents prevented the berg from continuing through the Drake Passage.
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Rail Madad

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- Indian Railways has for the first time completely digitized the Complaint management system.
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- Rail MADAD (Mobile Application for Desired Assistance During travel) aims to expedite & streamline passenger grievance redressal.
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- It registers a complaint with minimum inputs from passenger (option of photo also available), issues unique ID instantly and relays the complaint online to relevant field officials for immediate action.
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- It also displays various helpline numbers (e.g., Security, Child helpline etc) and provides direct calling facility for immediate assistance in one easy step.
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- All modes of filing complaints including offline and online modes are being integrated on a single platform.
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- Therefore the resultant management reports present a holistic picture of weak/deficient areas and enable focused corrective action by officials concerned.
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K2 Mission

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- A new mission plan named K2 "Second Light" was presented for consideration in 2013 by NASA.
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- The K2 mission represents a new concept for spacecraft operations that enables continued scientific observations with the Kepler space telescope.
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- K2 would involve using Kepler's remaining capability, photometric precision of about 300 parts per million, to collect data for finding and studying more exoplanets.
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- In this proposed mission plan, Kepler would search a much larger area in the plane of Earth's orbit around the Sun.
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- It entails a series of sequential observing Campaigns of fields distributed around the ecliptic plane and offers a photometric precision approaching that of the original Kepler mission.
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- The K2 mission welcomes all proposals including, but not exclusive to, exoplanet, stellar, extragalactic, and solar system science.

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eDNA extraction

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- The technique of extracting environmental DNA (eDNA) was used to confirm the presence of specific varieties of rare turtles in the scared ponds of North east.
- Due to the ritual nature of Ponds, scientists were denied complete access to these ponds and so this technique was used.
- Indian softshell turtle (Vulnerable) and South Asian narrow-headed softshell turtle (Endangered) were the species whose presence was confirmed by this technique.
- eDNA testing is fast emerging as a tool for monitoring the biodiversity of an area without physically collecting specimens.
- Coupled to DNA metabarcoding, eDNA is a powerful means of biodiversity monitoring.
- Environmental DNA or eDNA is DNA that is collected from a variety of environmental samples such as soil, seawater, or even air rather than directly sampled from an individual organism.
- In other words, Environmental DNA (eDNA) is genetic material that persists in an environment and is derived from organisms living there.
- Researchers have recently been using eDNA to detect the presence of macro-organisms, particularly those living in aquatic/semiaquatic ecosystems.

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Source: PIB, The Hindu

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