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Opportunity Rover

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- Opportunity Rover was launched by NASA in 2003 to land in red planet Mars.

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- The rover landed in 2004 and begin traversing the planet in search of signs of past life.

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- It is still actively exploring the Martian terrain.

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- It was originally planned for 90-day mission. But it has far outlasted its planned mission by 55 times longer than originally planned.

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- Mars is prone to dust storms due to its thin atmosphere and desertic conditions.

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- Recently, it witnessed an immense dust storm which led to the impenetrable, perpetual night in the planet.

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- Since, opportunity rover is a solar powered, the amount of light the spacecraft receives has dropped to less than 1 percent of normal levels.

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- Before the storm began, it had been rolling down a channel called **Perseverance Valley**, which scientists think may have been carved by water billions of years ago.

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- **Curiosity** - It is also a rover deployed by NASA in its Mars Exploration Program in 2012 to assess whether Mars ever had an environment able to support small life forms called microbes.

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- The rover captured **mesas and buttes** on mars geological layer called as Murray formation, which is formed from the lakebed mud deposits.

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Animal Welfare Board of India

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- It is a statutory, advisory body established under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960.
- It is within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- It ensures implementation of the animal welfare laws in the country and provides grants to animal welfare organizations and advice the Centre, States and UTs on animal welfare issues.
- As per the Act, the Board comprises of 28 Members including 6 MPs (4 from Lok Sabha and 2 from Rajya Sabha) with the term of 3 years.
- It is headquartered at Ballabhgarh in Haryana.
- Last year, the government has notified that the board will be permanently chaired by senior official from the ministry of environment.
- Recently, the board has issued directives to all the state departments to save stray animals from cruelty.
- Thus, the responsibility of protecting stray animals is given to state departments. Previously it was the responsibility of cow shelters and animal activists.
- The board does not have the right to prescribe punishments or fines for violations of the PCA Act but can pursue legal action.

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Swajal Yojana

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- Swajal yojana was recently launched by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in 115 aspirational districts in the country.

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- It is a community owned drinking water programme for sustained piped drinking water supply powered by solar energy.
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- It ensures the availability of clean drinking water to every household round the year.
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- The scheme will train hundreds of rural technicians for operation and maintenance of Swajal units which generates employment in the rural areas.
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- Under the scheme, 90% of the project cost will be taken care by the Government and the remaining 10% of the project cost will be contributed by the community.
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- The operations and management of the project will be taken care by the local villagers.
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Central Adoption Resource Authority

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- It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
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- It functions as the nodal body for adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children and is mandated to monitor and regulate the same.
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- **Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, 1993** was ratified by the Govt of India in 2003.
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- In accordance with the provisions of the convention, CARA was designated as the Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions.
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- It has recently **barred partners in live-in relationships** from adopting a child on the ground that cohabitation without marriage is not considered a stable family in India.
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- It permits a single woman to adopt a child of any gender, while single men can adopt only boys.
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- In case an applicant is married, both spouses must give their consent for adoption and should be in a stable marriage for at least two years.
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Composite Water Management Index

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Click [here](#) to know about the index.

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- The index is developed by NITI Aayog and it ranked states on how well they managed water.
- It comprises 9 broad sectors with 28 different indicators covering various aspects of groundwater, restoration of water bodies, irrigation, farm practices, drinking water, policy and governance.
- According to the recent report, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have managed water resources efficiently.
- Meghalaya, Uttarakhand and Nagaland are the bottom three states in the index.
- While Tripura has emerged as top performer in north-east, Rajasthan has emerged as the best performer in the incremental progress over last two years.
- Some of the other important findings from the recent report are,

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1. India is facing its “worst” water crisis in history and that the demand for potable water will outstrip supply by 2030, if steps are not taken.
2. 21 cities, including Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad, will run out of groundwater by 2020, affecting 100 million people.
3. Critical groundwater resources, which accounted for 40% of the water supply, are being depleted at “unsustainable” rates and up to 70% of the supply is “contaminated”.

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Source: The Hindu, PIB, Economic Times

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