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Forest-PLUS 2.0

- Union Environment Ministry and US Agency for International Development (USAID) has launched Forest-PLUS 2.0.
- It is a 5-year programme that focuses on developing tools & techniques to bolster ecosystem management and harness ecosystem services in forest landscape management.
- It is a set of pilot projects meant to enhance sustainable forest landscape management.
- Previously, Forest-PLUS was completed in 2017. Forest-PLUS 2.0 was initiated in December 2018.
- Achievements of Forest-PLUS –
 - i. Promotion of bio-briquettes in Sikkim,
 - ii. Introduction of solar heating systems in Rampur and
 - iii. Development of an agro-forestry model in Hoshangabad
- Forest-PLUS 2.0 - It comprises pilot project in 3 landscapes - Gaya in Bihar, Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala and Medak in Telangana.
- These sites were chosen for the contrast in their landscapes - Bihar (Forest deficit area), Telangana (Relatively drier area) and Kerala (Rich in Biodiversity).
- 3 Focal points of action under the programme are,
 - i. Developing tools for multiple services in forests management
 - ii. Instruments for leveraging finance & mobilising investment from the private sector
 - iii. Economic opportunities for forest-dependent people.

HC guidelines on Article 25

- HC of Karnataka has declared that Article 25 (Freedom to free profession, practice and propagation of religion), does not extend to public road and footpath.
- It said that denial of permission to put up temporary structures on roads and

footpaths for religious festivals or functions will not infringe upon the freedom granted Article 25.

- It also observed that one cannot get rights to use public roads and streets just because it was for religious purpose.
- It issued guidelines to all city municipal corporations on processing applications for temporarily using public roads and footpaths.

NIKSHAY

- It is a web enabled application, which facilitates monitoring of universal access to TB patient's data by all concerned stakeholders.
- It has been developed jointly by the Central TB Division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- Two objectives -
 - i. To create database of all TB patients including Multi-Drug Resistant cases across the country,
 - ii. To use this database for monitoring and research purposes at all levels so that TB can be eradicated from India in an effective manner.
- The government launched the Nikshay Poshan Yojana, a direct benefit transfer scheme, to provide nutritional support to TB patients.
- Under the scheme, TB patients receive Rs. 500 per month for the entire duration of treatment.
- According to the recent Tuberculosis India Report 2019 released by the Govt of India, the estimated TB incidence in India stands at 27 lakh.
- **Report Highlights** - TB burden in India is highest in Uttar Pradesh, followed by Maharashtra and Rajasthan, Gujarat and MP.
- The number of HIV-infected people who go on to develop Tuberculosis (TB) is increasing in India.
- TB is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality among People Living with HIV (PLHIV).
- In 2018, the Revised National Tuberculosis Programme (RNTBP) was able to achieve notification by 21.5 lakh persons, which is an increase of 16% as compared to 2017.

LRRK2

- Leucine-rich repeat kinase 2 (LRRK2) is a kinase enzyme that protects the body against viral and bacterial infections by triggering inflammation like swelling, redness, heat and pain.
- According to a recent study, this enhanced inflammation can lead to collateral damage to the body.
- Inflammation caused by mutation in a gene can raise the risk of Parkinson's

and Crohn's diseases as well as leprosy.

- Leprosy caused by infections characterised by lesions in the nerve endings of the skin.
- LRRK2, which causes excessive inflammation to defend body against a type of mycobacterium infects peripheral nerves, is thought to be behind leprosy.
- The findings are also important for ongoing clinical trials of Parkinson's drugs that can reduce excessive LRRK2 activity.
- However, total absence of LRRK2 function can make people more prone to infections.

Source: The Hindu, DownToEarth



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