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GS 1: ART & CULTURE, HISTORY, INDIAN SOCIETY AND GEOGRAPHY

1. Nagaland's famed hornbill festival

Context: Influential church bodies in Nagaland have criticised the state government's decision to permit to the sale of liquor at the 25th Hornbill festival, which is being held at Kisama heritage village in Kohima district. The sale of alcohol, including the so-called Indian made foreign liquor (IMFL) and the traditional rice beer, at the festival has been a contested issue. The state government has been mulling a review of the Nagaland liquor total prohibition (NLTP) Act of 1989.

Key points

- **Overview:** The Hornbill Festival, Nagaland's iconic cultural and tourism fair that is annually held from December 1 to 10.
- **About Hornbill Festival:** It was first organized in the year 2000. It aims to promote inter-tribal interaction and preserve Nagaland's heritage, blending the traditional with the contemporary in a

harmonious display of unity. It is organized by the State Tourism and Art & Culture Departments of the Government of Nagaland.

- **Theme of 2024 festival:** The Hornbill Festival 2024, themed “Cultural Connect,” is a grand celebration of Nagaland’s rich heritage and cultural diversity.
- **Significance:** The festival’s appeal extends beyond culture, weaving together modernity and tradition with activities like Naga wrestling, traditional archery, food and herbal medicine stalls, fashion shows, beauty contests, and musical concerts.
- **The Great Hornbill:** It is commonly called the Great Indian hornbill or great pied hornbill. It is found in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. The bulk of the population is found in India, where it is restricted to the Himalayan foothills, hill forests in northeast India and, the wet evergreen forests of west India.
- **Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act (NLTP) of 1989:** The NLTP Act is a law enacted by the Government of Nagaland that prohibits the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol in the state. The Act is one of the most stringent liquor prohibition laws in India, and its core features are as follows:
 - *Complete Ban on Alcohol* - The NLTP Act bans the production, sale, and consumption of all forms of alcoholic beverages, including beer, wine, and spirits. This includes both local (like rice beer) and commercial alcohol.
 - *Exceptions* - There are some exceptions under the law, such as alcohol being allowed for medical or scientific purposes and in certain regulated settings, like special licenses for non-local tourists during specific events (e.g., the Hornbill Festival).
 - *Support from Religious Groups* - The Act has received strong support from Christian church bodies, which constitute a majority in the state, as they view alcohol consumption as morally unacceptable and harmful to community life.
- **Role of Alcohol in the Hornbill Festival:** The Hornbill Festival is often seen as an exception to the state’s liquor prohibition. Thutse (local rice beer) is traditionally consumed during the festival, and according to academic Theyiesinuo Kreditsu, the Hornbill Festival is the only time in the year when the state permits the open sale and consumption of alcohol, including Thutse.

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

2. Silica scars

Context: India’s growth aspirations have spurred the national mining industry to extract more minerals for use in construction. One such mineral is silicon dioxide, or silica, an important component of sand and stone. Mine workers exposed to silica dust for many years have a heightened risk of developing silicosis, wherein microscopic silica particles are lodged in lung tissue, hampering their normal function. The risk of silicosis is age-agnostic and determined by exposure and is chronic after onset. Thus, it threatens millions of workers, many of them young.

Key points

- **Overview:** On November 29, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed the Central Pollution Control Board to draft new guidelines vis-à-vis “granting permission for [silica] mining and washing plants”, and the Uttar Pradesh government and Pollution Control Board to set up health-care facilities in areas with silica mines.

- **Silicosis:** Silicosis is a type of pulmonary fibrosis, a lung disease caused by breathing in tiny bits of silica, a common mineral found in sand, quartz and many other types of rock. Silicosis mainly affects workers exposed to silica dust in jobs such as construction and mining. There is no cure for silicosis, and it can be fatal (lead to death).
- **Types of silicosis:** *Acute silicosis* — which develops within weeks or months of exposure to very high levels of silica dust.
Accelerated silicosis — due to exposure to large amounts of silica dust for less than 10 years.
Chronic silicosis — due to exposure to low levels of silica dust for more than 10 years.
- **About Silica Dust:** Silica (SiO₂/silicon dioxide) is a crystal-like mineral found in various materials such as soil, sand, concrete, mortar, granite, and artificial stone. When these materials are cut or drilled, crystalline silica is released into the air as very fine dust.
- **Protective Measures:** To mitigate health risks, effective measures include - *Engineering Controls:* Using water sprays and ventilation systems to reduce dust levels.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - Ensuring workers use masks and respirators.
Workplace Practices - Implementing protocols to minimize dust generation and exposure.
- **Impacts:** *Lack of Preventive Measures* - Despite known preventive measures, many workplaces still lack adequate dust control and personal protective equipment.
Limited Treatment Options - There is no cure for silicosis, and treatment focuses on managing symptoms and preventing complications.
Socioeconomic Impact - Silicosis can lead to significant economic hardship for affected workers and their families due to lost wages and medical expenses.
Global Burden - The disease is a global health problem, with developing countries often bearing the impact of the burden due to limited resources and occupational safety regulations.
- **Regulations:** Governments and regulatory bodies are gradually acknowledging the risks associated with silica dust. (e.g. The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment hosts a 'silicosis portal' for awareness and resources.) Silicosis is recognized as a notified disease under the Mines Act (1952) and the Factories Act (1948).
 - *Mines Act of 1952* - The Mines Act of 1952 limits the number of hours a person can work in a mine, including above ground: No more than nine hours per day, Below ground: No more than eight hours per day, Weekly: No more than 48 hours per week, Weekly day of rest: No more than six days per week.
 - The Factories Act (1948) mandates a well-ventilated working environment, measures for dust protection, reduction of overcrowding, and provision of basic occupational health care.
- **Conclusion:** Addressing silicosis requires a multi-faceted approach involving improved workplace safety, early detection, and support for affected workers. Silica dust poses significant health risks, parallel to those historically associated with asbestos. Enhancing protective measures and regulatory frameworks is essential to safeguard workers in vulnerable industries.

QUICK FACTS: DTH DEDICATED TO SIGN LANGUAGE LAUNCHED

Union Minister of education Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday launched PM e-VIDYA channel 31, a DTH channel dedicated to sign language. Stressing the importance of sign language, the minister emphasized that manifestations of the same can be seen in popular culture, including dance, drama and other cultural activities. Mentioning acclaimed personalities who were differently abled, from Soordas to Stephen Hawking. There is immense potential that lies in our Divyang friends and launch of the DTH channel will help unlock that potential.

3. Safe skies, sustainable future

Context: The 7th of December has been celebrated as International Civil Aviation Day every year since 1994. The day has a historic significance. It was in 1903 that the Wright brothers successfully demonstrated the first flight in an open field named Kitty Hawk in North Carolina, United States. The technology developed rapidly thereafter. After World War II, on the 7th of December 1944, 52 nations met at Chicago, United States, and formed an organization to make the rules of flying. This is how the global regulator of civil aviation, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), came into being. 2024 is the 80th anniversary of ICAO and this year ICAO has adopted a new theme: 'Safe skies, sustainable future: Together for the next 80 years.' The theme focuses on sustainable aviation practices and addressing climate change challenges.

Key points

- **Overview:** International Civil Aviation Day is celebrated every year as a significant day that has allowed people and cultures to interconnect as well as reflect on the role of aviation organisations in ensuring safe air travel worldwide.
- **International Civil Aviation Day (ICAO):** It is celebrated on 7th of December. Signifies the 80th anniversary of the signing of the Chicago Convention (1944). Adopted in 1996 through UN Resolution A/RES/51/33. Its purpose is to emphasize the importance of civil aviation in global connectivity and the role of aviation organizations in ensuring safety and sustainability.
- **Relevance for environment:** International Civil Aviation Day 2024 theme is "Safe Skies. Sustainable Future: Together for the next 80 years." The International Civil Aviation Day theme is announced every fifth year on the anniversary of ICAO while reaffirming its commitment to reducing aviation carbon footprints.
- **Challenges with aviation:** *Aviation is carbon-intensive activity* – Though this mode of travel contributes just 2.5% of the world's carbon emissions, it might increase with more population opting for air travel.
Pollution by aviation fuels - Today's aviation fuels (mostly the widely used Aviation Turbine Fuel - ATF) consist primarily of hydrocarbon compounds and contain additives that are determined by the specific uses of the fuel. They emit CO₂ from burning fuel.
- **Regulatory Framework for Civil Aviation in India:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation has an important role in shaping the policies for growth and regulations of civil aviation in India. The ministry is responsible for managing airport infrastructure, air traffic services and compliance with international standards provided by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.
- **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF):** It is an alternative fuel made from non-petroleum feedstocks that reduces emissions from air transportation. They must be derived from a low-carbon raw material that can be continually and repeatedly sourced. They must not deplete natural resources or compete with other requirements such as food production, land and water use. They must be an alternative to traditional aviation energy sources and be processed to create jet fuel in an alternative manner.
- **Way forward:** The governments and international organizations need to implement regulations and standards aimed at reducing aviation's environmental impact. Investing in sustainable technologies can lead to long-term cost savings, create new job opportunities, and drive innovation within the aviation industry.

4. BSF launches special electronic surveillance project

Context: The Border Security Force (BSF) has initiated a special electronic surveillance project to secure over 600 “vulnerable patches” along the India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh borders, covering areas where physical fencing is not feasible. Approximately 800 km of the 4,069-km India-Bangladesh border remains unfenced due to rivers and other geographical challenges, the BSF along the Bangladesh front, is also undertaking a “detailed vulnerability mapping to strengthen surveillance by deploying additional manpower, special surveillance equipment and vehicles.

Key points

- **Overview:** On 1st December 2024, Prime Minister extended his greetings to the Border Security Force (BSF) on their 60th Raising Day, emphasizing the importance of the force in safeguarding India's borders.
- **Border Security Force (BSF):** BSF was established in 1965 following the India-Pakistan war to enhance border security. The BSF has an air wing, marine wing, an artillery regiment, and commando units. It works under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Jurisdiction of BSF:** The BSF secures India's borders and is empowered to arrest, search, and seize under various laws, including the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) of 1973, Passports Act 1967, Passport (Entry into India) Act 1920, and Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS), 1985.
- **Current reports:** About 2.65-lakh personnel force was raised on December 1, 1965. It is primarily tasked to guard more than 6,300 km of Indian fronts with Pakistan and Bangladesh, apart from rendering a variety of duties in the internal security domain of the country.

Q. Border management is a complex task due to difficult terrain and hostile relations with some countries. In the light of the above statement, examine jurisdiction of Border Security Force (BSF). [কিছুমান দেশৰ সৈতে কঠিন ভূখণ্ড আৰু শত্ৰুতাপূৰ্ণ সম্পৰ্কৰ বাবে সীমান্ত ব্যৱস্থাপনা এক জটিল কাম। উপৰোক্ত বিবৃতিটোৰ পৰিপ্ৰেক্ষিতত, সীমান্ত সুৰক্ষা বাহিনীৰ অধিকাৰক্ষেত্ৰ পৰীক্ষা কৰক (BSF).]