Daily News Juice

4th Nov, 2024

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1. Central Sector Scheme "NAMO DRONE DIDI"

Introduction

The Government has approved the Central Sector Scheme 'Namo Drone Didi' for providing Drones to the Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) under DAY-NRLM, with an outlay of Rs. 1261 Crores. The scheme aims to provide drones to 14500 selected Women SHGs during the period from 2024-25 to 2025-2026 for providing rental services to farmers for agriculture purpose (application of liquid fertilizers and pesticides for the present).

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operational guidelines are as under:

Operational Guidelines

The Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare has released the Operational Guidelines this scheme and all the stakeholders have been requested to make meaningful use of these operational guidelines to ensure prompt roll out and implementation of the 'Namo Drone Didi' Scheme. The major components of the

- The Scheme will be governed at the Central level by the Empowered Committee of the Secretaries of Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Department of Rural Development, Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Ministry of Women and Child Development.

- The Implementation and Monitoring Committee headed by the Additional Secretary, Department of Rural Development and having representation from all other stakeholders will be responsible for effective planning, implementation and monitoring of the scheme and it will provide overall advice and guidance to all technical matters related to the implementation of the scheme.

- Under the scheme, a Central Financial Assistance @ 80% of the cost of drone and accessories/ancillary charges up to a maximum of ₹ 8.0 lakhs will be provided to the women SHGs for purchase of drones as a package.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Governance Source: PIB

2. Elephant Deaths Linked to Kodo Millet Consumption

Incident Overview



In Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, ten wild elephants from a herd of thirteen died over three days. Authorities, led by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Vijay N Ambade, suspect "mycotoxins associated with kodo millet" as the cause.

What is Kodo Millet?

Kodo millet, also known as Kodra or Varagu in India, is a resilient crop native to India and widely cultivated in tropical and subtropical regions like Pakistan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and West Africa. Commonly grown in Madhya Pradesh, it is a staple food for economically vulnerable populations due to its drought-resistant properties, rich nutrient profile, and easy storage.

Health Benefits of Kodo Millet

Kodo millet is valued for being gluten-free, high in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, and possibly anti-carcinogenic. It is rich in dietary fiber, which aids metabolic and digestive health by helping to regulate glucose absorption and cholesterol levels.

Kodo Millet Poisoning History

The first documented case of kodo millet poisoning dates back to 1922, with human cases and an affected dog in Uttar Pradesh. In 1983, researchers recorded the first case of elephant deaths from kodo millet ingestion. Cyclopiazonic acid (CPA), a mycotoxin, was later identified as the main toxin causing kodo millet poisoning.

How Kodo Millet Becomes Toxic

Kodo millet becomes susceptible to fungal infections in humid conditions, especially when rain disrupts maturing or harvesting. CPA, a mycotoxin produced by these fungi, can lead to severe poisoning, locally referred to as "Matawna Kodoo." Once infected, the millet cannot be detoxified even with advanced processing methods.

Impact of Toxic Grain on Animals

Kodo millet poisoning can severely affect animals' nervous and cardiovascular systems, with symptoms like vomiting, tremors, rapid pulse, and unconsciousness. Studies also show it can lead to gastrointestinal issues and increase oxidative stress, which may damage internal organs.

Potential Solutions to Kodo Toxicity

Researchers recommend biocontrol measures, such as introducing non-toxic fungal strains to fields. Good agricultural practices, including dry storage and limiting moisture exposure, can also help. Infected grains should be discarded to prevent the spread of toxins.

Recent Cases and Detection Methods

In 2022, one elephant in Madhya Pradesh died after ingesting toxic kodo millet. Human poisoning cases are rare and treatable with prompt intervention. For safety, advanced detection methods like chromatography and rapid assays are used to identify toxins in millets, but these can be costly and time-consuming.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology Source: Indian Express

3. Key Takeaways from COP-16 on Biodiversity Conservation

Overview of COP-16



The 16th Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in Cali, Colombia, extended past its planned conclusion on November 1, as negotiators from 190 countries worked to finalize a deal. This conference aimed to strengthen commitments to biodiversity protection established in prior meetings, particularly the 2022

COP-15 in Montreal, Canada.

Background on the Convention

At COP-15, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) was introduced, setting 23 specific targets for biodiversity conservation, with the notable "30-by-30" goal of protecting 30% of land and marine areas by 2030. The framework also included targets for invasive species reduction, pollution control, and incorporating biodiversity into national policies. COP-16 sought to further define funding mechanisms to achieve these ambitious goals, with an estimated requirement of \$200 billion annually. However, only a fraction of this funding has been pledged.

Decisions and Agreements at COP-16

While the final text is still pending, significant steps have been agreed upon, including: 1. **Subsidiary Body for Indigenous Involvement:** A new body was approved to involve indigenous groups in biodiversity discussions, recognizing their critical role in conservation.

2. **Digital Sequence Information (DSI) Debate:** This agreement remains contentious. DSI relates to benefit-sharing from genetic data in commercial products, but COP-16 did not finalize who would contribute financially to this mechanism.

3. **Implementation Support:** Formal texts were adopted on biodiversity and climate integration, invasive species control, and mainstreaming biodiversity in national and international policies.

India's Role and Financial Commitments

India's delegation, led by the Minister of State for Environment, highlighted its commitment to biodiversity, presenting an updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).

The updated plan includes:

• **Increased Spending:** India plans to allocate approximately ₹81,664 crore from 2025-2030, up from ₹32,207 crore spent between 2018 and 2022.

• International Financial Assistance: Emphasizing the need for international funding, India requested financial support under KMGBF's Target 19, which calls for mobilizing \$200 billion annually, including \$30 billion from international sources.

• **Conservation Initiatives:** India noted recent strides, including the establishment of the International Big Cat Alliance for global big cat conservation and an increase in Ramsar sites from 26 to 85 since 2014, with a goal of reaching 100 sites soon.

Is Additional Funding Available?

While COP-16 acknowledged the need for substantial financial resources, securing these funds remains a challenge. Although there is broad support for increasing the biodiversity budget, no definitive corpus for conservation has been agreed upon, particularly for DSI benefit-sharing. The need for a clear funding pathway will likely continue to be a focus in future COP discussions.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology Source: The Hindu