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**Daily News Pedia**

### **India Looks To Buy Israeli Missiles**

A deal to procure the Spike anti-tank guided missiles from Israel has been brought before the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) for approval.

*Spike anti-tank guided missile:* It is a third generation fire and forget anti-tank guided missile. It is developed and designed by an Israeli Company. It is available in man-portable, vehicle-launched, and helicopter-launched variants.

*Defence Acquisition Council:* It was constituted for overall guidance of the defense procurement planning process. It is headed by the defence minister.

The current missile procurement from Israel will be through the government-to-government route. The deal includes 170 launchers, 4,500 missiles and 15 simulators.

The earlier deal was cancelled in January and it was decided that the requirement could be met through the indigenous man-portable missile being developed by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).

Source: The Hindu.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently rolled out the Centre's flagship scheme — *Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Abhiyaan*, also known as Ayushman Bharat or the National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM).

Ayushman Bharat is the National Health Protection Scheme, which will cover over 10 crore poor vulnerable families (around 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage of up to ₹5 lakh (per family per year) for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation. *It will subsume the on-going centrally sponsored schemes – Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).*

It will be an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database. The different categories in rural area include families having only one room with kucha walls and kucha roof; families having no adult member between age 16 to 59; female headed households with no adult male member between age 16 to 59; disabled member and no able bodied adult member in the family; SC/ST households; and landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour.

*Highlights of the scheme: Coverage:* The scheme has the benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year. To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme. The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.

*Target:* The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospitals across the country.

*Role of state governments:* State Governments will be allowed to expand AB-NHPM both horizontally and vertically. States will be free to choose the modalities for implementation. They can implement through insurance company or directly through Trust/ Society or a mixed model.

*Council:* For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States, it is proposed to set up Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPMC) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.

Source: The Hindu.

### *Citizen Science Initiative Helps Save Hornbills*

A citizen science initiative named The Hornbill Watch has been documenting and providing valuable inputs for the conservation of Hornbills in India.

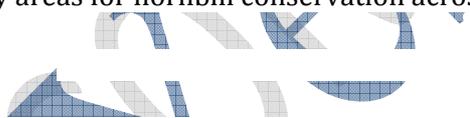
India has nine hornbill species-Indian Grey Hornbill (endemic to India), the Malabar Grey Hornbill (endemic to the Western Ghats), Malabar Pied Hornbill (endemic to India and Sri Lanka) Great Hornbill, Narcondam Hornbill (endemic to Narcondam), Austen's Brown Hornbill, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Wreathed Hornbill, and White-throated Brown Hornbill

*IUCN Status:* Most hornbill species in India are listed as vulnerable or near threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Example- Rufous-necked hornbill, the Austen's brown hornbill and the great hornbill. Narcondam hornbill is listed as endangered.

Major threats to hornbills: hunting and loss of habitat.

Hornbill Watch platform was set up by Nature Conservation Foundation and Conservation India in 2014. It is an interactive web interface that allows a person to report on hornbills anywhere in India

The information on hornbill distribution in India is scarce and thus it gives a poor understanding of the change in hornbill distribution over time. Hornbill Watch serves as centralized database to determine hornbill distribution over time and thus help in identifying key areas for hornbill conservation across India.



Source: The Hindu.

### *Decoding Total Expense Ratio (TER) Of Mutual Funds*

SEBI has recently asked mutual funds to reduce their TER or Total Expense Ratio.

*A mutual fund* is a professionally managed investment fund that pools money from many investors to purchase securities.

The asset management companies who managed these funds on the behalf of investors usually charged a cost which is some percentage of investment. This cost known as Total Expense Ratio (TER). Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) prescribed the maximum TER that a fund can charge their investors. For an example, if a total profit earned on an investment is 15% and the asset management company charges 2% as TER from investors, then the total profit for an investor will be  $15\% - 2\% = 13\%$ . Thus, TER has direct impact on the money invested by an investor.

Source: The Hindu.

## *Neelakurinji Plants.*

Tamil Nadu government has announced a novel scheme for the protection of the exotic Neela Kurinji (*Strobilanthus kunthianus*) plants that flower only once in 12 years.

These rare and ecologically unique flowers are being packaged and sold on the commercial basis. The district administration put up a prominent notice board near the forest patch where the flower was blooming, that people caught plucking flowers would be fined Rs. 5,000.

*About Neelakurinji:* Kurinji or Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthus kunthianus*) is a shrub that is found in the shola forests of the Western Ghats in South India.

Nilgiri Hills, which literally means the blue mountains, got their name from the purplish blue flowers of Neelakurinji that blossoms only once in 12 years. It is the most rigorously demonstrated, with documented bloomings in 1838, 1850, 1862, 1874, 1886, 1898, 1910, 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006 and 2018

Some Kurinji flowers bloom once every seven years, and then die. Their seeds subsequently sprout and continue the cycle of life and death. *The Paliyan tribal people living in Tamil Nadu used it as a reference to calculate their age.*

Source: The Hindu.



### Space watch: floating 'space junk' captured

Surrey Space Centre scheme for removing orbiting debris successfully nets test junk.

A satellite launched from the International Space Station has caught a piece of simulated space junk by ensnaring it in a net. Co-funded by the European commission, the 100kg RemoveDebris satellite was launched to the station in April as cargo on a supply mission. It was deployed from the station in June, and on 16 September began its experimental phase. It launched a small object to act as a dead satellite and a few seconds later fired a net at it.

The net unfurled as it caught up and then wrapped itself about the object. The extra mass that the net provides will help drag the object down into Earth's atmosphere, where it will burn up.



*Space debris must be removed from orbit says ESA*

This is expected to happen in the next few weeks. Space debris is an urgent problem. Collisions with it can destroy functioning satellites. Space agencies around the world are therefore developing techniques to remove old satellites and other pieces of junk from orbit.

The project was led by the Surrey Space Centre, at the University of Surrey, in the UK, and will now go on to perform a number of space debris removal experiments. These include harpooning a target, deployment of a test object with a large “drag sail”, and a navigation test to practise rendezvousing with pieces of space debris.

### **MAINS QUESTION**

**Q: Poor quarantine system is one of the main reasons behind increasing invasions by foreign species on Indian agriculture. Elucidate.**

YesUPSC