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UNESCO Global Geoparks



- The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) is making efforts to get recognition of a geopark for Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) consisting of Erra Matti Dibbalu (red sand dunes), natural rock formations, Borra Caves and volcanic ash deposits.
- While there are 161 UNESCO Global geoparks spread across 44 countries, India is yet to have one of its own.
- UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.
- UNESCO Global Geoparks empower local communities and give them the opportunity to develop cohesive partnerships with the common goal of promoting the area's significant geological processes, features, periods of time, historical themes linked to geology, or outstanding geological beauty.
- A UNESCO Global Geopark enhances awareness and understanding of key issues facing society, such as using our earth's resources sustainably, mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing natural disasters-related risks. The creation of innovative local enterprises, new jobs and high quality training courses is stimulated as new sources of revenue are generated through geo tourism, while the geological resources of the area are protected.
- A set of criteria as established by UNESCO must first be met for a geopark, as nominated by the corresponding government, to be included in the GGN: the existence of a management plan designed to foster socio-economic development that is sustainable (most likely to be based on agritourism and geo tourism); demonstrate methods for conserving and enhancing geological heritage and provide means for teaching geoscientific disciplines and broader environmental issues; joint-proposals submitted by public authorities, local communities and private interests acting together, which demonstrate the best practices with respect to Earth heritage conservation and its integration into sustainable development strategies. Global Geoparks Network (GGN):

1st Khelo India Zaskar Winter Sports Festival begins in Ladakh



- In Ladakh, the Union Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju launched the first ever Khelo India Zaskar Winter Sports Festival at Padum in Zaskar of Kargil district.
- The festival is being organised by the Ladakh UT Administration to promote Zaskar as winter tourists' destination.
- Zaskar Winter Sports and Youth festival is being introduced as an annual event in Zaskar to showcase its potential in adventure tourism and sports. It is one of the major events planned to promote winter tourism in Ladakh.

India's recovery will be V-shaped in 2021, 'V' stands for vaccine: RBI bulletin



- The shape of recovery will be V-shaped after all and the 'V' stands for vaccine." If the vaccination drive is successful, it will tilt the balance of risks upwards, it said. India's GDP is within the striking distance of attaining positive growth, the RBI bulletin added.

IFFCO, Amul's GCMMF rank 1st, 2nd in list of world's top 300 cooperatives



- The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) and Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Limited (GCMMF), the cooperative behind Amul, have ranked first and second respectively among the 300 leading cooperatives in the world.
- The rankings, released in the World Cooperative Monitor, are based on the ratio of turnover to the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of the country.

SpaceX delivers 60 satellites setting new rocket reusability record



- Elon Musk-led SpaceX successfully delivered 60 satellites under its 17th Starlink mission. The Falcon 9 first stage rocket booster was launched and landed for the eighth time, breaking SpaceX's own record for the number of uses of single rocket core.
- SpaceX aims to provide global broadband coverage from up to 42,000 satellites and has delivered over 1,000 satellites.

The many infirmities of China's Western Theatre Command

(Written by : Yogesh Gupta)

- In the first week of the new year, Chinese President Xi Jinping instructed his armed forces to be "combat-ready to act at any second" as they began their new training exercises.
- Firstly, with Joe Biden assuming the U.S. Presidency on January 20, Mr. Xi wants to signal confidence and military preparedness in responding to new U.S. policies on the freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea and Taiwan straits.
- Secondly, Mr. Xi's aggressive pursuit of disputed territories in the South China Sea, Taiwan and across borders with India has increased the chances of military conflicts.
- Thirdly, the performance of China's Western Theatre Command (WTC) in Ladakh last year was below par. It suffered a high number of casualties in the June 15 Galwan valley clash. The Indian Army also captured the strategic mountainous heights at Rezang La and other passes.

True empowerment of the electricity consumer

- Many States have not been able to provide quality supply, especially to rural and small electricity consumers.
- It is not because of a lack of rules or regulations that quality supply is not provided; rather,
- it is on account of a lack of accountability systems to enforce them.
- Guarantee of round the clock supply is a provision that the Rules emphasise, which might be missing in State regulations.
- it is not clear how the failure of power supply is going to be recorded.
- Further, the Rules, in few cases, dilute progressive mechanisms that exist in State regulations. Consider the case of electricity meter-related complaints.

- The Rules say that faulty meters should be tested within 30 days of receipt of a complaint.
- The Rules say that the forum — constituted to remedy complaints against DISCOMs as per existing laws and regulations
- The Rules say that faulty meters should be tested within 30 days of receipt of a complaint. Compared to this, regulations that were published as early as 2004, 2007 and 2012 in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, respectively, say that such testing needs to be conducted within seven days.
- A useful way to protect consumers would be to nudge SERCs to assess the SoP reports of DISCOMs and revise their regulations more frequently.
- Also, SERCs should organise public processes to help consumers raise their concerns.
- The Central Electricity Authority of India could be directed to collect supply quality data from DISCOMs, publicly host them on online portals and prepare analysis reports.