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December 3, 2019

Topic: Biodiversity and Ecotourism.

News:- Keshopur wetland records the arrival of 15000 winged visitors.

- Keshopur wetland is located in Gurdaspur district of Punjab.
- It is located around 4 km off the Pathankot to Gurdaspur National Highway.
- But the tourist footfall in the wetland is very dismal.

Let's see the factors responsible for this sorry state of affairs:-

- Lack of connectivity is there as public transport vehicles rarely operate in this region.
- The condition of the road connecting the wetland and the Pathankot to Gurdaspur National Highway is very poor.
- The road is not properly carpeted and it is merely 10 feet wide.

- Lack of proper signboards and tourism enquiry centres worsen the matters.
- The Tourist Interpretation Centre, built at a cost of rupees 8 crores (with the help of the Asian Development Bank) has not seen many updations.

Some of the steps that can be taken are:-

- On the lines of Gujarat tourism campaign, Punjab can start its own campaign to promote tourism through advertisements on televisions and social media.
- The involvement of other stakeholders such as Civil Society, municipalities, business groups, etc should be promoted.
- PPP model of investment could be used where private investments could be invited to the tourism sector.
- The ecotourism circuit theme in Punjab can be remodelled so that neglected sites such as Keshopur wetland could be involved.
- More fiscal resources could be dedicated to the development of dedicated tourist corridors and spots.

(Source: - The Tribune)

Topic: Science and Technology

News:- Punjab seeks to introduce electric buses in the State

 Punjab government is seeking to ink a pact with the Japanese government to introduce Electric Vehicles (EV

-) in the state.
- Japanese state of the art quick charges Lithium-ion batteries EVs would be introduced in the state.
- The discussions on the same topic would be held in Progressive Punjab Investors Summit, 2019.

The Japanese organisation, Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) would participate in the event representing Japan.

- JETRO is a government-related trade body.
- JETRO promotes mutually beneficial trade and investment between Japanese organisations and other countries.
- Many companies from Japan are participating such as Mitsui, SML Isuzu and Mitsubishi.
- Punjab is also interested in establishing a Centre of excellence in advanced and emerging technologies such as Artificial intelligence and Internet of things.
- For setting up this centre, Japanese assistance would be taken.
- Earlier, India had established an MoU with the electronic ministry of Japan.

Japanese companies have invested massively in the state already e.g:-

- Japan's Aichi steel company had acquired an 11.4% stake in Ludhiana based Vardhaman special steels.
- Sumitomo group, which holds a 50% stake in SML Isuzu, also invested around rupees 200 crores in its Nawanshahr plant.
- Similarly, Kansai paint company from Japan had started operations from its new plant at Goindwal Sahib near Amritsar.
- It has a capacity of around 38000 MT per year.

Way forward: -

- The state can set up its foreign investment policy with the help of all the stakeholders.
- It can improve its logistics and infrastructure. Subsequently, Punjab can further improve its ranking in the Logistics index prepared by Niti Aayog.
- Ease of doing business can further be improved in the state by providing better roads, Electricity etc.
- A huge scope exists in the food processing sector, where corporate farming can go a long way in the diversification of Agriculture and boosting farm incomes.

(Source: - The Tribune)

Topic: Social Welfare.

News:-Punjab government to regularise services of the Safai Sewaks of the state

The issue: -

- It has been found that the contractors, who employ the Safai karamcharis pay them less than the minimum wages.
- Also, wages are often paid in cash. Whereas the amount should be deposited in the accounts of the karamcharis so that corruption could be reduced.

Now, the government seeks to:-

- Do away with the contractor system.
- Cancel the licenses of the guilty Contractors.
- Getting the life insurance of the safai karamcharis done.
- Other services such as free medical checkup would also be done (once in 3 months).
- Also, the Safai Karamchari Commission has been asked to look into the grievances of the safai sewaks in entirety.

(Source: - The Tribune news)

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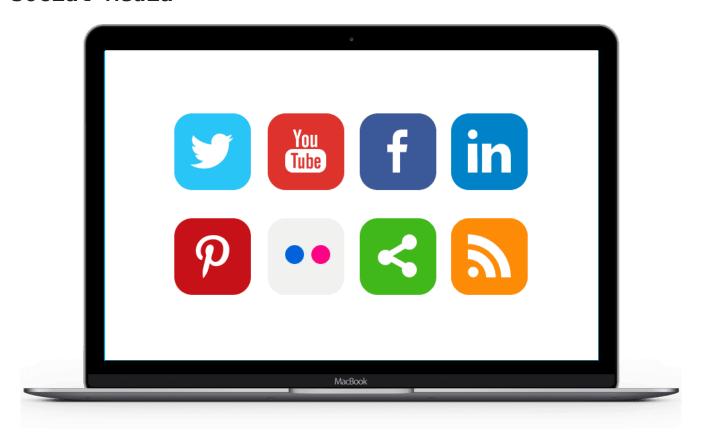
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