

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Kerala sets up drug price monitor:**

Kerala has become the first State to set up a price monitoring and research unit (PMRU) to track violation of prices of essential drugs and medical devices under the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).

The move comes more than five years after the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) proposed such a system for the States and the Union Territories.

Functions: The new watchdog will offer technical help to the State Drug Controllers and the NPPA to monitor notified prices of medicines, detect violation of the provisions of the DPCO, look at price compliance, collect test samples of medicines, and collect and compile market-based data of scheduled as well as non-scheduled formulations.

Need: The suggestion to set up PMRUs was made against the backdrop of the lack of a field-level link between the NPPA and the State Drugs Controllers and State Drug Inspectors to monitor drug prices. Pharma companies have been accused of overcharging prices of drugs in the scheduled category fixed by the DPCO and those outside its ambit too.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**20th Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM):**

20th edition of Bharat Rang Mahotsav is being held in New Delhi. It is being organized by National School of Drama (NSD).

Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM):

- It is the annual international theatre festival of India organized by the National School of Drama (NSD).
- It was established two decades ago to stimulate the growth and development of theatre across India.
- Originally a national festival showcasing the work of the most creative theatre workers in India, BRM has evolved to international scope, hosting theatre groups from around the world, and is now the largest theatre festival of Asia.

GEOGRAPHY**A third of Hindu Kush Himalaya glaciers will melt by 2100**

Two-thirds of Himalayan glaciers, the world's "Third Pole", could melt by 2100 if global emissions are not reduced, scientists warned in a major new study.

Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment

- The 'Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment' is released by the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).
- It provides insights into changes affecting one of the greatest mountain systems in the world.
- At least a third of the ice in the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush will melt down this century as temperatures rise, disrupting river flows vital for growing crops from China to India.
- And even if the "most ambitious" Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5° C is achieved, one-third of the glaciers would go, says the report.

Findings of the report

- Even if efforts are made to limit global warming to 1.5°C by the end of the Century, the Hindu Kush Himalaya will warm by around 1.8°C, the report has found.
- The warming will at least be 0.7°C higher in the northwest Himalaya and Karakoram region.
- The HKH will warm more than the global mean and more rapidly at higher elevations.
- Even the most ambitious goal set by the Paris Agreement to limit global warming would lead to a 2.1 spike in temperature in the HKH region leading to melting of one-third of the region's glaciers.
- It also points out that the Tibetan Plateau, Central Himalayan Range and Karakoram will warm more than the HKH average.

About Hindu Kush-Himalaya (HKH)

- HKH region covers 3500 kms across eight countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.

- It is the source of ten major river basins including the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Indus in India.
- Two billion people are dependent on the HKH for their water needs across Asia.
- Glaciers in the HKH region are a critical water source for some 250 million people in the mountains as well as to 1.65 billion others in the river valleys below.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY

Judicial Complex Inaugurated at Amaravati

The Chief Justice of India with the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, inaugurated the judicial complex in Amaravati. The judicial complex will house the interim High Court for Andhra Pradesh. The Chief Justice of India also laid the foundation stone for the construction of a permanent High Court to be built in Nelapadu of Guntur district.

The construction of new high court was necessitated after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. The High Court which was common for both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana till 2018 and recently the separate high courts were notified by the union government after the order from the Supreme Court.

Judicial complex in Amravati

- The Judicial Complex in Amravati was built by Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority within a short span of eight months. The total construction cost is estimated around Rs 173 crores. As a temporary arrangement, the complex will house the High Court of Andhra Pradesh.
- Once the construction of the new high court at Nelapadu of Guntur district is completed, the complex will house the city civil court.

Originally the first High Court of Andhra Pradesh was inaugurated on July 5, 1954, in Guntur and was moved to Hyderabad only in October 1956.

Braille Voter Slips for Visually Impaired and Blind

The Election Commission of India will be issuing Braille voter slips for the visually impaired and blind voters in the Lok Sabha elections due this year. The Braille voter slips were already issued during the recently held assembly polls.

The initiative is part of the strategic framework for 'accessible elections', The Election Commission of India also plans to provide Braille election photo identity cards. The Electronic voting machines already have the Braille feature. The ballot paper pasted on the machine with name and symbol of candidates is Braille enabled.

Strategic Framework on Accessible Elections

- The Strategic Framework on Accessible Elections is a compilation of guidelines issued by Election Commission of India and the Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.
- The guidelines aim to build on sensitization through education and training, community involvement of different sections of society, effective partnership with institutions and organizations and creation of facilities to cater to the specific needs of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) with a view to increasing their participation.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMS, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

Millet Village scheme of Kerala

With 'superfood' and 'eat smart' strategies forming the main ingredients of the latest dietary mantras, Kerala State Agriculture Department is earmarking farm space in more districts for growing nutrient-rich millets.

The state is also planning to expand its Millet Village scheme to various other districts.

Millet Village scheme:

It is a special scheme to promote the cultivation of cereals such as millet, ragi, bajra and maize by setting up a millet village at Attappady. The project aimed at protecting seeds of traditional varieties of millets and ensures food security and livelihood for tribals.

Efforts by government to promote millets:

- In order to promote 'millets', India had on its part notified these climate resilient crops as "Nutri-Cereals" and allowed its inclusion in the Public Distribution System (PDS) for improving nutritional support in April.

- Recognising millets' anti-diabetic properties, the notification called it a "powerhouse of nutrients" and identified several varieties of millets for promotion. The millets in the category of "Nutri-Cereals" include Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), Finger Millet (Ragi), Foxtail Millet (Kangani/Kakun) and Buckwheat (Kuttu) among others.
- Besides, the government had in July substantially hiked the minimum support price (MSP) of millets so that more and more farmers may opt for cultivation of these less water consuming crops.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

30th Member of NATO

Recently the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has announced that Macedonia is set to become the alliance's 30th member.

NATO

- It is an intergovernmental military alliance between 29 North American and European countries.
- The organization implements the 'North Atlantic Treaty' that was signed on April 1949.
- All member countries support each other in accordance with the Article 5 of the Alliance's founding treaty.
- The article of this treaty asserts that an attack against one is an attack against all.
- All Alliance decisions are taken by consensus, with each Ally having an equal say.
- Prominent Partners- NATO cooperates with a range of international organizations and countries in different structures: United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Organisation for Security and Co-operation Council in Europe.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Srinagar- Alusteng – Drass- Kargil – Leh Transmission Line

PM Modi recently dedicated the 220 kV Srinagar- Alusteng – Drass- Kargil – Leh Transmission Line to the Nation. With this, Ladakh is now connected to the National Grid. The project has been completed by the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Navratna Company of Government of India, under Ministry of Power.

It will result in minimizing the massive use of diesel generating sets during winters, and thus will help in protection of beautiful environment, of pristine Ladakh region. This would also give huge boost to the tourism sector and enhance socio-economic development of Ladakh.

What is National Grid?

- It is the high-voltage electric power transmission network in mainland India, connecting power stations and major substations and ensuring that electricity generated anywhere in mainland India can be used to satisfy demand elsewhere.
- The National Grid is owned, operated, and maintained by state-owned Power Grid Corporation of India.
- It is one of the largest operational synchronous grids in the world with 307.8 GW of installed power generation capacity.
- The union territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep are not connected to the National Grid.

Benefits of a National Grid:

- Better availability resulting in lesser power cuts.
- More stability in power.

Cross border transmission links:

Presently, India is importing electricity from Bhutan with synchronous transmission links while exporting power to Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar with asynchronous transmission links between the National Grid, and the electricity grids of these countries.

ISSUES RELATED TO INTERNAL SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Operation Smile:

The 'Operation Smile-V' initiative launched by Hyderabad Police has helped in rescuing 325 children, who were either working as labourers or begging on the streets, since January 1 this year.

- Objective: To trace the missing children and rescue child labourers, Operation Smile-V was launched on January 1 across Telangana.

- Operation Smile also called as Operation Muskaan is an initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to rescue/rehabilitate missing children.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**New Dwarf Galaxy discovered**

Using the Hubble Space Telescope, astronomers have discovered a dwarf galaxy in a globular cluster which is only 30 million light-years away. The researchers determined that this galaxy — nicknamed Bedin 1, after discovery team leader L. R. Bedin of the INAF-Osservatorio Astronomico di Padova in Italy — is a “spheroidal dwarf” just 3,000 light-years wide.

Hubble Space Telescope:

- The Hubble Space Telescope is a large telescope in space. NASA launched Hubble in 1990.
- It was built by the United States space agency NASA, with contributions from the European Space Agency.
- Hubble is the only telescope designed to be serviced in space by astronauts.
- Expanding the frontiers of the visible Universe, the Hubble Space Telescope looks deep into space with cameras that can see across the entire optical spectrum from infrared to ultraviolet.

DEFENCE**Shekatkar Committee Recommendations**

The Committee of Experts (CoE) constituted by the Ministry of Defence under the chairmanship of Lt. Gen (Retd) DB Shekatkar to recommend measures to enhance combat capability and rebalance defence expenditure of the armed forces, submitted its report in December 2016. The Report was taken up by the Ministry of Defence to frame key action points and roadmap for implementation.

Recommendations taken up for implementation

- Optimization of Signals Establishments to include Radio Monitoring Companies
- Restructuring of repair echelons (designated rank) in the Army
- Redeployment of Ordnance echelons to include Vehicle Depots, Ordnance Depots and Central Ordnance Depots apart from streamlining inventory control mechanisms.
- Better utilization of Supply and Transportation echelons and Animal Transport units.
- Closure of Military Farms and Army Postal Establishments in peace locations.
- Enhancement in standards for recruitment of clerical staff and drivers in the Army.
- Improving the efficiency of the National Cadet Corps.

MISCELLANEOUS FACTS**Tribal communities****Zeliangrong tribe**

- Recently two sisters belonging to the Zeliangrong tribe were killed when a powerful bomb exploded in Noney district of Manipur.
- Zeliangrong is one of the major indigenous Naga communities living in the tri-junction of Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland in India.
- The term ‘Zeliangrong’ refers to the combined Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmei tribes
- d) Earlier, the term also covered the Inpui tribe.

Matua community

- Matuas trace their ancestry to East Bengal and many of them entered West Bengal after Partition and after the formation of Bangladesh.
- They are Namasudras or belonging to the Scheduled Caste group.
- ‘Boro Ma’ is a women who is the matriarch of the Matua community.
- The community has recently gained political advantage due to their numbers.