

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION,
EMPOWERMENT ETC****Pre-Departure Orientation Programme**

Given the need to orient potential migrant workers with regard to language, culture, do's and don'ts in the destination country, the emigration process and welfare measures, a Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) programme has been launched.

Key facts:

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in collaboration with Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is conducting the PDOT programme under the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY).
- The National Skill Development Corporation is the implementing agency for this programme.

Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY):

- The Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY) is aimed at skilling Indians seeking employment abroad.
- The programme is also aimed at boosting the confidence of the Indian youth so that they don't feel like strangers when they land in a country of their choice for vocation.
- PKVY will train and certify Indians, who are keen on overseas employment in select sectors, in line with international standards.
- It will be implemented by the National Skill Development Corporation through its training partners and in consultation with the Ministry of External Affairs and the Skill Development Ministry.

NSDC:

- National Skill Development Corporation India (NSDC), established in 2009, is a not-for-profit company set up by the Ministry of Finance.
- NSDC aims to promote skill development by catalyzing creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions.
- It provides funding to build scalable and profitable vocational training initiatives.
- Its mandate is also to enable support system which focuses on quality assurance, information systems and train the trainer academies either directly or through partnerships.
- It also develops appropriate models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives.

Rules To Allow Employment of Women in Mines

In exercise of the power conferred under Mines Act, 1952, the Central Government has exempted the women employed in any mine above ground and in any mine below ground from the provisions of section 46 of the Mines Act, 1952. However, it is subject to the following conditions, namely:

In the case of women employed in any mine above ground:

- The owner of a mine may deploy women between the hours of 7 pm and 6 am in the mine above ground including opencast workings;
- the deployment of women shall be after obtaining the written consent of the concerned woman employee;
- the women so deployed shall be provided with adequate facilities and safeguards regarding occupational safety, security and health;
- the deployment of women shall be subject to the framing and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures on the basis of the guidelines issued in this regard by the Chief Inspector of Mines from time to time;
- the deployment of women shall be in a group of not less than three in a shift.

In the case of women employed in any mine below ground:

- the owner of a mine may deploy women between the hours of 6 am and 7 pm in technical, supervisory and managerial work where continuous presence may not be required.
- the deployment of women shall be after obtaining the written consent of the concerned woman employee;
- the women so deployed shall be provided with adequate facilities and safeguards regarding occupational safety, security and health;

- the deployment of women shall be subject to the framing and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures on the basis of the guidelines issued in this regard by the Chief Inspector of Mines from time to time;
- the deployment of women shall be in a group of not less than three.

Background:

- The Mines Act, 1952, restricted the employment of women in underground mines and also in opencast or aboveground workings of the mine during night hours between 7PM and 6AM.
- Several women employees groups, industry and students enrolled with various institutions pursuing mining engineering courses at degree and diploma levels have been representing to the government at different forum that women should be provided equal employment opportunity for working in mines. Requests from Mining Companies were also received.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Shehri Samridhi Utsav**

Shehri Samridhi Utsav (SSU) is a pan- India initiative of Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA). It aims to extend the outreach of Deendayal Antyodaya Mission – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), to the most vulnerable. It further aims to showcase its initiatives and facilitate access of Self-Help Group (SHG) members to the other government schemes.

Events under SSU

- Shehri Samridhi Utsav began with a series of rallies led by women's' SHGs, across the length and breadth of the country.
- These rallies spread awareness about DAY-NULM in urban poor communities.
- Through the Utsav, SHG members across cities are being linked to national government schemes.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**A National Register of Exclusion- On NRC Process**

Recent observations have found the official bias and arbitrariness in the NRC updation process. Many Residents with enough authentic documents are denied the elementary due process to prove citizenship.

- There is a complete absence of public compassion as well.
- Many persons are dropped from the draft NRC only because of minor differences in the spelling of Bengali names in English in different documents.
- The process empowers the Assam Police to identify anyone it suspects to be a 'foreigner'.
- Police department have marked the impoverished migrant workers as illegal immigrants, even if they are citizens of the country.
- All cases referred by the police are heard by Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs). But here due process is not followed as the political interference is involved.

Implications:

- Women are especially in danger of exclusion from the citizenship register.
- They typically don't have birth certificates or are not sent to school.
- They get married before they become adults. Therefore, by the time their names first appear in voters' lists are different from those of their parents.

Concerns:

- As the proof of citizenship is on the heads of the people, they find very difficult to deal with it. It has put them in distress cycle.
- It is bound to deploy lawyers paid by the state to fight their cases in the Foreign Tribunals (FTs) and higher courts. However, No one has been provided a legal aid.
- People need to spend the enormous amounts of money to pay lawyers and other costs. It has put them under financial debts.
- Majority of them are poorly educated and very impoverished, doing low-paid work such as drawing rickshaws or working as domestic work or farm labour.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMS, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)**

The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports is implementing Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) within overall ambit of National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) for providing financial assistance to elite athletes included in TOPS for their customized training in world class training institutes/academies within the country and abroad.

- It aims at identifying and supporting potential medal prospects for upcoming Olympic Games.
- It will provide selected sportspersons customized training at institutes having world class facilities and also other necessary support is being provided to the elite athletes. It will also provide a benchmark for selection of athletes on par with international standards.
- Under it, Sports Authority of India (SAI) and federations, which are members of Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), will be nodal agencies for disbursement of fund. They will make payments directly to beneficiary person and institution concerned on behalf of athletes

National Sports Development Fund: Established in 1998, under Charitable Endowments Act 1890, vide Government of India Notification dated 12th November 1998.

Functions:

- The NSDF supports sportspersons to excel in the field by providing opportunities to train under coaches of international repute with technical, scientific and psychological support and also in getting exposure to international competitions.
- Financial assistance is also provided to specific projects for promotion of sports and games sponsored by reputed Organizations/Institutes, provided the facilities so created are made available to a sizeable population of the area/region.

The Council:

- The Fund is managed by a Council constituted by the Central Government.
- Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports is the Chairperson of the council.
- The Members of the Council include senior officers in the Department of Sports/Sports Authority of India.
- The representatives of the Apex industry organizations namely, FICCI, CII and ASSOCHAM have been included in the Council as members.
- The representatives of Sports Promotion Boards of reputed organizations are also members of the Council.
- Joint Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports is the ex-officio Member Secretary of the Council.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**

The Ministry of Home Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs and National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is organising a meeting of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Cluster Group on Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in New Delhi.

IORA:

- The Indian Ocean Rim Association was set up with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean Region
- The IORA is a regional forum, tripartite in nature, bringing together representatives of Government, Business and Academia, for promoting co-operation and closer interaction among them.
- It is based on the principles of Open Regionalism for strengthening Economic Cooperation particularly on Trade Facilitation and Investment, Promotion as well as Social Development of the region.
- India, Australia, Iran, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Singapore, Mauritius, Madagascar, UAE, Yemen, Seychelles, Somalia, Comoros and Oman are among the members of IORA.

Significance of IORA: The existence of IORA is a reminder of the untapped potential of Indian Ocean regionalism. Nearly five decades ago, in the aftermath of decolonisation, the attempt to bring together

the Indian Ocean states faltered amidst deep divisions within the littoral and due to the negative impact of the Cold War. Today, the IORA underlines the region's agency in shaping its own future.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Security of Elephant corridors

Asian Elephant Alliance, an umbrella initiative by five NGOs, has come together to secure 96 out of the 101 existing corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India.

Key facts:

- The joint venture aims to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors, old and new, in the next ten years.
- The alliance joined hands to raise the mammoth sum as money was the main constraint in securing the land.
- NGOs Elephant Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IUCN Netherlands and World Land Trust have teamed up with Wildlife Trust of India's (WTI) in the alliance.

Elephant Corridors: Elephant corridors are narrow strips of land that connect two large habitats of elephants. Elephant corridors are crucial to reduce animal fatalities due to accidents and other reasons. So fragmentation of forests makes it all the more important to preserve migratory corridors.

- The movement of elephants is essential to ensure that their populations are genetically viable. It also helps to regenerate forests on which other species, including tigers, depend.
- Nearly 40% of elephant reserves are vulnerable, as they are not within protected parks and sanctuaries. Also, the migration corridors have no specific legal protection.
- Forests that have turned into farms and unchecked tourism are blocking animals' paths. Animals are thus forced to seek alternative routes resulting in increased elephant-human conflict.
- Weak regulation of ecotourism is severely impacting important habitats. It particularly affects animals that have large home ranges, like elephants.

Gaj Yatra:

- 'Gaj Yatra', a nationwide campaign to protect elephants, was launched on the occasion of World Elephant Day in 2017. The campaign is planned to cover 12 elephant range states. The elephant is part of India's animal heritage and the Government celebrates this day to spread awareness about the conservation of the species.
- The 15 months campaign will be led by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). The campaign aims to create awareness about elephant corridors to encourage free movement in their habitat.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

India's communication satellite GSAT-31 launched

India's latest communication satellite, GSAT-31 was successfully launched from the Spaceport in French Guiana. The launch vehicle Ariane 5 VA-247 lifted off from Kourou Launch Base, French Guiana carrying India's GSAT-31 and Saudi Geostationary Satellite 1/Hellas Sat 4 satellites.

GSAT-31

- It was launched in an elliptical Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit with a perigee (nearest point to Earth) of 250 km and an apogee (farthest point to Earth) of 35,850 km, inclined at an angle of 3.0 degree to the equator.
- With a lift-off mass of 2536 kg, GSAT-31 will augment the Ku-band transponder capacity in Geostationary Orbit.
- The satellite will provide continuity to operational services on some of the in-orbit satellites.
- GSAT-31 will provide DTH Television Services, connectivity to VSATs for ATM, Stock-exchange, Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG) and e-governance applications.
- The satellite will also be used for bulk data transfer for a host of emerging telecommunication applications.
- It is the India's 40th communication satellite which is configured on ISRO's enhanced 'I-2K Bus', utilising the maximum "bus capabilities" of this type.