

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, HEALTH, EDUCATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)**

AYUSH ministry and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), New Delhi will collaborate in research and education in areas of traditional systems of medicine and its integration with modern science.

This is not the first collaboration of the two organisations. CSIR and the Department of AYUSH (now Ministry) has developed the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL).

About TKDL:

- The Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) is an Indian digital knowledge repository of the traditional knowledge, especially about medicinal plants and formulations used in Indian systems of medicine.
- Set up in 2001, as a collaboration between the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the MINISTRY OF AYUSH.
- Objective of the library is to protect the ancient and traditional knowledge of the country from exploitation through biopiracy and unethical patents, by documenting it electronically and classifying it as per international patent classification systems.
- Apart from that, the non-patent database serves to foster modern research based on traditional knowledge, as it simplifies access to this vast knowledge of remedies or practices.
- The TKDL contains documentation of publicly available traditional knowledge (TK) that:
 - relates to Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Yoga
 - is in digitized format
 - is available in five languages: English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish.
- The TKDL:
 - seeks to prevent the granting of patents for products developed utilizing TK where there has been little, if any, inventive step
 - intends to act as a bridge between information recorded in ancient Sanskrit and patent examiners (with its database containing information in a language and format understandable to patent examiners)
 - facilitates access to information not easily available to patent examiners, thereby minimizing the possibility that patents could be granted for “inventions” involving only minor or insignificant modifications.

Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits

Over 3,100 special kits for collecting blood and semen samples, besides other evidence to carry out immediate investigations into sexual assault cases have been distributed among the States and UTs by the MHA.

Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits

- The Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits (SAECK) or ‘rape investigation kits’ are designed to carry out immediate medico-legal investigation and aid in furnishing evidence in sexual assault and rape cases.
- Each of these kits comprises essential items that will aid in furnishing evidence such as blood and semen samples in sexual assault and rape cases, thus helping the prosecution gather evidence against the accused.
- The kit has a set of test tubes and bottles, which mention contents and specifications.
- These kits also contain instructions on collection of evidence from the crime scene.
- The SAECKs would be sent to the closest laboratory and within two months the results would be out.
- Police and medical officers are being given training on how to use the kits in the event of any such case happening in their area of jurisdiction.
- The kits are expected to help law enforcement agencies to ensure effective investigation in a timely manner for better prosecution and convictions in sexual assault cases.

Why such move?

- The SAECKs or ‘rape investigation kits’ were procured with financial support under the central government’s ‘Nirbhaya Fund’, which was named after the 2012 Delhi gang-rape victim.
- Incidents of crime against women rose from 3,29,243 in 2015 to 3,38,954 in 2016.
- In 2015, as many as 34,651 cases of rape were registered in the country. The figure increased to 38,947 in 2016, according to the data of the National Crime Records Bureau.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Soon, heritage by-laws for PuranaQila, Khair-ul-Manazil**

The heritage by-laws, drafted in accordance with the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010, for PuranaQila and the Khair-ul-Manazil mosque, will be out in the public domain

National Monument Authority (NMA) drafting rules:

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) can only carry out repairs in the 100 metre-span from a protected area, which is called the prohibited area.
- The area starting from 100 metres from such a monument till 300 metres away from it is the “regulated area”, as per the Act.
- For the regulated areas, the NMA is drafting heritage by-laws for each monument or group of monuments that will determine the nature of new construction activity.
- The proposed by-laws will lay down restrictions on the height of new constructions, among other features.

Purpose

- The by-laws would be aimed at ensuring new constructions are “in harmony” with the protected monuments.
- After these two monuments in Delhi, the NMA will be working towards finalising by-laws for several monuments in MP and UP, for which drafts have been received from regional officials.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**In an oil slick**

Faced with the U.S.’s intransigent demand that all countries put a full stop to oil imports from Iran or face sanctions, the Indian government has indicated it will ‘zero out’ oil imports after the May 2 deadline.

What next?

- Alternative Energy Sources – Statements from the Petroleum and External Affairs Ministries suggest the government’s focus is now on finding alternative sources of energy, and minimising the impact on the Indian market.
- At last count, India was importing about 10% of its oil needs from Iran, although it had considerably reduced its intake over the last few months.

US’s Directions-

- The U.S. has made it clear that Indian companies that continue to import oil from Iran would face severe secondary sanctions, including being taken out of the SWIFT international banking system and a freeze on dollar transactions and U.S. assets.
- In response, Indian importers, including the oil PSUs, have decided that sourcing oil from Iran is unviable at present.

India’s Interests –

- As a result, the government is seeking to explain the decision as a pragmatic one, taken in India’s best interests.
- Officials point to the six-month reprieve, from November 2018 to May 2019, that they received from the U.S. in the form of sanctions waivers to import Iranian oil, and the exemption to continue developing the Chabahar port, as positive outcomes of the negotiations over the past year.

Caving under pressure

- Such arguments are, however, not very convincing. India has, in effect, now decided to cave in to U.S. pressure on the issue less than a year after External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said that India would recognise only UN sanctions, not “unilateral” ones.
- In fact, last February Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed in Iranian President Hassan Rouhani’s presence in Delhi to increase India’s oil intake from Iran.

Costs Due to ban

- There are other real costs attached to the U.S. ultimatum that India may have to bear.
- High Costs – The price of oil has already shot up above the \$70 mark in April.
- The threat to oil shipments – In addition, Iran has threatened to shut down the Strait of Hormuz, a key channel for global oil shipments, which would further lead to inflationary trends, not just for oil but other commodities too.
- Other Interests – Any direct backlash from Iran for its decision will also jeopardise India’s other interests in the country, including its considerable investment in the Chabahar port, which India is building as an alternative route for trade to Central Asia.

In the larger picture, India isn’t just testing its traditional ties with Iran, but also giving in to President Donald Trump’s blatant bullying after his administration withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal. Building a counter – Instead of engaging in what appear to have been fruitless negotiations with the U.S. over the past year, India, China, the EU and other affected entities could have spent their time more productively in building a counter with an alternative financial architecture, immune to the U.S.’s arbitrary moves.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Kumbh brought Allahabad to verge of an epidemic, says NGT

Both the governments, at the Centre and Uttar Pradesh, claimed to have organised a ‘swachh’ — clean — Kumbh in the winter of 2018-19, but the NGT seems to differ. In fact, the quasi judicial body rang alarm bells about host city Allahabad being on the verge of an epidemic. While predicting a rise in case of acute diarrhoea, enteric fever, viral hepatitis and cholera, the NGT said responsibility needs to be fixed so an epidemic can be prevented.

Why Kumbh left an epidemic behind?

- Poor solid waste management: The green bench flagged poor solid waste management during the months-long religious gathering. The NGT said 60,000 metric tonnes (mt) of solid waste had been collected at nearest SWM Plant which was lying untreated. Of this, 18,000 mt was generated in Kumbh, but the plant was not operational since September 2018.
- Polluted Groundwater: Also, the tribunal pointed out that groundwater too has been polluted. Dirty water from toilets was being collected in kutch pits. The base of the soak pits had not been lined and the dirty water could percolate underground.
- Ganga, the ultimate sufferer: The NGT found that a large number of toilets were constructed very close to the river. The nearby geotubes had more sewage than it could treat. The geo tube was not working satisfactorily and 50 per cent of the sewage from the drain was trapped and the rest was going into the Ganga.
- No lesson learnt from past: This is not the first Kumbh to have come under criticism for poor management. Things were far from perfect during the last Kumbh as well. The CAG of India’s audit report of the event read, that no effective planning for protection of environment and pollution control was made for the MahaKumbh.

Earth Day:

- It is an annual event, organized to show support for environmental protection around the world on April 22.
- Earth Day was founded by American senator Gaylord Nelson for environmental education.
- This day commenced on April 22, 1970. In the year 2020, the 50th anniversary of the first Earth Day will be celebrated.
- Theme of Earth Day 2019: Protect Our Species.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE
ETC****Mosquirix: World's first Malaria vaccine**

African Nation, Malawi will be undertaking large scale pilot tests for the world's most advanced experimental malaria vaccine in a bid to prevent the disease. The vaccine has been recommended by WHO for pilot introduction in selected areas of 3 African countries- Ghana, Kenya and Malawi.

World's first vaccine against a parasitic disease: Mosquirix:

- RTS,S, known by its trade name Mosquirix, uses antibodies to target proteins presented by sporozoites (such as the circumsporozoite protein of falciparum) to enhance the immune system and help prevent the parasite from infecting the liver.
- Mosquirix is also engineered using a hepatitis B viral protein and a chemical adjuvant to further boost the immune response for enhanced effectiveness.

India's efforts in this regard:

- India's progress in fighting malaria is an outcome of concerted efforts to ensure that its malaria programme is country-owned and country-led, even as it is in alignment with globally accepted strategies.
- At the East Asia Summit in 2015, India pledged to eliminate the disease by 2030. Following this public declaration, India launched the five-year National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination. This marked a shift in focus from malaria "control" to "elimination". The plan provides a roadmap to achieve the target of ending malaria in 571 districts out of India's 678 districts by 2022.

Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative: Among states, Odisha's Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative is significant.

- The initiative aims to deliver services to the most inaccessible and hardest hit people of the State. The initiative has in-built innovative strategies to combat asymptomatic malaria.
- The programme is jointly implemented by Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Malaria Research (ICMR-NIMR), National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), Odisha and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV).

QUOTE OF THE DAY

**A dream doesn't become a reality through magic; it takes
SWEAT, DETERMINATION & HARD WORK.**