

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize**

The Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2019 was awarded to author Rana Dasgupta for his 2010 novel "Solo".

Solo is a tale of estrangement and the ultimate failure of material existence.

About the prize:

- It aims to revive poetry and books that can change lives.
- An amount of \$10,000, a Tagore statue and a certificate for contribution to literature will be given to the awardee.
- Eligibility: Indian Poets, novelists and Playwrights writing in officially recognized languages or dialects of the Indian subcontinent, including English.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Khasi 'kingdoms' to revisit 1947 agreements**

A federation of 25 Himas or Khasi kingdoms that have a cosmetic existence today has planned to revisit the 1948 agreements that made present-day Meghalaya a part of India.

Concerns of Khasis

- The revisiting is aimed at safeguarding tribal customs and traditions from Central laws in force or could be enacted, such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.
- The bill is one of the factors in move to strengthen the Federation of Khasi States that were ruled by a Syiem (king-like head of a Hima).
- Himas are expecting to come to a conclusion on how best it can insulate their customs and traditions from overriding central rules and policies.
- The Constitution has provided self-rule to a considerable extent through tribal councils, there has been an increasing demand for giving more teeth to the Khasi states.

History of Khasi Merger in India

- During the British rule, the Khasi domain was divided into the Khasi states and British territories.
- At that time, the British government had no territorial right on the Khasi states and they had to approach the chiefs of these states if they needed land for any purpose.
- After independence, the British territories became part of the Indian dominion but the Khasi states had to sign documents beginning with the Standstill Agreement that provided a few rights to the states.
- The 25 Khasi states had signed the Instrument of Accession and Annexed Agreement with the Dominion of India between December 15, 1947, and March 19, 1948.
- The conditional treaty with these states was signed by Governor General C. Rajagopalachari on August 17, 1948.

Statehood to Meghalaya

- Meghalaya was formed by carving out two districts from the state of Assam: the United Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills, and the Garo Hills on 21 January 1972.
- Before attaining full statehood, Meghalaya was given semi-autonomous status in 1970.
- The Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia tribes had their own kingdoms until they came under British administration in the 19th century.
- Later, the British incorporated Meghalaya into Assam in 1835.
- The region enjoyed semi-independent status by virtue of a treaty relationship with the British Crown.
- At the time of Indian independence in 1947, present-day Meghalaya constituted two districts of Assam and enjoyed limited autonomy within the state of Assam.
- A movement for a separate Hill State began in 1960.
- The Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969 accorded an autonomous status to the state of Meghalaya.

- The Act came into effect on 2 April 1970, and an autonomous state of Meghalaya was born out of Assam.
- In 1971, the Parliament passed the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971, which conferred full statehood on the autonomous state of Meghalaya.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

WHO guidelines on physical activity for children under 5 years of age

The WHO issued guidelines as part of a campaign to tackle the global obesity crisis and ensure that young children grow up fit and well, particularly since development in the first five years of life contributes to children's motor and cognitive development and lifelong health.

Recommendations at a glance:

Infants (less than 1 year) should:

- Be physically active several times a day in a variety of ways, particularly through interactive floor-based play; more is better. For those not yet mobile, this includes at least 30 minutes in prone position (tummy time) spread throughout the day while awake.
- Not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g. prams/strollers, high chairs, or strapped on a caregiver's back). Screen time is not recommended. When sedentary, engaging in reading and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged.
- Have 14–17h (0–3 months of age) or 12–16h (4–11 months of age) of good quality sleep, including naps.

Children 1-2 years of age should:

- Spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of types of physical activities at any intensity, including moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity, spread throughout the day; more is better.
- Not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g., prams/strollers, high chairs, or strapped on a caregiver's back) or sit for extended periods of time. For 1-year-olds, sedentary screen time (such as watching TV or videos, playing computer games) is not recommended. For those aged 2 years, sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better. When sedentary, engaging in reading and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged.
- Have 11-14 hours of good quality sleep, including naps, with regular sleep and wake-up times.

Children 3-4 years of age should:

- Spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of types of physical activities at any intensity, of which at least 60 minutes is moderate- to vigorous intensity physical activity, spread throughout the day; more is better.
- Not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time (e.g., prams/strollers) or sit for extended periods of time. Sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better. When sedentary, engaging in reading and storytelling with a caregiver is encouraged.
- Have 10–13h of good quality sleep, which may include a nap, with regular sleep and wake-up times.

World Immunization Week 2019

- World Immunization Week is celebrated in the last week of April month.
- The week aims to promote the use of vaccines to protect people against various diseases. Immunization is recognised as the most successful and cost-effective health invention, which saves millions of lives every year.
- The theme for this year's immunization week is – Protected Together: Vaccines Work! The week will also be celebrating Vaccine Heroes from around the world. Vaccine heroes are the people from parents, community members to innovators and health workers who help ensure that everyone is protected from diseases by getting vaccinated.

How does vaccination work?

- Our immune system is composed of various types of cells. These cells defend us against invaders and remove the harmful pathogens. However, for that our immune system needs to recognise that an invader is dangerous. Vaccination works by teaching our immune system

how to recognise new diseases. Vaccines stimulate our bodies to make antibodies against antigens of pathogens. It also teaches the immune system to remember the antigens that cause infection, which leads to a faster response to the same disease in the future.

- In simple terms, vaccines work by exposing you to a safer version of a disease. While the body responds to the vaccine, it builds an adaptive immune system, which helps the body to fight off the actual infection in the future.
- A vaccine has two parts: A vaccine usually consists of two parts and is usually given through an injection. The first part is the antigen, which is a piece of disease one's body must learn to recognise. The second part is the adjuvant, which sends a danger signal to the body and helps your immune system to respond strongly against the antigen. All this helps in developing your immunity.

Global Talent Competitiveness Index

Global Talent Competitive Index (GTCI) for 2019 has been released.

Background:

- GTCI, launched in 2013, is an annual benchmarking report that measures the ability of countries to compete for talent.
- It is released by INSEAD business school in partnership with Tata Communications and Adecco Group.
- The report measures levels of Global Talent Competitiveness by looking at 68 variables such as ease of hiring, gender earnings gap, and prevalence of training in firms.

Uniqueness of this year's report:

- This year's report has a special focus on entrepreneurial talent – how it is being encouraged, nurtured and developed throughout the world and how this affects the relative competitiveness of different economies.
- The report also reveals that cities rather than countries are developing stronger roles as talent hubs and will be crucial to reshaping the global talent scene.

India's performance:

- India remains the laggard in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) region and was ranked 80.
- It performs better than its lower-income peers when it comes to growing (48th) talent, primarily by virtue of the possibilities for Lifelong Learning (38th) and Access to Growth Opportunities (41st).
- An above-average Business and Labour Landscape (38th) and Employability (34th) raise the scores of the pillars related to Enable (70th) and Vocational and Technical Skills (72nd) that are otherwise hampered by the remaining sub-pillars.
- Notwithstanding the scope for improvement across the board, India's biggest challenge is to improve its ability to Attract (95th) and Retain (96th) talent.
- Above all, there is a need to address its poor level of Internal Openness (116th)—in particular with respect to weak gender equality and low tolerances towards minorities and immigrants—and its disappointing showing in Lifestyle indicators.

Global findings: In this sixth edition, Switzerland continues to lead the 2019 Global Talent Competitiveness index, while Singapore and the United States come in second and third respectively. Yemen has finished at the bottom of this year's index at 125th, just below Congo (124th) and Burundi (123rd).

INDIAN ECONOMY

National Housing Bank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has sold its entire stakes in the National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) and National Housing Bank. The decision to divest its entire stake was taken based on the recommendations of the second Narasimham Committee. The government now holds a 100 per cent stake in both NHB and NABARD.

About NHB:NHB is an All India Financial Institution (AIFI), set up in 1988, under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987. It is an apex agency established to operate as a principal agency to promote housing finance institutions both at local and regional levels and to provide financial and other support incidental to such institutions and for matters connected therewith.

NABARD:

- It is an apex development and specialized bank established on 12 July 1982 by an act by the parliament of India.
- Its main focus is to uplift rural India by increasing the credit flow for elevation of agriculture & rural non farm sector.
- It was established based on the recommendations of the Committee set up by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) under the chairmanship of Shri B. Shivaraman.
- It replaced the Agricultural Credit Department (ACD) and Rural Planning and Credit Cell (RPCC) of Reserve Bank of India, and Agricultural Refinance and Development Corporation (ARDC).
- It has been accredited with “matters concerning policy, planning and operations in the field of credit for agriculture and other economic activities in rural areas in India”.

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

DBT funds research to ‘cultivate’ meat in lab

The Department of Biotechnology has decided to fund the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) and the National Research Centre on Meat for research on cell-based meat.

What is it?

- Cell-based meat, also called clean meat or cultured meat, is nutritionally equivalent to conventional meat, and tastes, smells, looks and feels exactly the same. The only difference is in the way it is produced.
- Rather than raising livestock and slaughtering them for meat, cell-based meat is produced through ‘cellular agriculture’, with animal cells being cultivated into meat.

Why It’s the Future?

- Lab-grown meats beat the old-fashioned kind in two areas: They’re better for body and they’re better for the environment. Clean meats are grown in a sterile environment, meaning that you’ll avoid bacteria found in traditional meats. The environmental benefits might outweigh your personal benefit, though: As the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization notes, animals raised for food make up 14.5 percent of total carbon emissions across the globe.
- According to one study, replacing livestock with lab-grown meats will cut down on the land needed by 99 percent, and the water needed by 90 percent. Granted, those savings are off-set by the energy needed to power the lab itself, but it’s still a net benefit. By shifting to lab-grown, you’ll save resources that will be increasingly in demand as the world’s population continues ticking upwards — by some estimates, demand for meat and seafood will double by 2050, reaching 1.2 trillion pounds.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Turn off the GADGETS to turn on your MIND.