INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY

Jaipur gets UNESCO World Heritage tag

The Walled City of Jaipur, known for its iconic architectural legacy and vibrant culture made its entry into the UNESCO World Heritage Site list. ICOMOS (The International Council on Monuments and Sites) had inspected the city in 2018, post its nomination. With this, India now has 38 World Heritage Sites , that include 30 Cultural properties, 7 Natural properties and 1 mixed site.

About Jaipur

- The historic walled city of Jaipur in Rajasthan was founded in 1727 AD under the patronage of Sawai Jai Singh II.
- It serves as the capital city of the culturally-rich state of Rajasthan.

Why Jaipur?

- The City of Jaipur is an exceptional urban example in indigenous city planning and construction in South Asia.
- Unlike other medieval cities of the region, Jaipur was deliberately planned as a new city on the plains open for trade as opposed to hilly terrain and military cities of past.
- In town planning, it shows an interchange of ancient Hindu, Mughal and contemporary Western ideas that resulted in the form of the city.
- The site selected within the valley that lay to the south of Amber hills was comparatively flat and unmarred by any previous construction.
- Besides an exemplary planning, its iconic monuments such as the Govind Dev temple, City Palace, Jantar Mantar and Hawa Mahal excel in artistic and architectural craftsmanship of the period.
- Jaipur is an expression of the astronomical skills, living traditions, unique urban form and exemplary foresighted city planning of an 18th century city from India.
- Jaipur is an exemplary development in town planning and architecture that demonstrates amalgamation and important interchange of several ideas over the late medieval period.

About the World Heritage Committee

- The World Heritage Committee is composed of representatives of 21 States Parties to the World Heritage Convention who meet annually.
- The Committee is in charge of implementing the Convention.
- To date, 1,092 sites in 167 countries have been inscribed on the World Heritage List.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)

Subhash Palekar, the man behind the idea of ZBNF came in the Union Budget speech of FM where she talked of the need to "go back to basics" and replicate this innovative model that can help in doubling our farmers.

What is Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)?

- ZBNF is a set of farming methods, and also a grassroots peasant movement, which has spread to various states in India.
- According to the "zero budget" concept, farmers won't have to spend any money on fertilisers and other agricultural inputs.
- Over 98% of the nutrients that crops require — carbon dioxide, nitrogen, water, solar energy — are already present in nature.
- The remaining 1.5-2% are taken from the soil, after microorganisms convert them from "non-available" to "available" forms, for intake by the roots.
- This is where the special package of practices which, Palekar says he perfected during the 1990s at his 36-acre farm in Belura village of Amravati district in Maharashtra's drought-prone Vidarbha region, comes in.

Four Wheels of ZBNF

- The "four wheels" of ZBNF are 'Jiwamrita', 'Bijamrita', 'Mulching' and 'Waaphasa'.
- Jiwamrita is a fermented mixture of cow dung and urine (of desi breeds), jaggery, pulses flour, water and soil from the farm bund.
- This isn't a fertiliser, but just a source of some 500 crore micro-organisms that can convert all the necessary "non-available" nutrients into "available" form.

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- Bijamrita is a mix of desi cow dung and urine, water, bund soil and lime that is used as a seed treatment solution prior to sowing.
- Mulching, or covering the plants with a layer of dried straw or fallen leaves, is meant to conserve soil moisture and keep the temperature around the roots at 25-32 degrees Celsius, which allows the microorganisms to do their job.
- Waaphasa, or providing water to maintain the required moisture-air balance, also achieves the same objective.

Astra's of ZBNF against pest attacks

- Palekar also advocates the use of special 'Agniastra', 'Bramhastra' and 'Neemastra' concoctions — again based on desi cow urine and dung, plus pulp from leaves of neem, white datura, papaya, guava and pomegranates — for controlling pest and disease attacks.

Is it organic farming?

- ZBNF uses farmyard manure or vermicompost mostly produced from Eisenia fedita, a species imported from Europe and Canada.
- These foreign earthworms accumulate heavy metals like lead, arsenic and cadmium, which get transferred into their castings that, far from being manure, are actually toxic to the soil.
- So, the soil fertility, instead of improving, only reduces".
- He says that in ZBNF, the work of making nutrients available to plants is done exclusively by microorganisms from Jiwamrita and "local earthworms".

However, not all farmers are convinced about ZBNF. Why?

- The cost of labour for collection of dung and urine, apart from the other inputs used in preparation of Jiwamrita, Neemastra or Bramhastra is quit higher.
- Keeping cows is also a cost that has to be accounted for. Farmers cannot afford to keep desi cows that yield very little milk.
- If ZBNF is practiced in isolation, the crop grown would be vulnerable to attacks by insects and pests which may move there from fields where chemical pesticides are being sprayed.
- Many state governments, including Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka have openly supported ZBNF after studying its efficacy.

India to be a $5-trillion economy

The government has announced that its main goal is to make India a $5-trillion economy by the end of this term.

Present state:

- In 2014, India's GDP was $1.85 trillion. Today it is $2.7 trillion and India is the sixth-largest economy in the world.
- Essentially the reference is to the size of an economy as measured by the annual GDP.

Are Indians the sixth-richest people in the world?

- No. That India is the sixth-largest economy does not necessarily imply that Indians are the sixth-richest people on the planet.
- GDP per capita gives a better sense of how an average resident of an economy might be fairing. It reveals a very different, and indeed a more accurate picture of the level of prosperity in the respective economies.
- For instance, on average, a UK resident's income was 21 times that of an average Indian in 2018.
- Still, the richest 1% of Indians own 58.4% of wealth. The richest 10 % of Indians own 80.7 % of the wealth.

Can India achieve the target by 2024?

- The answer would depend essentially on the assumption about economic growth.
- If India grows at 12% nominal growth (that is 8% real GDP growth and 4% inflation), then from the 2018 level of $2.7 trillion, India would reach the 5.33 trillion mark in 2024. India must keep growing at a rapid pace to attain this target.

How will GDP per capita change when India hits the $5-trillion mark?

- If by 2024 India's GDP is $5.33 trillion and India's population is 1.43 billion (according to UN population projection).
- India's per capita GDP would be $3,727.

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- This would be considerably more than what it is today, still it will be lower than Indonesia's GDP per capita in 2018.

Reducing Fiscal Deficit

In the recent Union Budget, there was a debate over whether to deviate from the path of fiscal consolidation due to sluggish tax collections. But the Government has chosen to bring down the deficit to 3.3 percent of GDP in 2019-20 (BE), from 3.4 per cent in 2018-19 (RE).

Which are the Centre's plan to meet its fiscal deficit target?

- At the aggregate level, the Centre expects its gross tax revenues to grow at 18.3 per cent in FY20. Achieving this is a challenging task.
- Direct tax collections are expected to grow at roughly 18.6 percent in FY20, up from 12.3 per cent the year before.
- Income tax collections are expected to grow by a staggering 23.2 per cent in FY20. In comparison, they grew by a mere 7.2 per cent the year before.
- Indirect tax collections have been budgeted to grow around 18 per cent in FY20, up from roughly 4 per cent the previous year.
- The surge in collections is expected from higher taxes on petrol and diesel and higher customs duties.
- This budget also relies on dividends from the RBI and other public financial institutions, disinvestment proceeds and revenues from the telecom sector to shore up revenues.

Why cesses and surcharges are important?

- Over the years, the Centre has begun to rely more on revenue collected through cesses and surcharges to meet its expenditure obligations.
- According to the 14th Finance Commission, states should receive 42 per cent of the divisible tax pool. The revenue collected through this route is not part of the divisible tax pool and is thus not shared with the states.
- In this Budget the finance minister has raised the special additional excise duty and road and infrastructure cess each by one rupee on a litre of petrol and diesel.
- The amount the Centre hopes to collect through ceases and surcharges are now greater than its entire allocation to centrally sponsored schemes or its total capital expenditure.

What are the challenges?

- Tax collections grew by a mere 8.4 per cent in FY19 due to sluggish economic activity.
- The RBI has lowered its GDP growth projection for FY20 to 7 per cent from 7.4 percent earlier.
- Collections from central GST have been lowered to Rs 5.26 lakh crore in FY20, from the interim Budget target of Rs 6.1 lakh crore.
- Telecom sector is already under stress, and spectrum auctions may not result in expected revenue.
- Failure to meet these stiff targets will not only risk the task of meeting the fiscal deficit target for this year but also cast doubts on the medium-term fiscal roadmap that envisages bringing down the deficit to 3 per cent in 2020-21.

How is public sector borrowing crowd out private investment?

- In the recent past, there has been concern over the rise in borrowings of the public sector (Centre, states and public sector enterprises) as this left little space for the private sector to borrow.
- The current Budget reveals that borrowings by central PSUs are expected to decline from Rs 4.1 lakh crore in FY19 to 3.1 lakh crore in FY20. Much of this decline is due to fall in FCI's borrowings.
- The Centre's gross market borrowings are pegged at Rs 7.1 lakh crore in FY20, up from Rs 5.71 lakh crore last year. But part of the borrowings will be met by raising funds from abroad.
- This will bring down the level of public sector borrowings in the domestic market, creating space for the private sector.
- The combined borrowing of the Centre and PSUs have risen as a percentage of GDP, but they are expected to decline to 4.9 per cent of GDP in FY20 from 5.2 per cent in FY19.

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DEFENCE

Operation 'Sudarshan' launched along the Pakistan border

- BSF has launched the operation 'Sudarshan' to fortify the 'anti-infiltration grid' along the Pakistan border in Punjab and Jammu.
- It was launched on July 1 and will cover the entire 1,000-kms length of the India-Pakistan International Border.
- The Border Security Force is the primary force guarding this frontier as the 'first line of defence'.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT

Odisha schemes in cloud after fall in Central Tax shares

As the State's share in Central taxes will be less than what was anticipated in the Odisha Budget and there is lack of clarity on the quantum of grants from the Centre, the Government is likely to face difficulties in implementation of welfare schemes and carry out routine administrative functions.

Odisha's Share

- Odisha's share in Central taxes anticipated by the State Government in 2019-20 Budget is Rs 39,207 crore. Besides, it had also estimated Rs 30,559 crore grant from the Centre.
- The State's Budget of Rs 1,39,000 crore for 2019-20 is mainly to be financed through funds from these two sectors besides borrowing Rs 23,734 crore.
- Official sources, however, maintained that Odisha's share in Central taxes will be Rs 37,559 crore, creating a deficit of around Rs 1,648 crore in the State coffers. This will create an extra burden on the State exchequer when it is saddled with implementation of welfare measures announced by the Government.

What should be done?

- Cost cutting is the only measure which will enable the State Government to implement various welfare measures as it has not spelt out any new initiative in the Budget to raise the resources level. Sources said unless the funds anticipated by the State Government from the Centre materialises, the debt burden will increase further.
- In view of less than the anticipated share of the State in Central taxes, funds from other sectors will have to be transferred for implementation of populist schemes.

Other Concerns:

- One of the major expenditure of the Government will be through KALIA scheme which seeks to provide financial support to about 75 lakh farmer families including small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers and sharecroppers. The provision of Rs 5,611 crore has been allocated for the scheme for 2019-20.
- In 2019-20, the State is expected to spend Rs 11,207 crore on servicing its debt. This is 12 per cent higher than the revised estimates of 2018-19.
- This includes Rs 4,707 crore towards repaying loans and Rs 6,500 crore towards interest payments.

Rain deficit in Odisha goes down as monsoon picks up pace

Rainfall deficit in Odisha, which stood at 31.5 per cent last month, has come down after southwest monsoon activities picked up pace in the last one week. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) rainfall deficit in the State between June 1 and July 6 now stands at eight per cent.

The Mansoon Districts

- Gajapati has received the minimum rainfall during the period and recorded a deficit of 55 per cent. Heavy rainfall occurred at isolated places in Sambalpur and Mayurbhanj districts. Kuchinda in Sambalpur received the maximum rainfall of 90 mm followed by Tiring in Mayurbhanj with 70 mm. The monsoon current is active and the rainfall activity will increase from Wednesday. Light to moderate rainfall and thundershower activities are expected to occur at most places in Odisha on Thursday.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Either you run the day or the day runs you.

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Ph.: 8984111101, 8093083555. Web: www.vanikias.com, E-mail: vaniksias@gmail.com

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: What does it mean for India to become a $5-trillion economy? Can India achieve the target by 2024 with the existing income inequality in the economy?

Ans: In 2014, India's GDP was $1.85 trillion. Today it is $2.7 trillion and India is the sixth-largest economy in the world. As a thumb rule, the bigger the size of the economy, the more prosperous it can be expected to be. If by 2024 India's GDP is $5.33 trillion and India's population is 1.43 billion (according to UN population projection). India's per capita GDP would be $3,727. This would be considerably more than what it is today, still it will be lower than Indonesia's GDP per capita in 2018.

If one looks at the GDP per person data published by the govt., it reveals a very different, and indeed a more accurate picture of the level of prosperity in the respective economies. For instance, on average, a UK resident's income was 21 times that of an average Indian in 2018. Other distressing fact includes the richest 1% of Indians own 58.4% of wealth and the richest 10 % of Indians own 80.7 % of the wealth.

The answer, whether India can achieve the target by 2024, would depend essentially on the assumption about economic growth. If India grows at 12% nominal growth (that is 8% real GDP growth and 4% inflation), then from the 2018 level of $2.7 trillion, India would reach the 5.33 trillion mark in 2024. However, there's a glitch. Last year, India grew by just 6.8%. This year, most observers expect it to grow by just 7%. So India must keep growing at a rapid pace to attain this target.

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Ph.: 8984111101, 8093083555. Web: www.vanikias.com, E-mail: vaniksias@gmail.com

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. Consider the following statements w.r.t the UNESCO World Heritage Tag.
   1. India has 38 sites in the UNESCO WHS sites list.
   2. Ahmadabad is the First Indian Heritage City.
   3. Jaipur is the latest city to be included in the list

   Which of the statements is/are correct?
   (a) 1 and 2
   (b) 1 and 3
   (c) 2 and 3
   (d) 1, 2 and 3
2. Which of the following statements is/are correct w.r.t the Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)?
   1. ZBNF is a set of farming methods, and also a grassroots peasant movement, which has spread to various states in India.
   2. According to this concept, farmers won't have to spend any money on fertilisers and other agricultural inputs.
   3. It uses farmyard manure or vermin-compost mostly produced from Eisenia fedita

   Select the correct answer from the codes given below
   (a) 1 and 2
   (b) 2 and 3
   (c) 1 and 3
   (d) 1, 2 and 3
3. Consider the following statements w.r.t India Economic Scenario.
   1. India is the sixth-largest economy which implies that Indians are the sixth-richest people in world.
   2. GDP per capita gives a better sense of how an average resident of an economy might be fairing.

   Which of the statements is/are correct?
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Which of the following action/actions can be taken by the Government to reduce the deficit budget?
   1. Reducing revenue expenditure
   2. Introducing new welfare schemes
   3. Rationalizing subsidies
   4. Reducing import duty

   Select the correct answer using the code given below.
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 and 3
   (c) 1 and 3
   (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
5. Consider the following statement w.r.t the Fiscal Deficit.
   1. Fiscal deficit is expressed as a percentage of the Nominal GDP of India
   2. Fiscal deficit allows for the shortfall in the income of the government to do welfare and development activities

   Which of the statement is/are correct?
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Which of the following operations has been taken up to fortify the 'anti-infiltration grid' along the Pakistan border in Punjab and Jammu?
   (a) Operation Apar Shakti
   (b) Operation Sankatmochan
   (c) Operation Sudarshan
   (d) Operation Pratighat

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