

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**National Essential Diagnostics List**

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has finalised the country's first National Essential Diagnostics List (NEDL).

- India has become the first country in the world to compile such a list that would provide guidance to the government for deciding the kind of diagnostic tests that different healthcare facilities in villages and remote areas require.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) released the first edition of essential diagnostics list (EDL) in May 2018. Even though WHO's EDL acts as a reference point for development of national EDL, India's diagnostics list has been customised and prepared as per landscape of India's health care priorities.
- In India, diagnostics are regulated under the regulatory provisions of the Medical Device Rules, 2017.
- Diagnostics (medical devices and in vitro diagnostics) follow a regulatory framework based on the drug regulations under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945.

NEDL

- Level of Healthcare: NEDL has been developed for all levels of health care – village level, primary, secondary and tertiary care.
 - It builds upon the Free Diagnostics Service Initiative (FDI) and other diagnostics initiatives of the Health Ministry to provide an expanded basket of tests at different levels of the public health system.
 - FDI was launched in July 2015. Under this initiative, the National Health Mission (NHM) is supporting all states to provide essential diagnostics – laboratory and radiology at their public health facilities, free of cost.
- Scope: It includes a group of general laboratory tests for routine patient care and for diagnosis of communicable and non-communicable diseases.
- Inclusion of the diagnostic test on specific diseases selected on the basis of disease burden: Vector borne diseases (Malaria, Dengue, Filariasis, Chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis); Leptospirosis, Brucellosis, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis A, B C and E, HIV, Syphilis.
 - Certain tests have been put as desirable tests and should be included in regions or states with high disease burden of that disease.
 - It also encompasses tests relevant for new programmes such as Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.
 - In addition to tests, corresponding In Vitro Diagnostics (IVD) products have also been recommended. In vitro diagnostics are tests done on samples such as blood or tissue that have been taken from the human body
- A guidance document on “Regulatory framework for diagnostics: National and International” has been included.
- It also recommends list of human resources such as ASHA workers, lab technicians pathologists for different levels of health care as per the proposed list of diagnostics.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Aadi Mahotsav**

The Aadi Mahotsav, a nine-day tribal festival and the Centre's first official function in Ladakh after the government decided to make it a Union Territory, to start in Leh on the evening of 17th August, 2019.

- This is the first time that the Aadi Mahotsav is being held in Ladakh as in earlier times, the Tribal Ministry never got a response from the J&K administration.
- Aadi Mahotsav is a national tribal festival and a joint initiative of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India & Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).

- The festival showcases traditional art and handicrafts and cultural heritage of the country.
- The theme of the festival is : “A celebration of the spirit of Tribal Craft, Culture and Commerce”. An effort is being made to take tribal commerce to the next level of digital and electronic transactions.
- Mahotsav will identify:
 - Food and Forest Produces, which can be processed, value-added and marketed under the Van Dhan Scheme of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
 - Artisans and master craftsmen and women of Ladakh for empanelling them as suppliers of TRIBES India, a brand under the TRIFED. The products can then be marketed all over the country through the 104 retail outlets run by TRIBES India across the country and 190 countries across the world through Amazon, with whom TRIBES India has an agreement.
- In line with the national aspiration to go cashless, for the first time, the tribal artisans will be accepting payment through major credit/debit cards for which Point of Sale (POS) machines have been provided in each stall.

TRIFED:

- TRIFED came into existence in 1987. It is a national-level apex organization functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India.
- TRIFED has its registered and Head Office located in New Delhi and has a network of 13 Regional Offices located at various places in the country.
- The ultimate objective of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people in the country by way of marketing development of the tribal products.

GEOGRAPHY**Geographical Indication Tag**

The government has allotted Geographical Indication (GI) tags to four new products from the states of Tamil Nadu, Mizoram and Kerala. These products are:

- Palani Panchamirtham, is one of the main religious offerings to Lord Dhandayuthapani Swamy, the presiding deity of Arulmigu Dhandayuthapani Swamy Temple, situated in palani hills in Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu.
 - It is a combination of five natural substances, namely, bananas, jaggery sugar, cow ghee, honey and cardamom in a definite proportion.
 - This is the first time a temple ‘prasadam’ from Tamil Nadu has been bestowed with the GI tag.
- Tawlhlohpuan, a medium to heavy, compactly woven, good quality fabric from Mizoram is known for warp yarns, warping, weaving & intricate designs that are made by hand.
- Mizo Puanchei, a colourful Mizo shawl/textile, from Mizoram, is considered as the most colourful among the Mizo textiles.
 - It is an essential possession for every Mizo lady and an important marriage outfit in the state. The weavers insert the designs and motifs by using supplementary yarns while weaving to create this beautiful and alluring textile.
- Tirur betel vine from Kerala, which is mainly cultivated in Tirur, Tanur, Tirurangadi, Kuttippuram, Malappuram and Vengara block panchayats of Malappuram District, is valued both for its mild stimulant action and medicinal properties.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**e-Courts**

- The High Court of Punjab and Haryana to launch its first virtual court (e-Court) at Faridabad.
- This e-Court would deal with traffic challan cases from across the State.
- The project will be launched under the guidance of e-Committee of the Supreme Court of India.

- Virtual courts will remove the need for the litigant to be present in the court and facilitate adjudication of the case online through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

e-Courts Project

- The e-Courts project was conceptualized on the basis of the “National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary – 2005” submitted by e-Committee, Supreme Court of India with a vision to transform the Indian Judiciary by ICT enablement of Courts.
- The e-Courts Mission Mode Project, is a Pan-India Project, monitored and funded by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India for the District Courts across the country.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Forex Reserves

According to the latest Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, India's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$1.620 billion to \$430.572 billion due to rise in foreign currency assets.

- The total foreign currencies (of different countries) an economy possesses at a point of time is its ‘foreign currency assets/reserves’.
- The Forex Reserves (‘foreign exchange reserves’) of an economy is its ‘foreign currency assets’ added with its gold reserves, SDRs (Special Drawing Rights) and Reserve Tranche in the IMF.
- Officially, the RBI targets neither a particular exchange rate nor foreign exchange reserves, but maintains forex reserves to reduce volatility in the forex market.
 - Forex reserves act as an insurance when the rupee tends to be volatile against the dollar,
 - In the process of supporting weakening rupee, RBI needs to buy dollars, ultimately, leading to higher forex buildups..
 - But when RBI purchases dollars, it leads to infusion of rupee into the system which leaves inflationary effect on the economy.
- Citing the example of China, the Economic Survey 2014–15 held that India could target foreign exchange reserves of US\$750 billion to \$1 trillion.
- China has highest forex reserves in the world i.e., \$3.2 trillion. India is currently the sixth largest holder of forex reserves

Reserve tranche: Reserve tranche is a portion of the required quota of currency each member country must provide to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that can be utilized for its own purposes.

Special Drawing Rights

- The SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries’ official reserves
- The SDR is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF.
- Initially SDR was defined as equivalent to 0.888671 grams of fine gold, which at the time, was also equivalent to one U.S. dollar. After the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the SDR was redefined as a basket of currencies.
- This basket includes five currencies—the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen, and the British pound sterling.
- The collapse of Bretton Woods system in 1973 and the shift of major currencies to floating exchange rate regimes lessened the reliance on the SDR as a global reserve asset.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Dragonfly Day

- Recently, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-India), in collaboration with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) conducted dragonfly census and celebrated Dragonfly Day on August 18, in New Delhi and its neighbouring regions.

- It is the second such event dedicated to dragonflies and damselflies and aims to carry out a census and raise awareness about their importance.
- Dragonfly act as important bio-indicators of the ecological health of an area.
- They feed on mosquitoes and other insects that are vectors to life-threatening diseases like Malaria and Dengue.
- The first of this census was carried out in 2018, which revealed a total of 51 different species of these insects in New Delhi and NCR.

Bioindicators

- Bioindicators are living organisms such as plants, plankton, animals, and microbes, which are used to assess the health of the natural ecosystem in the environment.
- Examples of Bioindicators:
 - Lichens are powerful Bioindicators of air quality.
 - Frogs are basically influenced by changes that take place in their freshwater and terrestrial habitats.
 - Algae blooms are often used to indicate large increases of nitrates and phosphates in lakes and rivers.

More than half of forest wildlife declined since 1970: WWF

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has released the “Below the Canopy report”. It is the world’s first-ever global assessment of forest-living species populations.

Highlights of the Report:

- The report uses the methodology of WWF’s Living Planet Report (Living Planet Index) and developed a Forest Specialist Index that tracks wildlife that lives only in forests. In total, the report took into account 268 species (455 populations) of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.
- According to the report, there has been a 53% decline in the number of forest wildlife populations since 1970. Of the 455 monitored populations, more than half declined at an annual rate of 1.7%, on average between 1970 and 2014.
- The report has noted that along with deforestation there were other major threats that has led to decline in wildlife populations. These include: Habitat loss and habitat degradation/change, overexploitation and climate change.
 - Loss of habitat due to logging, agricultural expansion, mining, hunting, conflicts and spread of diseases accounted for almost 60% of threats. Nearly 20% of threats were due to overexploitation.
 - Climate change threatened to 43% of amphibian populations, 37% of reptile populations, 21% of bird populations but only 3% of mammal populations.

In October 2018 WWF published the Living Planet Report. The report highlighted that global populations of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles have decreased by an average of 60% between 1970 and 2014.

In an effort to conserve nature, world leaders have agreed to launch a New Deal for Nature and People at 15th Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) COP in 2020 in China.

DEFENCE

India’s doctrine of Nuclear No First Use

Defence Minister has said that while India has strictly adhered to the doctrine of ‘No First Use’ (NFU) of nuclear weapons, it can be reconsidered on future circumstances.

It was not immediately clear if policymakers are willing to revisit it.

Doctrine in making: A commitment to not be the first to use a nuclear weapon in a conflict has long been India’s stated policy.

- India first adopted a “No first use” policy after its second nuclear tests Pokhran-II, in 1998.
- In August 1999, the govt. released a draft of the doctrine which asserts that nuclear weapons are solely for deterrence and that India will pursue a policy of “retaliation only”.

- Pakistan, by contrast, has openly threatened India with the use of nuclear weapons on multiple occasions beginning from the time the two nations were not even acknowledged nuclear powers.
- No First Use doctrine
- Among the major points in the doctrine was “a posture of No First Use”, which was described as follows:
- Nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere”.
- India’s nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage.
- Also in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons.
- Nuclear retaliatory attacks can only be authorised by the civilian political leadership through the Nuclear Command Authority. (The Nuclear Command Authority comprises a Political Council and an Executive Council. The Political Council is chaired by the PM.)
- India would not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.
- India would continue to put strict controls on the export of nuclear and missile related materials and technologies, participate in the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty negotiations, and continue to observe the moratorium on nuclear tests.
- India remains committed to the goal of a nuclear weapons free world, through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

Why in news?

- The successive governments are following Vajpayee’s doctrine and have directly or indirectly reaffirmed their commitment to NFU.
- However, the doctrine has been questioned at various times by strategic experts in domestic policy debates, and the idea that India should revisit this position has been put forward at various high-level fora.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT

Odisha govt. nod to set up maritime board

- Odisha government has approved the formation of the Odisha Maritime Board in the state.
- The board will deal with the administration, control and management of non-major ports and non-nationalised inland waterways.
- The Board will be constituted with 12 members with Chief Secretary as the chairperson along with representatives of stakeholders departments as well as representatives of the Central government.
- The board will function as a single window facilitator for the overall maritime development of the State.
- It will also provide policy, guidelines and directions for the integrated development of ports and inland water transport keeping in view of the country’s security and defence related concerns.
- Odisha is endowed with a vast coastline of 480 km having rich, unique and natural port locations and perennial rivers.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

What if I fail-fly!!!!

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Why did India adopt the 'No First Use' policy? Should India retain the doctrine?

Ans:

India's 'No first use' nuclear doctrine was recently questioned by the Defence Minister when he said that India should state that "it is a responsible nuclear power and would not use it irresponsibly, instead of declaring an NFU doctrine". Such statement from the Defence Minister on the eve of India-Japan Civil Nuclear Deal drew sharp criticisms from all political parties.

What is 'no first use' nuclear doctrine?

No first use (NFU) policy is more of a pledge by a nuclear power that it would not use nuclear weapons as a means of warfare until or unless attacked by the enemy power through nuclear weapons. Earlier, the concept had also been applied to chemical and biological warfare.

When did India adopt the 'No First Use' policy?

- In August 1999 (post- Pokhran II tests), India released a draft nuclear doctrine which proclaims that nuclear weapons are solely for deterrence and that India will pursue a policy of "retaliation only". The document also assures that India "will not be the first to initiate a nuclear first strike, but will respond with punitive retaliation should deterrence fail" and that decisions to authorise the use of nuclear weapons would be made by the Prime Minister or his 'designated successor(s)'.

Arguments in favour of retaining the NFU doctrine-

- India has always promoted herself as a responsible nuclear weapon state. Hence, a first strike policy would severely damage India's reputation as a responsible nuclear weapon state.
- It enables India to keep the nuclear threshold high with the antagonistic neighbours adopting an irresponsible nuclear stand.
- A withdrawal of NFU doctrine might also push Pakistan's nuclear warheads into irresponsible hands which may turn the 'rogue' state into a nuclear terrorism exporter.
- China, the anticipated rival in the region also adopts a 'no-first use' policy. Hence, withdrawing NFU in India might give it a chance to revisit its stance too.
- If China aborts its NFU stance, then it would become a threat for the global powers such as the United States and the Russian Federation. Thus, a global nuclear arms race would restart again.
- A strategic rethink towards the NFU doctrine might jeopardise India's ballistic missile defence programmes due to the global limelight India might attract because of an offensive stance.
- Nuclear weapons are merely deterrent in nature. The impact of a nuclear strike is unimaginable. Therefore, even a slight push towards hostility could push us to the brink of another nuclear war.

Alternatives available-

- Doctrine of 'Cold Start' is one such solution. It is a military doctrine developed by the Indian Armed Forces for use in a possible war with Pakistan. It involves the various branches of India's military conducting offensive operations as part of unified battle groups. The Cold Start doctrine is intended to allow India's conventional forces to perform holding attacks in order to prevent a nuclear retaliation from Pakistan in case of a conflict.
- Instead of focusing on adopting a first strike policy, India must work towards strengthening its counter strike and second strike capability.

Conclusion:

- India has always projected herself as the firm supporter of nuclear disarmament. It has been the only state to call for a Nuclear Weapons Convention that would ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. However, it is India's no-first use stance that enables New Delhi to vouch for a nuclear weapons free world.
- Mature nations always pursue a NFU policy. In the present strategic context, there is no necessity for India to change its existing nuclear doctrine. Therefore, instead of making offensive overtures towards the neighbours, India should pursue more confidence building measures through diplomatic channels to minimise the threats emanating from our immediate neighbourhood.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. With reference to National Essential Diagnostics List (NEDL), consider the following statements:
 1. It has been customised and prepared as per landscape of India's health care priorities by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
 2. India is the first country in the world to compile such a list that would provide guidance to the government for deciding the kind of diagnostic tests required.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only**
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Which among the following is/are bioindicators?
 1. Dragonfly
 2. Lichens
 3. Frogs
 4. Algae BloomsSelect the correct option from the codes given below:
 - (a) 2, 3 and 4
 - (b) 1, 2 and 4
 - (c) 2 and 4
 - (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4**
3. With reference to the National Board for Wildlife, consider the following statements:
 1. It is a statutory organization constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
 2. It is chaired by the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Consider the following sentences:
 1. India is the second largest holder of forex reserves after USA.
 2. Foreign currency assets, gold reserves, SDRs and Reserve Tranche form the forex reserve of a country.Which of the statements given above are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only**
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. Which of the following high court of India recently launched the Virtual Court?
 - (a) Telangana High Court
 - (b) Andhra Pradesh High Court
 - (c) Punjab & Haryana High Court**
 - (d) Delhi High Court
6. Which of the following statements with reference to the Aadi Festival is/are correct?
 1. It is a national tribal festival
 2. It is a joint initiative of Ministry of Tribal Affairs & Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).
 3. It was recently celebrated in the Union Territory of Jammu & KashmirSelect the correct answer using codes given below:
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 2 and 3
 - (c) 1 and 2**
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3