GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

SDG India Index by NITI Aayog

NITI Aayog has released the **second edition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index (SDG Index 2.0).**

- The index documents the **progress made by India's States and Union Territories** towards achieving the **2030 SDG targets.**
- The Index spans 16 out of 17 SDGs which marks an **improvement over the 2018 Index,** which covered only 13 goals.
- The SDG India Index has been developed **in collaboration** with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the United Nations, and the Global Green Growth Institute.
- The year **2020 will be the 5th anniversary** of the adoption of SDGs by 193 countries at the UN General Assembly.

About:

- ➢ A **composite score** for SDG Index (2019) was computed in the **range of 0–100** for each State/UT based on its aggregate performance across 16 SDGs.
- ➢ The **higher the score** of a State/UT, the **closer** it is towards **achieving the 2030 national targets.**
- ➢ States /UTs are classified based on the SDG India Index Score as follows:
  - o **Aspirant:** 0–49
  - o **Performer:** 50–64
  - o **Front Runner:** 65–99
  - o **Achiever:** 100
- ➢ Top 5 performing states are Keral-70, Himachal Pradesh-69, Andhra-67, Tamilnadu-67 and Telengana-67.
- ➢ Bottom 3 states are Bihar-50, Jharakhand-53, Arunachal Pradesh -53.
- ➢ India's composite **score improved** from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019-20 with major success **in water and sanitation, power and industry.**
- ➢ However, **nutrition and gender equality continue to be problem areas** for India, requiring a more focused approach from the government.
- ➢ The ranks of **14 states have dropped** in the index **compared to 2018.**

Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR)

- **Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) is** an online portal launched by government that will enable blocking and tracing of stolen or lost mobile phones.
- The project was undertaken by the telecom department for addressing security, theft and other concerns including reprogramming of mobile handsets.
- It will facilitate requests for **blocking** of stolen or lost mobile phones by customers, allowing services to other existing customers having mobile phones with the same **International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI)** number, **sharing of traceability data** with police authorities, as well as **unblocking** of recovered phones.
- Moreover, because of the centralised nature of the register or database, all the operators can block the particular stolen or lost device across the country even though the phone is being serviced by one particular operator.

Some facts about IMEI:

• This is a **unique 15 digit code** that precisely identifies the phone or mobile broadband device.

• Manufacturers assign IMEI numbers to each device based on ranges allotted to them by the **Global System for Mobile Communications Association**.

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- Dual-SIM phones will have two IMEI numbers.

National Infrastructure Pipeline

Recently, the Government has released a **report of the task force on National Infrastructure Pipeline for 2019-2025**.

Task Force was constituted to draw up the **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)** for each of the years from financial years 2019-20 to 2024-25.

- National Infrastructure Pipeline will enable a forward outlook on infrastructure projects which will create jobs, improve ease of living, and provide equitable access to infrastructure for all, thereby making growth more inclusive.
- NIP includes economic and social infrastructure projects.
- During the fiscals 2020 to 2025, sectors such as Energy (24%), Roads (19%), Urban (16%), and Railways (13%) amount to around 70% of the projected capital expenditure in infrastructure in India.
- It has outlined plans to invest more than Rs.102 lakh crore on infrastructure projects by 2024-25, with the **Centre, States and the private sector** to share the capital expenditure in a **39:39:22 formula.**

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2019

The Ministry for Environment, Forests and Climate Change has released the India State of Forest Report (ISFR), 2019.

- ISFR is a **biennial publication** of **Forest Survey of India (FSI),** an organization under the Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change.

- The ISFR **assesses** the forest and tree cover, bamboo resources, carbon stock and forest fires.

- The 2019 report for the first time has assessed the qualitative nature of the forest cover, including listing its biodiversity and the type of plants and trees found.

- It also created a **national forest inventory for the first time** on produce from forests.

KEY FACTS

o The 2019 survey has found an increase of 5,188 sq km in total forest and tree cover in the country.

o **Tree and forest cover** together made up **24.56% (8,07,276 sq km)** of India's area. In the **last assessment** it was **24.39%.**

o The **top five states** to have shown an increase in forest cover include **Karnataka (1,025 sq km) > Andhra Pradesh (990 sq km) > Kerala (823 sq km) > J&K (371 sq km) > Himachal Pradesh (334 sq km).**

o **Maharashtra has had the highest increase in tree cover** and a large part of that is due to horticulture.

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o Mangrove cover in the country has increased by 54 sq km (1.10%) as compared to the previous assessment.

o There has been a decrease of forest cover to the extent of 765 sq km (0.45%) in the North East region. **Except Assam and Tripura, all the States** in the region show **decrease** in forest cover.

o The **National Forest Policy, 1988,** which envisages 33% of forest and tree cover for sustainable environment.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, ARCHITECTURE

80th Session of Indian History Congress

➤ Recently, the **80th session** of the **Indian History Congress (IHC)** was held at **Kannur, Kerala,** between **28th and 30th December 2019.**

➤ It called upon political and administrative authorities to pursue the constitutional duty of promoting composite culture, which is vital to promoting the territorial unity of India.

Indian History Congress

In **1935,** an **All India Congress** was organised by the **Bharata Itihasa Samshodhaka Mandala (BISM)** to celebrate its silver jubilee. The event resulted in the inception of the **IHC.**

Role of IHC:

o To regulate the standard of works of history produced in India.

o To promote impartial and substantive history.

o To commit to a fair and scientific history, devoid of bias and politics.

Nirmal Fort and Udasi Mutt

Nirmal Fort and Udasi mutt in Nirmal Town in Adilabad district of Telangana are undergoing ruination.

Nirmal Fort

• Nirmal Fort, also called as the Shamgarh fort, was built by the French.

• Nirmal is a prominent town in Adilabad district. The town has glorious past due to patronization of arts and culture by ruling nobility.

• The region was ruled by Kakatiyas, Chalukyas, the Qutubshahis and Nizams who have contributed immensely to the growth of cultural heritage.

Udasi Mutt

➢ The Udasi mutt in Nirmal town was built around 1822 in the Deccan by Dewan Chandulal, who was the Prime Minister for Nizam, Asaf Jah III, a follower of the Udasi sect of ascetics which was based on the teachings of Guru Nanak's elder son Sri Chand.

➢ Followers of Sri Chand established mutts at all the places visited by Guru Nanak.

➢ The mutt in Nirmal Town was built during Guru Nanak's second Udasi between 1511 CE and 1513 CE.

- To spread the "real message of God" Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji travelled in all four direction – North, East, West and South, these long travels are known as the "Four Udasis".

- Udasis were the missionary travels of Guru Nanak, the second one covering Sri Lanka and the Deccan, including Vijayawada and Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, and Hyderabad and Nirmal in Telangana.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Electro-Kinetic Streaming to Tap Energy from Water

- The **Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) researchers** have developed materials that can **produce energy from flowing or stagnant water in households.**

- The generation of energy from water in various forms like river flow, ocean tides, stagnant water and even raindrops is now known as **"Blue Energy".**

- Two different methods have been employed to harvest energy from the flowing water and the stagnant waters.

Electro-Kinetic Streaming Potential:

o By this method, energy can be harvested from flowing tap water.

o When fluids stream through tiny channels that are charged, they can generate an electrical voltage, which may be harnessed through miniaturised generators.

Contrasting Inter-Facial Activities:

o These entail different types of semiconducting materials to generate power from stagnant water.

o Devices were fabricated with doped graphene flakes for generating power by dipping in a bucket of water in the stagnant water source to "complementary charge transfer activities".

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. The recent judgement of Supreme Court that brings the office of CJI under the ambit of RTI Act will give a fillip to peoples' quest for transparency and accountability. Comment.

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Ans. The RTI Act, 2005, is a strong weapon that enhances accountability, citizen activism and, consequently, makes democracy participative. The higher judiciary was often criticized for opaqueness under the notion of **independence of the judiciary.** The recent Supreme Court decision to bring the office of the **Chief Justice of India** under the ambit of the RTI Act has reiterated the established position that **"no one is above the law".** It agreed in principle to share information but on a **case-to-case basis** and subject to RTI safeguards.

Implications of Judgement
➢ **Transparency and Independence:** Judicial independence is meant to keep judiciary out of executive influence and judicial independence was not a judge's privilege. Therefore, the judgment holds good in making the judicial process more transparent.

➢ **Accountability:** People's cases relating to their life, liberty, property, and rights are decided by the high courts and the Supreme Court.

➢ Therefore, people have the right to know not only the criteria but also all materials that formed the basis of making the decision.

➢ **Declaration of Personal Assets:** The Office of the Chief Justice of India is now obliged to disclose the details of personal assets of other judges of the Supreme Court. Hence, the judgment will boost peoples' faith in the judiciary.

Challenges

Judicial Burden: Our judiciary is already under the burden of huge amount of pending cases, therefore, providing necessary information under RTI Act will only add to the administrative burden of the judiciary.

Surveillance: The judgment posses a threat of surveillance of the judiciary which may impact its impartial functioning.

Conclusion

Bringing the office of Chief Justice of India under RTI ambit is the landmark judgment, the next logical step would be to remove opaqueness about appointments of the judges, made through the collegium system in the SC. The verdict will make the judiciary more inclusive and boost peoples' confidence in the judiciary.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQ

1. 'Mahajan Commission' is associated with

   a) Karnataka Maharashtra border dispute

   b) Reorganisation of Andhra Pradesh

   c) Inner Line Permit (ILP)

   d) Restricted Area Permit (RAP)

2. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands were under the occupation of which of the following countries during World War II?

   a) Japan   b) USA   c) Great Britain   d) France

3. 'Ashtadhyayi' is associated with

   a) Grammar   b) Mathematics   c) Astronomy   d) Chemistry

4. 'Manasollasa' is associated with

   a) Someshvara III   b) Jahangir   c) Akbar   d) Tipu Sultan

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5. 'Kalak Tartar' is located in

   a) Ladakh   b) Chhota Nagpur

   c) Malwa   d) Rann of Kutch

6. 'Silent Valley National Park' is located in

   a) Kerala   b) Tamil Nadu

   c) Himachal Pradesh   d) Arunachal Pradesh

7. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to 'India State of Forest Report 2019'?

   1. While the overall green cover has increased in the country, the forest cover in the north-east has decreased.

   2. North-eastern and central India are the most vulnerable regions to forest fires in India.

   Select the correct statements

   a) 1 Only   b) 2 Only   c) Both   d) None

8. Consider the following statements with respect to 'Protocooperation'

   1. It is an interaction between organisms of different species in which both organisms' benefit, but neither is dependent on the relationship.

   2. The flowers of plants that are pollinated by insects and birds is an example of protocooperation.

   Select the correct statements

   a) 1 Only   b) 2 Only   **c) Both**   d) None

9. 'Talley Valley Wildlife Sanctuary' is located in

    a) Nagaland   b) Tripura   c) Ladakh   **d) Arunachal Pradesh**

10. Consider the following statements with respect to 'Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO)'

    1. It is a joint project of international cooperation between the European Space Agency (ESA) and ISRO.

    2. It was launched onboard Chandrayaan- 2.

    Select the correct statements

    a) 1 Only   b) 2 Only   c) Both   **d) None**

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