

INDIAN HISTORY**1.Rabindranath Tagore**

The Prime Minister paid tribute to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore on 160th Jayanti on 7th May, 2021.

Key Points**About:**

- He was also referred to as ‘Gurudev’, ‘Kabiguru’, and ‘Biswakabi’
- He was born in Calcutta on 7th May 1861
- He is regarded as the outstanding creative artist of modern India and hailed by W.B Yeats, Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali poet, novelist, and painter, who was highly influential in introducing Indian culture to the west.
- He was an exceptional literary figure and a renowned polymath who singlehandedly reshaped the region's literature and music.
- He was a good friend of Mahatma Gandhi and is said to have given him the title of Mahatma.
- He had always stressed that unity in diversity is the only possible way for India's national integration.
- He had spoken at the World Parliament for Religions in the years 1929 and 1937.

Contributions:

- He is said to have composed over 2000 songs and his songs and music are called ‘Rabindra Sangeet’ with its own distinct lyrical and fluid style.
- He is responsible for modernising Bengali prose and poetry. His notable works include Gitanjali, Ghare-Baire, Gora, Manasi, Balaka, Sonar Tori, He is also remembered for his song ‘Ekla Chalo Re’.
- He published his first poems aged 16 under the pen-name ‘Bhanusimha’.
- He not only gave the national anthems for two countries, India and Bangladesh, but also inspired a Ceylonese student of his, to pen and compose the national anthem of Sri Lanka.
- Besides all his literary achievements he was also a philosopher and educationist who in 1921 established the Vishwa-Bharati University, a university that challenged conventional education.

Awards:

1. In 1913 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his work on Gitanjali.
2. He was the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize.
3. In 1915 he was awarded knighthood by the British King George V. In 1919, following the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre he renounced his Knighthood.

Death:He died on 7th August 1941 in Calcutta.

2.G.K Gokhale

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a great social reformer and educationist who provided exemplary leadership to India's freedom movement.The Prime Minister of India paid tribute to Gopal Krishna Gokhale on his Jayanti.

Key Points

Birth: 9th May, 1866 in Kotluk village in present-day Maharashtra (then part of the Bombay Presidency).

Ideology:Gokhale worked towards social empowerment, expansion of education , struggle for freedom in India for three decades and rejected the use of reactionary or revolutionary ways.

Role in Colonial Legislatures: Between 1899 and 1902, he was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council followed by work at the Imperial Legislative Council from 1902 till his death (1915). At the Imperial legislature, Gokhale played a key role in framing the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909.

Role in INC: He was associated with the Moderate Group of Indian National Congress (joined in 1889). He became president of INC in 1905 in Banaras session. This was the time when bitter differences had arisen between his group of 'Moderates' and the 'Extremists' led by Lala Lajpat Rai and Bal Gangadhar Tilak among others. The two factions split at the Surat session of 1907. Despite the ideological difference, in 1907, he intensely campaigned for the release of Lala Lajpat Rai, who was imprisoned that year by the British at Mandalay in present-day Myanmar.

Related Societies and Other Works: He established the Servants of India Society in 1905 for the expansion of Indian education. He was also associated with the Sarvajanik sabha journal started by Govind Ranade. In 1908, Gokhale founded the Ranade Institute of Economics. He started English weekly newspaper, The Hitavada (The people's paper).

Mentor to Gandhi: As a liberal nationalist, he is regarded by Mahatma Gandhi as his political guru. Gandhi wrote a book in Gujarati dedicated to the leader titled 'Dharmatma Gokhale'.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

India-EU Leaders' Meeting

This is the first time that the EU hosted a meeting with India in the EU+27 format. Indian Prime Minister participated in the India-European Union (EU) Leaders' Meeting.

Key Points

Free Trade Negotiations:

- Agreed to relaunch free trade negotiations by resuming talks that were suspended for the Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA).
- India and EU had launched talks for having a wide-ranging Free Trade Agreement (FTA), officially called broad-based BTIA, long ago in 2007. The BTIA was proposed to encompass trade in goods, services and investments. However, the talks stalled in 2013 over differences on market access and movement of professionals.
- The EU was India's largest trading partner in goods 2019-20, ahead of China and the US, with total trade close to USD 90 billion.

Connectivity Partnership:

- Launched an ambitious and comprehensive 'Connectivity Partnership' which is focused on enhancing digital, energy, transport and people-to-people connectivity.
- 1. It is based on the shared principles of social, economic, fiscal, climate and environmental sustainability, and respect for international law and commitments.
- 2. It will catalyse private and public financing for connectivity projects. It will also foster new synergies for supporting connectivity initiatives in third countries, including in the Indo-Pacific.
- Also signed the contract for the second tranche of USD 150 million from the EU for the Pune Metro rail project.

Climate Change:

- Reiterated their commitment to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement and agreed to strengthen joint efforts for mitigation, adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change, as well as providing means of implementation including finance in the context of Conference of the Parties (COP 26).
- India welcomed the EU's decision to join the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

Technology: Agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation on digital and emerging technologies such as 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum and High-Performance Computing including through the early operationalization of the Joint Task Force on AI and the Digital Investment Forum.

Strengthening Partnership:

- Desired to further strengthen the India-EU Strategic Partnership based on a shared commitment to democracy, fundamental freedoms, rule of law and multilateralism.
- India appreciated the prompt assistance provided by the EU and its member states to combat its second Covid wave.
- India also requested the EU's support for its joint proposal with South Africa for a Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) waiver on vaccine production-related patents in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Recently, the US has supported the proposal. However, India failed to secure the support of the European leaders.

GOVERNANCE

1. Post Devolution Revenue Deficit

The Ministry of Finance has released the second monthly instalment of Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grant of Rs. 9,871 crore for the year 2021-22 to 17 States.

Key Points

About the Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD):

- The Centre provides the Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant to the States under Article 275 of the Constitution.
- The grants are released as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission in monthly installments to meet the gap in Revenue Accounts of the States post-devolution (of the divisible tax pool of the Centre).
- The 15th Finance Commission has recommended post devolution revenue deficit grants amounting to about Rs. 3 trillion over the five-year period ending FY26.

States Recommended for PDRD Grants: Over the five-year period, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal are recommended to be provided with the deficit grants. The Ministry of Finance has accepted the recommendation.

Centre State Financial Relations

Constitutional Provisions:

- Indian Constitution has made elaborate provisions, relating to the distribution of the taxes as well as non-tax revenues and the power of borrowing, supplemented by provisions for grants-in-aid by the Union to the States.
- Article 268 to 293 in Part XII deals with the provisions of financial relations between Centre and States.

Taxing Powers: The Constitution divides the taxing powers between the Centre and the states as follows:

- The Parliament has exclusive power to levy taxes on subjects enumerated in the Union List, the state legislature has exclusive power to levy taxes on subjects enumerated in the State List.
- Both can levy taxes on the subjects enumerated in Concurrent List whereas residuary power of taxation lies with Parliament only.

Distribution of the Tax Revenue:

- **Duties Levied by the Union but Collected and Appropriated by the States (Article 268):** Includes stamp duties on bills of exchange, cheques, etc.
- **Taxes Levied as well as Collected by the Union, but Assigned to the States (Article 269):** These include taxes on the sale and purchase of goods (other than newspapers) in the course of inter-state trade or commerce or the taxes on the consignment of goods in the course of inter-state trade or commerce.
- **Levy and Collection of Goods and Services Tax in Course of Inter-State Trade or Commerce (Article 269-A):** The Goods and Services Tax (GST) on supplies in the course of inter-state trade or commerce are levied and collected by the Centre. But, this tax is divided between the Centre and the States in the manner provided by Parliament on the recommendations of the GST Council.
- **Taxes Levied and Collected by the Union but Distributed between the Union and the States (Article 270):** This category includes all taxes and duties referred to in the Union List except the following: Duties and taxes referred to in Articles 268, 269 and 269-A. Surcharge on taxes and duties referred to in Article 271 (this goes to the Centre exclusively). Any cess levied for specific purposes.

Grants-in-Aid:

- Besides sharing of taxes between the Centre and the States, the Constitution provides for Grants-in-aid to the States from the Central resources. There are two types of grants:
- **Statutory Grants (Article 275):** These grants are given by the Parliament out of the Consolidated Fund of India to such States which are in need of assistance. Different States may be granted different sums. Specific grants are also given to promote the welfare of scheduled tribes in a state or to raise the level of administration of the Scheduled areas therein.
- **Discretionary Grants (Article 282):** It empowers both the Centre and the states to make any grants for any public purpose, even if it is not within their respective legislative competence. Under this provision, the Centre makes grants to the states. These grants are known as discretionary grants, the reason being that the Centre is under no obligation to give these grants and the matter lies within its discretion. These grants have a two-fold purpose: to help the state financially to fulfil plan targets; and to give some leverage to the Centre to influence and coordinate state action to effectuate the national plan.

2.100% Tap Water Connection in Rural Areas in Puducherry

The Union Territory of Puducherry has become the fourth State/UT after Goa, Telangana and Andaman & Nicobar Islands to provide assured tap water supply to every rural home under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).

Key Points

Jal Jeevan Mission:

- JJM envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024.
- It is under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- JJM focuses on integrated demand and supply-side management of water at the local level. Creation of local infrastructure for source sustainability measures as mandatory elements, like rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse, is undertaken in convergence with other government programmes/schemes.
- It also encompasses:
 1. Prioritizing provision of FHTCs in quality affected areas, villages in drought prone and desert areas, Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) villages, etc.
 2. Providing functional tap connection to Schools, Anganwadi centres, Gram Panchayat buildings, Health centres, wellness centres and community buildings.
 3. Technological interventions for removal of contaminants where water quality is an issue.
- The Mission is based on a community approach to water and includes extensive Information, Education and Communication as a key component of the mission.

- JJM looks to create a jan andolan for water, thereby making it everyone's priority.
- The fund sharing pattern between the Centre and states is 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States, 50:50 for other states, and 100% for Union Territories.
- The total allocation to the scheme is over Rs. 3 lakh crore.

Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban):

- **Launch:** In the Budget 2021-22, Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) was announced under the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry to provide universal coverage of water supply to all households through functional taps in all statutory towns in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal- 6 (clean water and sanitation).
- **Objectives:** Securing tap and sewer connections. Rejuvenation of water bodies. Creating a circular water economy.

BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT

3rd Arctic Science Ministerial

Recently, India participated in the 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM) organised by Iceland and Japan and shared plans for research and long-term cooperation in the Arctic Region. The first two meetings—ASM1 and ASM2—were held in the USA in 2016 and Germany in 2018, respectively.

Key Points

Third Arctic Science Ministerial Conference:

- **Host Countries:** It was jointly organised by Iceland and Japan. It was the first Ministerial meeting being held in Asia (Tokyo in Japan).
- **Objective:** It provides opportunities to various stakeholders, including academia, indigenous communities, governments and policymakers, to enhance collective understanding of the Arctic region, emphasize and engage in constant monitoring, and strengthen observations.
- **Theme:** 'Knowledge for a Sustainable Arctic'.

India's Stand:

1. To contribute observing systems in the Arctic, both in-situ and by remote sensing.
2. Would deploy open ocean mooring in the Arctic for long-term monitoring of upper ocean variables and marine meteorological parameters.
3. The launch of NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) satellite mission, in collaboration with the USA, is underway.
4. Contributions to the Sustained Arctic Observational Network (SAON) would continue.

India's Engagement in the Arctic:

- India's engagement with the Arctic dates back to 1920 with the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in Paris.
- Since July 2008, India has had a permanent research station in the Arctic called Himadri at NyAlesund, Svalbard Area in Norway.
- India received the 'Observer' country status in the Arctic Council in 2013 and is one among the 13 countries across the world, including China, to have that position which was again renewed in 2018.
- It has also deployed a multi-sensor moored observatory called IndARC in the Kongsfjorden fjord since July 2014.
- The research in the Arctic region from India is coordinated, conducted, and promoted by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.
- Recently, India drafted a new Arctic policy that aims at expanding scientific research, sustainable tourism and exploration of mineral oil and gas in the Arctic region.

Significance of Arctic Study for India:

- Though none of India's territory directly falls in the Arctic region, it is a crucial area as the Arctic influences atmospheric, oceanographic and biogeochemical cycles of the earth's ecosystem.
- Arctic warming and its ice melt are global concerns as they play a pivotal role in regulating climate, sea levels, and maintaining biodiversity.
- There is growing evidence of connection between the Arctic and the Indian Ocean (which modulates the Indian monsoon). Hence, improving the understanding of physical processes and quantifying the impact of Arctic ice melt on the Indian summer monsoon is very important.

2.Kaziranga Animal Corridor

Three animal corridors within the eco-sensitive zone of the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Key Points

About the Animal Corridor:

- Wildlife or animal corridors are meant to ensure safe passage for animals between two isolated habitats.
- In wildlife parlance, corridors are mainly of two types: functional and structural. **Functional corridors** are defined in terms of functionality from the perspective of the animal (basically areas where there have been recorded movement of wildlife). **Structural corridors** are contiguous strips of forested areas and structurally connect the otherwise fragmented blocks of the landscape.
- When structural corridors are affected by human anthropogenic activities, functional corridors automatically widen because of animal use.

Kaziranga Animal Corridor:

- A special committee formed by the Supreme Court in its report had recommended the delineation of nine animal corridors in Kaziranga National Park (KNP). The nine identified animal corridors are:
 1. Anguri, Bagori, Chirang, Deosur, Harmati, Hatidandi and Kanchanjuri are in Nagaon district and Haldibari and Panbari corridors are in Golaghat district of Assam.
 2. The nine corridors that already exist behave as functional corridors, but according to the new recommendation, the corridors will act as both structural and functional, on the basis of need.
- The report suggested that structural corridors should be made free of all human induced disturbances except for the forestry and wildlife management practices.
- On the other hand, functional corridors (which might become important when structural corridors are disturbed), can have regulated multi-use with restrictions on land use change.

Significance of Animal Corridors:

- These corridors are crucial for the rhinos, elephants, tigers, deer and other animals that escape a flooded Kaziranga during the monsoon months for the safety of the hills of Karbi Anglong district beyond the highway skirting the southern boundary of the tiger reserve.
- Once the rain clear, the animals make their way back to the grasslands.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Birth Anniversary of Maharana Pratap

The Prime Minister of India paid tributes to Maharana Pratap on his Jayanti.

Key Points

Description:

- Rana Pratap Singh also known as Maharana Pratap was born on 9th May 1540 in Kumbhalgarh, Rajasthan.

- He was the 13th King of Mewar and was the eldest son of Udai Singh II
- Maharana Udai Singh II ruled the kingdom of Mewar, with his capital at Chittor.
- Udai Singh II was also a founder of the city of Udaipur (Rajasthan).

Battle of Haldighati:

- The Battle of Haldighati was fought in 1576 between Rana Pratap Singh of Mewar and Raja Man Singh of Amber who was the general of the Mughal emperor Akbar.
- Maharana Pratap fought a brave war, but was defeated by Mughal forces.
- It is said that Maharana Pratap's loyal horse named Chetak, gave up his life as the Maharana was leaving the battlefield.

Reconquest:After 1579, the Mughal pressure relaxed over Mewar and Pratap recovered Western Mewar including Kumbhalgarh, Udaipur and Gogunda. During this period, he also built a new capital, Chavand, near modern Dungarpur.

Death:He died on 19th January, 1597. He was succeeded by his son Amar Singh, who submitted in 1614 to Emperor Jahāngīr, son of Akbar.

2.Black Fungus

A number of Covid-19 patients are developing a serious fungal infection known as Mucormycosis also called black fungus.

Key Points**Mucormycosis:**

- It is a serious but rare fungal infection caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes, which is abundant in the environment.
- It mainly affects people who have health problems or take medicines that lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness.
- The types of Mucormycosis are: Rhinocerebral (Sinus and Brain), Pulmonary (Lung), Gastrointestinal, Cutaneous (Skin), and disseminated Mucormycosis.

Transmission:

- It occurs through inhalation, inoculation, or ingestion of spores from the environment.
- Mucormycosis does not spread between people or between people and animals.

Symptoms:These include pain and redness around eyes and/or nose, fever, headache, coughing, shortness of breath, bloody vomits, and altered mental status. Warning signs can include toothache, loosening of teeth, blurred or double vision with pain.

Prevention:Avoiding areas with a lot of dust like construction or excavation sites, avoiding direct contact with water-damaged buildings and flood water after hurricanes and natural disasters and avoiding activities that involve close contact to soil.

Treatment:Mucormycosis needs to be treated with prescription antifungal medicine. In some cases, it can require surgery.

3.PMGKAY

The scheme has been rolled out again for two months (May and June 2021) as the country's healthcare infrastructure has reached its capacity and several states have taken steps like complete lockdown, night curfew to contain the spread of the disease. Recently, thirteen states have started distributing foodgrains under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY).

Key Points**About:**

- PMGKAY is a part of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP) to help the poor fight the battle against Covid-19. Its nodal Ministry is the Ministry of Finance.
- It was initially announced for a three month period (April, May and June 2020), covering 80 crore ration cardholders. Later it was extended till November 2020. However in April 2021, the government had announced its decision to restart the PMGKAY.
- The scheme aimed at providing each person who is covered under the National Food Security Act 2013 with an additional 5 kg grains (wheat or rice) for free, in addition to the 5 kg of subsidised foodgrain already provided through the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- The new version of the PMGKAY lacks one of its important components which was there in 2020 PMGKAY i.e free-of-cost 1 kg pulses per month to each household covered under the NFSA.

Expenditure: Government of India will bear all expenditure of over Rs. 26,000 crore on account of food subsidy and Central assistance to states/UTs on account of intra-state transportation etc.

Allocation Till Now: Out of a total monthly allocation of 39.69 lakh Metric Tonnes (MT) under the PMGKAY, 15.55 lakh MT have been lifted by states. 1.01 lakh MT have been distributed to 2.03 crore beneficiaries till May 2021.

Challenge: A key issue is that the beneficiaries of the National Food Security Act are based on the last census (2011). The number of food-insecure people has increased since then and they remain uncovered.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q. Discuss the basic principles of the communitarianism school of thought.

Ans:

Introduction Communitarianism is a social and political philosophy that emphasizes the importance of community in the functioning of political life, in the analysis and evaluation of political institutions, and in understanding human identity and well-being.

Body

- According to communitarians, a healthy community, and not the maximization of individual choices, is the desirable goal of public decision-making.
- They regard any individual as inherently situated in society. It is within society that individuals have their being and acquire their identity. Society and other human beings are a prerequisite for human life and happiness. In a way, communitarians accord higher priority to society over the individual.
- Communitarians value courteous dialogues on public issues, reasoned analysis of problems, and dispassionate individual decision-making.
- According to them, laws will be effective only when they are based on a moral consensus that aims at specific goals.
- The goals which governments need to pursue are healthy citizenry, environmental protection, reducing crimes, and strengthening community solidarity.
- They do not, however, advocate any form of collectivist or dictatorial ideology. What they have in mind is a global community—with all its diversities—of the information age.

Conclusion

- This view is in sharp contrast with the economic theory of the market in which individual self-interest acts as the driving force with the myriad individual decisions getting coordinated by an invisible hand.

- In contrast, communitarians argue that consideration for others, altruism, loyalty, community-based attachments, and other group-based sentiments are at the base of social life.

DAILY QUIZ

Q.1 The Global Forest Goals Report 2021 is released by which of the following?

- Food and Agriculture organization (FAO)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)**
- World Resources Institute (WRI)
- World Economic Forum (WEF)

Q.2 The “Haymarket Affair” sometimes mentioned in news recently is related to

- international climate diplomacy
- human behavior change during the COVID-19 pandemic
- international struggle for workers' rights**
- none of the above

Q.3 The ‘Operation Samudra Setu’, which was launched by the:

- Indian Coast Guard
- Indian Navy**
- Indian Airforce
- Both (a) and (b)

Q.4 Which of the following is/are the possible consequence/s of heavy sand mining in riverbeds?

- Decreased salinity in the river
- Pollution of groundwater
- Lowering of the water-table

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 and 3 only**
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Q. 5. With reference to new research on climate change causing a shift in Earth’s axis, consider the following statements:

- this change is not expected to affect daily life
- it can change the length of the day by a few milliseconds

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2**
- Neither 1 nor 2