

CURRENT AFFAIRS

**MONTH OF
FEBRUARY-2019**



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01.02.2019

1. Budget Highlights 2019-20

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi
(PM-KISAN)

To extend direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year to farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares.

Under this Government of India funded Scheme, Rs.2,000 each will be transferred to the bank accounts of around 12 crore Small and Marginal farmer families, in three equal instalments.

This programme would be made effective from 1st December 2018 and the first instalment for the period upto 31st March 2019 would be paid.

Pradhan Mantri Shram-Yogi Maandhan

Under the scheme, an assured monthly pension of Rs 3,000 per month will be provided to workers in the unorganised sector after 60 years of age.

To avail of the scheme, workers will have to contribute Rs 100 month.

Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog

- To upscale sustainable genetic upgradation of cow resources and to enhance production and productivity of cows.

Topic- GS-3- Economy

Source-PI B

A unique travelogue series 'Rag Rag Mein Ganga' launched on Doordarshan

Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation launched travelogue program "Rag Rag Mein Ganga" on Doordarshan.

This series has been made by Doordarshan in collaboration with National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).

The show relays the message of the need of rejuvenating River Ganga while also informing about the efforts of the Government to clean Ganga – presented in a unique and interesting format.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source-PI B

DIPP renamed as DPIIT

The government has notified changing the name of the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP) to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

The notification has also included four new categories of responsibilities to DIPP. It includes

The promotion of internal trade (including retail trade)

The welfare of traders and their employees

Matters relating to facilitating Ease of Doing Business

Matters relating to start-ups.

Related Information

Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion

Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP) functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

It is responsible for formulation and implementation of promotional and developmental measures for growth of the industrial sector, keeping in view the national priorities and socio-economic objectives.

It is also responsible for facilitating and increasing the foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to the country.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Economics Source- The Hindu

Polar Vortex

Recently the south-directing current of the North Polar vortex has brought deadly cold waves to the USA.

Reason - During winter in the northern hemisphere the vortex becomes weak and expands, sending Arctic cold air southward due to which North Polar vortex has brought deadly cold waves to the USA.

Related Information

Polar vortex

The Polar vortex is a large area of low pressure that consistently overlies the North and South poles.

It always exists near the poles but weakens in summer and strengthens in winter.

They are called 'vortexes' because of the mass of cold, dense air that spins counter-clockwise like a hurricane.

The polar vortex can lead to major cold air outbreaks in the Northern Hemisphere, including North America, Europe and Asia.

It is capable of delivering subzero temperatures in the new areas for several days at a time.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- Science Daily

Piyush Goyal has been awarded the Carnot Prize 2018

The Union Minister of Railways, Piyush Goyal has been awarded the Carnot Prize 2018.

- He got this award for the transformational changes brought by him during his tenure as Union Minister of Power.

Related Information

Carnot Prize

The Carnot Prize is the annual recognition by the US-based Kleinman Center for Energy Policy for distinguished contributions to energy policy through scholarship or practice.

The prize has been named after French scientist Sadi Carnot, who in 1824 published Reflections Motive Power of Fire, which became the basis for the second law of thermodynamics.

Carnot recognized that the power of the steam engine would "produce a great revolution" in human development.

Topic-GS Paper-2–Important awards/prizes

Source- Indian Express

Global Warming Affect El Niño in the 21st Century

The most recent projection of global warming impact on El Niño appeared in scientific journal 'Nature' in which has thrown some light on the effects of global warming on El Niño in the 21st Century.

Finding of the study

El Niño remains the largest climate phenomenon that occurs frequently producing droughts, floods, wildfires, dust and snow storms, fish kill, and even elevated risks of civil conflicts.

The theatre of action for El Niño is the tropical Pacific Ocean but its global reach costs the global community tens of billion dollars each

time. Related Information El Niño

In a normal year, a surface low pressure develops in the region of northern Australia and Indonesia and a high-pressure system over the coast of Peru.

El Nino refers to the unusual warming of the central and east-central equatorial Pacific Ocean which leads to air pressure drops over large areas of the central Pacific and along the coast of South America.

The warmer waters of the Pacific Ocean cause the winds in various regions to reverse

This change in wind direction leads to warmer winters and summers and a decrease in rainfall during the monsoon.

Effects of El Nino's

El Nino affects global weather.

El Nino reduces upwelling of cold water, decreasing the uplift of nutrients from the bottom of the ocean which affects marine life, seabirds and the fishing industry.

Drought caused by El Nino can be widespread, affecting southern Africa, India, Southeast Asia, Australia, and the Pacific Islands.

A recent WHO report on the health consequences of El Nino forecasts a rise in vector-borne diseases, including those spread by mosquitoes, in Central and South America.

Cycles of malaria in India are also linked to El Nino.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- Down to Earth

Biopolymer research to focus on new products

Rajasthan is promoting research in the biopolymer sector with an emphasis on the fabrication of new products and generation of more employment opportunities.

The research on Biopolymer is carried out by the Centre for Skilling and Technical Support and the National Institute of Fashion.

The initiative will also be helped the handicraft industry.

Biopolymer

Biopolymers are polymers that are produced by living organisms.

They are generally polymers of starch.

These are composed of monomeric units.

Cellulose is the most common organic compound and biopolymer on Earth.

Other examples of biopolymers include rubber, suberin, melanin and lignin.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source-The Hindu

Cow urine may be a reason for global warming: Study

In a study Cow urine — a minor fount of research in India for its medicinal benefits — may also contribute to global warming.

The urine from the ruminant is a source of nitrous oxide emissions (N₂O), a gas that is 300 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

The cattle and livestock are a significant source of methane, a greenhouse gas, and therefore a contributor to global warming is well-known.

Related Information

India had estimates for dung and urine production per cow or buffalo or other livestock animals as well as their overall estimates for their populations as per 2012 livestock census.

But the exact contribution of cow urine to the total nitrous oxide emission from India is not estimated precisely.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

African Asian Rural Development Organisation

An international workshop on fisheries and aquaculture has called for regional cooperation among member countries of the African Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO) to develop joint fisheries management plans.

Related Information

AARDO

AARDO is an autonomous inter-governmental organization comprising 33 members from Africa and Asia formed in 1962.

Its headquarters is in New Delhi.

The Organization was set up with a view to promoting coordinated efforts, exchange of experiences and cooperative action for furthering the objectives of development of the rural areas.

India is one of the Founder Members of the Organization and is the largest contributor in terms of membership contribution.

The first Afro-Asian Conference on Rural Reconstruction held its historic Session in New Delhi during 18-25 January 1961.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Organisation
Source- The Hindu

04.02.2019

Inkjet' solar panels set to reshape green energy

A PhD scholar has developed a novel inkjet processing method for perovskites — a new generation of cheaper solar cells. It makes it possible to produce solar panels under lower temperatures, thus sharply reducing costs.

Solar panels coated with the mineral are light, flexible, efficient, inexpensive and come in varying hues and degrees of transparency.

They can easily be fixed to almost any surface — be it laptop, car, drone, spacecraft or building — to produce electricity, including in the shade or indoors.

Perovskites

Perovskite is a calcium titanium oxide mineral composed of calcium titanate (CaTiO₃).

Many different cations can be embedded in this structure, allowing the development of diverse engineered materials.

The mineral was discovered in the Ural Mountains of Russia by Gustav Rose in 1839 and is named after Russian mineralogist Lev Perovski (1792–1856).

Found in the Earth's mantle, perovskite's occurrence at Khibina Massif is restricted to the under-saturated ultramafic rocks and foidolites, due to the instability in a paragenesis with feldspar.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Art and Culture
Source- The Hindu

UNSC adopts a resolution to extend sanctions against the Central African Republic for another year

The United Nations Security Council has adopted a resolution 2454 to extend sanctions against the Central African Republic (CAR) for another year.

Features of Resolution 2454

It has adopted unanimously by the 15-member council, decides to renew the sanctions regime – an arms embargo, travels ban and asset freeze till January 31, 2020.

It also decides to extend the mandate of the panel of experts, which helps the Security Council with the implementation of the sanctions, until Feb 29, 2020.

The resolution envisages the establishment of key benchmarks in various sectors that could help the Security Council review the arms embargo on the CAR government by April 30, 2019.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

It is one of the six principal organs of the UN.

It will be charged with the maintenance of international peace and security as well as accepting new members to the United Nations

It will also help in approving any changes to its United Nations Charter.

Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions.

It is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.

The Security Council consists of fifteen members (5 Permanent + 10 non-permanent).

Ten (10) non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Organization

Source- Business Standard

World Wetlands Day 2019: "Wetlands and Climate Change"

World Wetlands Day was celebrated on February 2nd with the theme of "Wetlands and Climate Change".

It is celebrated on 2 February 1971 to commemorate the signing of the Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention at the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

The two-fold objectives of the Ramsar Convention are Conservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands and stop the encroachment and loss of wetlands.

Wetlands

Wetlands are areas of marsh or peatland with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or saline, including areas of marine water.

These are transition zones between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. E.g. Mangroves, lake littorals (marginal areas between highest and lowest water level of the lakes), floodplains (areas lying adjacent to the river channels beyond the natural levees and periodically flooded during high discharge in the river) and other marshy or swampy areas.

Waterlogged soil, adapted plant life (hydrophytes) and hydric soils (not enough O₂) are the chief characteristics of wetlands.

India has totally 27,403 square km wetlands, of which 23,444 square km are inland wetlands and 3,959 square km are coastal wetlands.

Wetlands occupy 18.4% of the country's area of which 70% are under paddy cultivation.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

Know My India Programme

- The National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH) is organizing a special workshop for 42 Youth in the age group of 15 to 22 years, who have been victims of communal violence in the past, under the Know My India Programme beginning in Bengaluru.

It aims to bring together financially assisted children of the Foundation from different States/Regions of the country to promote oneness, fraternity and national integration.

- The programme is all about familiarization with the environment, family life, social customs, etc. of the people living in different parts of the country; developing the understanding of the common historical and cultural heritage of the country.

Related Information

NFCH

The NFCH is an autonomous organization under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- PIB

New panel for welfare of nomadic communities

The Centre will form a welfare panel for nomadic, semi-nomadic and de-notified communities.

The committee will be set up under Niti Aayog to complete the task of identifying de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, especially as they move from place to place in search of a livelihood.

The committee will follow up on the work of the Renke Commission and the Idate Commission.

A Welfare Development Board will also be set up under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to design and implement programmes for these hard-to-reach communities.

Topic-GS Paper 2–Important Committee

Source- The Hindu

Kerala sets up drug price monitor

- Kerala has become the first State to set up a price monitoring and research unit (PMRU) to track violation of prices of essential drugs and medical devices under the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).

Concern

- Pharma companies have been accused of overcharging prices of drugs in the scheduled category fixed by the DPCO and those outside its ambit too.

Price Monitoring Research Unit

The State Health Secretary would be the Chairman of the society and the Drugs Controller would be its member secretary.

- Its members include a State government representative, representatives of private pharmaceutical companies, and those from consumer rights protection fora. The new watchdog will offer technical help to the State Drug Controllers and the NPPA to monitor notified prices of medicines, detect violation of the provisions of the DPCO, look at price compliance, collect test samples of medicines, and collect and compile market-based data of scheduled as well as non-scheduled formulations.

Note: The suggestion to set up PMRUs was made against the backdrop of the lack of a field-level link between the NPPA and the State Drugs Controllers and State Drug Inspectors to monitor drug prices.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

Rishi Kumar Shukla appointed CBI Director

Rishi Kumar Shukla has been appointed as the new CBI Director.

How a CBI Director is appointed?

The CBI draws its legality from the 1946-Delhi Special Police Establishment Act (DSPE).

The precursor to the CBI was the Special Police Establishment, which was India's first agency to investigate corruption. It was set in 1946 by the British.

Before the Lokpal Act was legislated, the CBI director was appointed by the DSPE Act.

Now, the Lokpal Act governs the appointment of the CBI director.

The CBI director is appointed by the Centre on the basis of the recommendation of a search committee comprising of the Prime Minister as the chairperson, the Chief Justice of India and the Leader of Opposition.

The Chief Justice of India can nominate a Supreme Court judge if he does not attend the search committee meeting.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

Rare artefacts on iconic Buddhist figure celebrate India-Bhutan ties

The exhibition of rare artefacts is accompanying a two-day conference on Guru Padmasambhava's life and legacy, often called Second Buddha, and brought together distinguished scholars from India, Nepal & Bhutan. The conference is titled "Life and Legacy of Guru Padmasambhava". The conference also celebrates the 50 years of diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan.

Related Information
Padmasambhava

Guru Padmasambhava is known as the Second Buddha because he played a seminal role in spreading Buddhism and Buddhist teachings across the Himalayan region including Northeast India, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet.

In Tibetan, Guru Padmasambhava is generally referred to as Guru Rinpoche, which means "precious master."

He undertook many travels across India, Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal.

Thangka paintings, sculptures and photographs portray the life and teachings of the Guru.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

A 'pink revolution' quietly takes shape in Maharashtra

A 'pink revolution' is quietly taking shape in Maharashtra.

The objective is to breed imported pigs to address the problem of protein deficiency in a sizeable section of the population that has been deprived of access to affordable meat besides providing livelihood to farmers.

The 'pink revolution' targets to produce five lakh high-quality pigs over a period of 5-6 years.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

Britain, France and UK create a firm "Instex" to trade with Iran

Three major European allies introduced a financial mechanism a new company, called Instex, for Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges, would essentially allow goods to be bartered between Iranian companies and foreign ones without direct financial transactions or using the dollar.

Instex, which was registered in France and is known technically as a special-purpose vehicle, will be financed jointly by the three countries and run by a German banker.

Related Information

After President Trump pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal and reimposed punitive banking sanctions last year, European leaders vowed to find a way to enable Tehran to keep doing business with the rest of the world.

The European countries- Britain, France and Germany- were all signatories to the Iran deal in 2015, as was the US under President Obama. The Europeans, along with Russia and China, who were also signatories, have all vowed to keep to the terms of the agreement, which was intended to ensure that Iran could not build a nuclear weapon.

Topic- GS-2- International Events Source- TOI

05.02.2019

Centre sets up the panel to look into the angel tax issue

The government decided to set up a five-member working committee to look into the angel tax issue and come up with guidelines.

The panel also agreed to implement some key changes requested by start-ups regarding the issue.

Some Key Changes

As per the previous notification start-ups whose aggregate amount of paid-up share capital and share premium after the proposed issue of share does not exceed 10 crore are eligible for exemption from the tax. But now officials representing the government agreed to raise this limit to **25 crore**.

They also agreed to amend the definition of a start-up to include companies that have been in operation for up to 10 years rather than the previous limit of seven years.

Previously the angel investor should have filed income tax returns of at least 50 lakh for the year preceding the year in which the investment was made and have a net worth of 2 crore. Now it would be modified to be 25 lakh and 1 crore, respectively.

Angel Tax

It is a tax on the excess capital raised by an unlisted company through the issue of shares over and above the fair market value of those shares.

This excess capital is treated as income and taxed accordingly.

This tax most commonly affects start-ups and the angel investors who back them.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics

Source- The Hindu

Fundraiser to secure 96 elephant corridors

According to a recent survey, seven elephant corridors in Jharkhand, U.P., Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have already been impaired due to land use changes.

To tackle this problem the Asian Elephant Alliance, an umbrella initiative by five NGOs Elephant Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IUCN Netherlands and World Land Trust have teamed up with WTI in the alliance.

They came together to secure 96 out of the 101 existing corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India.

These are the joint venture is aiming to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors, old and new, in the next ten years.

There are 101 elephant corridors identified by the WTI in its 2012-15 study, five of them — two in Meghalaya and one each in Assam, Kerala and Karnataka — have already been secured by the WTI (Wildlife Trust of India's) with the help of conservation partners and the support of State governments.

Indian Elephant

It is one of three recognized subspecies of the Asian elephant and native to mainland Asia.

The Asian elephant has been listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List. The wild population has declined by at least 50% since the 1940s to 1930s, i.e. three elephant generations.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

3. Odisha's Kalia scholarship scheme for farmers' to boost higher education

Odisha Chief Minister launched a scholarship scheme named 'KALIA Chhatravritti Yojana'.

This scheme for the children of farmers under Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme in Keonjhar district.

It will help to boost education for farmers children.

Under this scheme, the beneficiaries will be provided with scholarships to pursue higher education in professional courses at free of cost.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Business Standard

Indus river dolphin is Punjab's state aquatic animal

- Recently Punjab declared the endangered Indus river dolphins- one of the world's rarest mammals - as the state's aquatic animal.

Related Information

Indus river dolphin

It is the second most endangered freshwater river dolphin.

At present, there are only around 1,800 of these in the Indus in Pakistan.

Indus river dolphins are freshwater aquatic mammal found only in the Beas in Punjab.

It is listed endangered in the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species and its International trade is prohibited by virtue of it being listed under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Indus dolphin like Ganges River dolphin is functionally blind and relies on echolocation to navigate, communicate and hunt prey in muddy river water.

Gangetic Dolphin

Gangetic Dolphins are the only surviving freshwater dolphin in India. Gangetic Dolphins are found in the river systems of Ganga, Brahmaputra, Meghna and Karnaphuli- Sangu in Nepal, India and Bangladesh.

The IUCN status of the Gangetic Dolphin is Endangered.

Gangetic Dolphin is the National Aquatic Animal of India.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity

Source- TOI

Braille voter slips for blind

The Election Commission of India will be issuing Braille voter slips for the visually impaired and blind voters in the Lok Sabha elections 2019.

It is part of its strategic framework for 'accessible elections', the commission has told all chief electoral officers to issue accessible photo voter slips with braille to voters who are visually impaired or blind.

The Electronic voting machines already have the Braille feature.

Related Information

- The Strategic Framework on Accessible Elections is a compilation of guidelines issued by Election Commission of India and the Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment, Government of India.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Economics Times

NASA Discovers Dwarf Galaxy

- NASA's Hubble telescope has discovered a dwarf galaxy in the neighbourhood of Milky Way galaxy. The dwarf galaxy has been nicknamed as 'Bedin 1' by the astronomers.

It is a modestly sized, elongated galaxy.

It measures only around 3000 light-years at its greatest extent which is a fraction of the size of the Milky Way.

"Dwarf galaxies" is a general term for galaxies that are faint and small in size and have low-luminosity, lack of dust and old stellar populations.

The dwarf galaxy is discovered only 30 million light years away within the globular cluster NGC 6752.

Significance

From the properties of its stars, scientists are able to infer that the galaxy is around 13 billion years old — nearly as old as the Universe itself. Due to its isolation, Bedin 1 is will be helpful in understanding the early Universe.

Globular Cluster:

A Globular cluster is a large group of old stars that are closely packed in a symmetrical and somewhat spherical form.

Globular clusters are extremely luminous objects and may contain thousands to millions of stars.

Related Information NASA's

Great Observatories

Hubble Space Telescope

The first element of the program - and arguably the best known -- is the Hubble Space Telescope (HST).

The Hubble telescope was deployed by a NASA Space Shuttle in 1990.

It was built by NASA, with contributions from the European Space Agency.

The Compton Gamma Ray

Observatory (CGRO)

It was the second of NASA's Great Observatories.

This mission collected data on some of the most violent physical processes in the Universe, characterized by their extremely high energies.

Chandra X-ray Observatory

The third member of the Great Observatory family.

This observatory is observing such objects as black holes, quasars, and high-temperature gases throughout the x-ray portion of the EM spectrum.

Spitzer Space Telescope

The Spitzer Space Telescope represents the fourth and final element in NASA's Great Observatory program.

Spitzer fills in an important gap in wavelength coverage not available from the ground-the thermal infrared.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source-Indian Express

Kerala's Village Millet Scheme

Kerala government has decided to expand millet village scheme to other districts in the state.

The Millet Village scheme was first launched in Attappady in Palakkad district of Kerala.

Under the Millet Village scheme, the government promoted the harvest of ragi (finger millet), thina (foxtail millet), cholam (sorghum) and kuthiravaali (barnyard millet).

The project aimed at protecting seeds of traditional varieties of millets and ensures food security and livelihood for tribals.

The scheme also provides financial assistance to farmers for cultivation of millets crops.

Related Information

Millets Production in India

Millets are cultivated in low-fertile land, mountainous, tribal and rain-fed areas.

These areas include Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, MadhyaPradesh,Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.

Millets also are known as 'nutri-cereals' and have a high protein content, short growing season, climate change resilience and low water requirement.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important

Scheme Source- Indian Express

In Assam, temples stave off extinction of turtles

Recently a few temple ponds in Assam and Bangladesh are bringing Black softshell turtle back from the brink.

Related Information

The black softshell turtle is a species of freshwater turtle found in India (Assam) and Bangladesh (Chittagong and Sylhet).

The black softshell turtle figures in the IUCN Red List as "extinct in the wild".

India hosts 28 species of turtles, of which 20 are found in Assam.

But consumption of turtle meat and eggs, silt mining, encroachment of wetlands and change in flooding pattern have had a disastrous impact on the State's turtle population.

Unfortunately, 70% of the species found in Assam are threatened with extinction.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Biodiversity Source- The Hindu

325 child labourers rescued in Hyderabad under 'Operation Smile'

Operation Smile

Operation Smile was launched on January 1 this year to trace missing children.

The month-long programme aims to rescue child labourers, children engaged in begging for alms & so on.

Topic- GS-2- Governance

Source- Business Standards

06.02.2019

ISRO's 'GSAT-31' launched

ISRO successfully launched its 40th communication satellite GSAT-31 from the spaceport in French Guiana.

The satellite with a mission life of 15 years will provide continuity to operational services on some of the in-orbit satellites and augment the Ku-band transponder capacity in Geostationary Orbit

Weighing about 2,535 kg, the satellite was launched onboard the Ariane-5 (VA247) from Kourou in French Guiana.

Application

The satellite provides Indian mainland and island coverage.

GSAT-31 will be used for supporting VSAT networks, television uplinks, digital satellite news gathering, DTH television services, cellular backhaul connectivity and many such applications.

The satellite will also provide wide beam coverage to facilitate communication over a large oceanic region comprising a large part of the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean using a wideband transponder.

Topic- GS-3- Science and Technology Source- DD News

2. National Film Development Corporation of India has been selected as Winner under the Miniratna Category (Category II)

- National Film Development Corporation of India has been selected as Winner under the Miniratna Category (Category II) by Ministry of MSME.

This has been done as part of endeavour by Ministry of MSME to felicitate select CPSEs to recognize their exemplary work towards promotion of SC/ST entrepreneurs.

NFDC (National Film Development Corporation Ltd.)

It was incorporated in the year 1975, was formed by the GOI.

It incorporated with the primary objective of planning and promoting an organized, efficient, and integrated development of the Indian film industry.

These films, in various Indian languages, have been widely acclaimed and have won many national and international awards.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture Source-PIB

Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana

This scheme was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 2017.

The objective of the scheme is to provide Senior Citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from age-related disabilities/ infirmities, with such physical aids and assisted living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions.

Under the Scheme, assisted living devices such as Walking Sticks, Elbow Crutches, Walkers/ Crutches, Tripods/ Quadpods, Hearing Aids, Wheelchairs, Artificial Dentures and Spectacles are provided free of cost to the beneficiary senior citizens.

The Scheme is being implemented through the "Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO)", a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of SJ&E, as the sole Implementing Agency.

For the senior citizens aged 80 years or more, the devices are provided at their doorsteps.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Scheme for Vulnerable section of Society Source- PIB

PM-JAY app

The PM-JAY app launched by Union Minister under the scheme Ayushman Bharat.

The app is helping users to get easy access of information about the scheme, check eligibility, find hospitals nearby and get assisted help.

The app will provide a way to connect and get all important information on the Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

Bullet train gets green light via flamingo haven, national park

Recently, a committee, chaired by Union Environment Minister has accorded wildlife clearance to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed train corridor that encroaches upon a flamingo sanctuary and the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, the home to leopards, in Mumbai.

Mumbai–Ahmedabad high-speed Rail (MAHRS) Corridor

This project for one of India's first 'bullet trains' was inaugurated by Prime Minister and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe in Ahmedabad in September 2017.

It is expected to be ready by 2022.

The train will cover a distance of over 508 km from Sabarmati (Gujarat) to Bandra (Mumbai, Maharashtra) in around 2.58 hours at high speed of 320 kph from the existing 7-8 hours.

In this project, around 80 % cost will be provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as a soft loan at an interest of 0.1% per annum.

This loan will be repaid to Japan in 50 years, with 15 years grace period.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics and Development

Source- The Hindu

100% use of VVPAT for Lok Sabha polls: EC

- The Election Commission informed the Madras High Court that it had made it clear way back in 2017 that there shall be 100% use of the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) system during the Lok Sabha election 2019.

The usage of VVPAT machines of the Election Commission is expected to ensure free and fair elections.

Related Information

Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)

In the VVPAT system, when a voter presses the button for a candidate of his choice in the electronic voting machines (EVM), a paper ballot containing the serial number, the name of the candidate and poll symbol will be printed for the voter.

The voters will be able to view the voter-verifiable paper audit trail slip for seven seconds after which it will get deposited in a sealed box.

VVPAT machines can be regarded as an independent verification system as it

- o allows voters to verify that their votes are cast correctly,
- o detects possible election fraud or malfunction and
- o Provides a means to audit the stored electronic result.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance Source- The Hindu

Russia racing to develop new missile systems to counter the US by 2021

Russia announced that it is planning to develop two new land-based missile launch systems in response to President Trump's announcement that the U.S. will withdraw from a landmark nuclear weapons treaty.

Moscow intends to develop the systems by 2021 in order to counter U.S. developments in its missile capabilities.

The U.S. and others in the international community have accused Russia of violating the treaty, which prohibits nuclear and conventional ground-launched missiles with ranges between 300 to 3,400 miles from being deployed in Europe, since 2014.

Related Information

Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

The INF Treaty was signed in 1987 between US President Ronald Reagan and USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev.

The treaty aimed to end arms race between USA and USSR during the cold war and to ensure some strategic stability in Europe.

The INF treaty banned the development, testing and possession of short and medium-range ground-launched nuclear missiles having range between 500-5,000 km.

And also, all the nuclear and conventional missiles, as well as their launchers, with ranges of 500–1,000 km or (short-range) and 1,000–5,500 km (intermediate-range) were banned under this treaty.

The Treaty proved to be a potent deterrent against any full-scale nuclear war in Europe.

New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)

It is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation with the formal name of Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms.

It was signed on 8 April 2010 in Prague, and, after ratification, entered into force on 5 February 2011.

It is expected to last at least until 2021.

New START replaced the Treaty of Moscow (SORT), which was due to expire in December 2012.

Under terms of the treaty, the number of strategic nuclear missile launchers will be reduced by half.

A new inspection and verification regime will be established, replacing the SORT mechanism.

It does not limit the number of operationally inactive stockpiled nuclear warheads that remain in the high thousands in both the Russian and American inventories.

Topic- GS Paper 2–International relation Source- The Hindu

NTA Students App

National Testing Agency (NTA) recently has launched a 'mobile app' through which students can practice or take mock tests on their own computers or smartphones.

Now the students across the country can register themselves online at NTA Website or 'NTA Students App' for visiting the TPCs.

Related Information

National Test Agency

The Union Cabinet in November 2017 approved the creation of the National Testing Agency (NTA) as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization to conduct entrance examinations for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country.

It will be chaired by an educationist who will be appointed by the MHRD.

The agency will have a board of governors who will represent the member institutions.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

Department of School Education and Literacy has launched an Integrated Scheme for School Education-Samagra Shiksha, subsuming three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE), with effect from 2018-19.

The new integrated scheme envisages school education as a continuum from pre-school to senior secondary level.

Its aim to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels.

It will also support to states in the implementation of RTE Act, 2009 and strengthening of teacher education institutions.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Government

Scheme Source-PI B

'Earthquake swarm' in Palghar

The Palghar district in northern Maharashtra was rocked by a series of minor earthquakes.

Related Information

Earthquakes swarms

NCS (National Centre for Seismology) has categorised the unusual tremors as an 'earthquake swarm' which is a series of low magnitude earthquakes that occur in a localised region and over a period of time ranging from days, weeks to even months.

When seismic energy piles up inside the Earth and is released in small amounts from certain points, such a series of earthquakes can occur.

Sometimes, these rumblings of the Earth are also accompanied by acoustic or sound emissions.

They are differentiated from earthquakes succeeded by a series of aftershocks by the observation that no single earthquake in the sequence is obviously the main shock.

It is believed that these are caused by the movement of tectonic plates which is normal in the Indian peninsula.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Disaster Management

Source- Indian Express

Shehri Samridhi Utsav Launched

It is an initiative of the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA).

It is the National Exhibition and a sale of Self Help Group products and National Street Food Festival organized in New Delhi.

It aims to extend the outreach of Deendayal Antyodaya Mission – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), to the most vulnerable, showcase its initiatives and facilitate access of Self-Help Group (SHG) members to the other government schemes.

Related Information

Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)

It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented by Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation.

Its objective is to uplift urban poor folks by enhancing sustainable livelihood opportunities through skill development.

Its intended beneficiaries are urban poor (street vendors, slum dwellers, homeless, rag pickers); unemployed and differently abled.

It also provides social mobilization and institution development through the formation of Self-Help Groups (SHG) for training members and hand holding, initial support of 10,000 is given for each group.

It also provides subsidy to urban poor i.e. interest subsidy of 5% – 7% for setting up individual microenterprises with a loan of up to 2 lakhs and for group enterprises with a loan limit of up to Rs.10 lakhs.

PAISA Portal a centralised electronic platform is launched for quicker processing of loans under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

07.02.2019

MoU between India and Norway on India-Norway Ocean Dialogue

The Union Cabinet has approved the MoU between India and Norway on India-Norway Ocean Dialogue.

Benefits:

The MoU will promote cooperation in the areas of mutual interest pertaining to the development of blue economy.

Norway is a global leader in the area of Blue Economy and has cutting-edge technologies and expertise in areas such as fisheries, hydrocarbons, renewable energy, sustainable harnessing of ocean resources and maritime transport.

The proposed MoU will contribute in:

Creating opportunities for collaboration in areas such as exploitation of hydrocarbons and other marine resources,

Management of ports

Tourism development

contribute to the objective of Food Security through the infusion of new technologies in fisheries & aquaculture.

Topic-GS Paper2–International Relation

Source-PI B

Cabinet approves Abolition of Institution of Income-Tax Ombudsman and Indirect Tax Ombudsman

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for Abolition of Institution of Income-Tax Ombudsman and Indirect Tax Ombudsman.

The approval comes in the wake of alternative complaint redressal mechanisms chosen by the public and the institution of Ombudsman could not prove to be more effective than regular existing parallel channels of grievance redressal.

Related Information

Institution of Income-Tax Ombudsman

It was created in the year 2003 to deal with grievances of public related to the settlement of complaints relating to Income Tax.

However, the Institution of Ombudsman failed to achieve its objectives.

It was observed that institution of new complaints has in turn fallen to single digits.

Also, taxpayers started preferring alternate methods of grievance redressal like CPGRAMS (Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System), Aaykar Seva Kendras etc.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

Amendments to the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018 pursuant to the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF).

Objective– to effectively tackle the menace of illicit deposit-taking activities in the country, and prevent such schemes from duping poor and gullible people of their hard earned savings.

Related Information

Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018

It provides comprehensive legislation to deal with the menace of illicit deposit schemes in the country through

Complete prohibition of unregulated deposit-taking activity;

Deterrent punishment for promoting or operating an unregulated deposit-taking scheme;

Stringent punishment for fraudulent default in repayment to depositors;

Designation of a Competent Authority by the State Government to ensure repayment of deposits in the event of default by a deposit-taking establishment;

Powers and functions of the competent authority including the power to attach assets of a defaulting establishment;

Designation of Courts to oversee repayment of depositors and to try offences under the Act;

Listing of Regulated Deposit Schemes in the Bill, with a clause enabling the Central Government to expand or prune the list.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Indian Express

Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for the establishment of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog for Conservation protection and development of cows and their progeny.

It was announced in Budget 2019-20 by the finance minister.

Impact

It will lead to the conservation, protection and development of the cattle population in the country including the development and conservation of indigenous breeds.

It will result in increased growth of the livestock sector which is more inclusive, benefiting women, and small and marginal farmers.

The Aayog will work in collaboration with Veterinary, Animal Sciences or Agriculture University or departments or organizations of the Central/State Government engaged in the task of research in the field of breeding and rearing of the cow, organic manure, biogas etc.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source-PIB

Central Sector Scheme of Exploration of Coal and Lignite

The Cabinet approved the proposal for continuation of the Scheme of "Exploration of Coal and Lignite.

The scheme will be extended for a period of 3 years from 2017-18 to 2019-2020.

Under the Scheme, approximately 7 billion tonnes of resources will be established and 11 billion tonnes of resources will be proved.

Exploration for coal and lignite is required to estimate and to prove the resources available in the country.

Exploration for coal and lignite in the country is conducted in two broad stages:

Regional exploration and detailed drilling.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Environment Source-PIB

First career portal for students launched in Rajasthan

India's first "career portal", addressing the needs of secondary and higher secondary students for information on scholarships and career choices, was launched with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Benefit

- The portal would promote employment-oriented education in the State and provide information on 200 vocational and 237 professional careers, 455 employment avenues, 960 scholarships, 955 competitive examinations and 10,000 institutions of higher education to the students from Classes IX to XII.

It will also help to reveal substantial progress in terms of gender equality among the students.

It will serve the needs in the educational stream, enabling the students to choose their career path matching with their aspirations, interest, inclination and aptitude.

Why Rajasthan?

UNICEF had selected Rajasthan for launching the portal because of its track record in employment-oriented education.

UNICEF's studies in Rajasthan have highlighted that two largest sources of career information for students are teachers and family members.

About 69% of students mentioned that they were using the Internet for their career-related queries, which indicates that the adolescents will quickly learn to use the career portal.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance Source- The Hindu

7. Cabinet approves unified regulator for IFSCs

The Cabinet has approved the setting up of a unified authority that would regulate all the financial services in International Financial Services Centres (IFSC), such as the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in Gandhinagar.

This is to be done through the International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019.

Currently, the banking, capital markets and insurance sectors in IFSCs are regulated by multiple regulators, i.e. RBI, SEBI and IRDAI.

Related Information

What is an IFSC?

An IFSC is aimed at encouraging Indian companies that are conducting business in foreign financial centres such as London and Singapore, to bring that business to India by providing them with a global-standard regulatory and business environment.

An IFSC caters to customers outside the jurisdiction of the domestic economy. Such centres deal with flows of finance, financial products and services across borders.

IFSC would also complement and promote further development of financial markets in India.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics

Source- The Hindu

8. RBI unlikely to transfer contingency fund to govt.

RBI is unlikely to give in to the government's demand for transferring funds that were set aside for contingency reserves in 2016-17 and 2017-18.

A total of 27,330 crore — 13,140 crore in FY17 and 14,190 crore in FY18 — was set aside by the RBI for the contingency fund.

The government has requested the RBI for providing an interim surplus for the financial year 2018-19 on the analogy of previous financial year and transfer of the amount withheld from the surplus of 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Related Information

Contingency fund

A contingencies fund or contingency fund is a fund for emergencies or unexpected outflows, mainly economic crises.

Contingency fund with respect to India

The Constitution of India authorized the parliament to establish a contingency fund of India.

The Contingency Fund of India is established under Article 267 of the Indian Constitution.

It is in the nature of an imprest (money maintained for a specific purpose). Accordingly, Parliament enacted the contingency fund of India Act 1950.

The fund is held by the Finance Secretary (Department of Economic Affairs) on behalf of the President of India and it can be operated by executive action.

The Contingency Fund of India exists for disasters and related unforeseen expenditures.

Contingency fund for States

Contingency Fund of each State Government is established under Article 266 of the Constitution.

This is in the nature of an imprest placed at the disposal of the Governor to enable him/her to make advances to meet urgent unforeseen

expenditure, pending authorization by the State Legislature.

Approval of the Legislature for such expenditure and for withdrawal of an equivalent amount from the Consolidated Fund is subsequently obtained, whereupon the advances from the Contingency Fund are recouped to the Fund.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics

Source- The Hindu

9. Disaster Resilience Exercise: EXERCISE RAHAT

- 'EXERCISE RAHAT' is Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise.

The Joint exercise in coordination with NDMA is being conducted to synergise efforts for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

Representatives from Armed Forces, National Disaster Management Response Mechanism (NDMRM), and SDMA Rajasthan will be participating in the exercise.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- Indian Express

ESA's Hera mission and NASA's Double Asteroid Redirection Test

The European Space Agency's (ESA's) Hera mission is set for a new record by becoming the first spacecraft to explore a binary asteroid — the Didymos pair.

The moon orbiting Didymos, called 'Didymoon' — almost the size of the Giza Pyramid in Egypt,— will be the smallest asteroid ever explored.

However, Hera mission won't be the first to reach Didymos.

NASA in the USA plans to launch the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) between 2020 and 2021, which will target Didymoon as part of its planetary defence programme.

The programme, designed to protect Earth from dangerous comets and asteroids, aims to crash DART into Didymoon in 2022 to alter its orbit around Didymos.

Topic-GS-3-Science and Technology

Source- Down To Earth

08.02.2019

Various programs/schemes for promotion of grid interactive renewable energy

The details of the major steps taken by the Government to attract investment in the renewable energy sector are as follows: -

1. Waiver of Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) charges and losses for the inter-state sale of solar and wind power for projects to be commissioned up to March 2022.

Permitting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) up to 100 per cent under the automatic route.

Notification of standard bidding guidelines to enable distribution licensee to procure solar and wind power at competitive rates in a cost-effective manner.

Declaration of trajectory for Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) up to the year 2022.

Implementation of Green Energy Corridor project to facilitate grid integration of large scale renewable energy capacity addition.

Note:

The Government has set a target of installing 175000 MW of renewable energy capacity by the year 2022 which includes 100000 MW from solar, 60000 MW from wind, 10000 MW from bio-power and 5000 MW from small hydropower.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source-PIB

Siamese fighting fish: Thailand national aquatic animal

Thailand named the tiny, eye-catching, colourful fin plumaged Siamese fighting fish as its aquatic animal.

It will help to boost the conservation and breeding of the same.

Related Information

Siamese fighting fish is the native of Mekong basin of Thailand and is mostly found in the Chao Phraya river in Thailand.

The Siamese fighting fish was registered as an intangible cultural heritage in 2013.

The IUCN status of fish is Vulnerable.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

Macedonia signed an accord to join NATO

Macedonia signed an accord to join NATO to become the 30th member of the NATO military alliance.

Related Information

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

It is an intergovernmental political and military alliance between 29 North American and European countries.

The organization implements the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed on 4 April 1949.

NATO constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.

NATO's Headquarters are located in Haren, Brussels, Belgium, while the headquarters of Allied Command Operations is near Mons, Belgium.

Note: NATO's purpose is to guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means.

POLITICAL- NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.

MILITARY –

- o NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes.
- o If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management.
- o These are carried out under the collective defence clause of NATO's founding treaty- Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organisations.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Organisation

Source- The Hindu

RBI released its 6th Bi-Monthly

Monetary Policy

Reserve Bank of India(RBI)'s six-member monetary policy committee chaired by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das released its 6th Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of RBI decided to reduce the repo rate to 6.25% from 6.50.

Related Information

Monetary Policy Committee of India

The Monetary Policy Committee of India formed in 2016 is responsible for fixing the benchmark interest rate in India.

The meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee are held at least 4 times a year and it publishes its decisions after each such meeting.

The committee comprises six members - three officials of the Reserve Bank of India and three external members nominated by the Government of India.

The Governor of Reserve Bank of India is the chairperson ex officio of the committee.

Decisions are taken by the majority with the Governor having the casting vote in case of a tie.

The current mandate of the committee is to maintain 4% annual inflation until March 31, 2021, with an upper tolerance of 6% and a lower tolerance of 2%.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics

Source- The Hindu

Cabinet approves setting up Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund

The Union Cabinet approved the creation of an Rs 2,000-crore Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF) for development and upgradation of rural agriculture markets.

It will be created with NABARD for development and upgradation of agriculture marketing infrastructure in Gramin agriculture markets and regulated wholesale markets.

Related Information

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs

The Prime Minister is the head of this committee.

Cabinet ministers of various ministries are its members.

Its important functions are:

To direct and coordinate the governmental activities in the economic sphere.

To review economic trends and evolve a consistent and integrated policy framework in the country.

To review the progress of activities related to rural development including those concerning small and marginal farmers

To deal with industrial licensing cases involving proposals from the Ministries for the establishment of Joint Sector Undertakings.

To consider issues relating to disinvestment

Other functions

To consider and decide on issues pertaining to the World Trade Organization.

To consider issues relating to the Unique Identification Authority of India

To monitor general prices, assess availability and export of essential and agricultural commodities and to take measures for efficient Public Distribution System

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

Parmanu Tech 2019

Ministry of External Affairs and Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) organised Parmanu Tech 2019 in New Delhi to discuss the issues related to Nuclear Energy and Radiation Technologies.

The following sectors discussed in the conference:

- o The main motive of this conference is to showcase India's capabilities in Nuclear Energy with environmental responsibility.
- o Food Preservation, Agricultural & Industrial Applications: From farms to factories – Serving the National Cause
- o Health care: Nuclear Medicine and Radiation therapy – Care to cure

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source-PIB

India jumps 8 places to 36th on international IP index 2019

US Chambers of Commerce released the 7th edition of annual International IP Index of top 50 economies in the world.

India's rank moved up to 36 jumping eight places - as against 44 in 2018.

India's overall score in the annual International IP Index has increased substantially to 16.22 (out of a maximum score of 45), against 12.03 (out of 40) in the sixth edition.

The latest report, Inspiring Tomorrow, analyses the IP climate in 50 world economies, based on 45 indicators critical to an innovation-led economy.

The US tops the list followed by the United Kingdom.

Related Information

Intellectual property

Intellectual property (IP) refers to creations of the intellect for which a monopoly is assigned to designated owners by law.

Intellectual property rights

Intellectual property rights (IPRs) are the rights granted to the creators of IP, and include trademarks, copyright, patents, industrial design rights, and in some jurisdictions trade secrets.

DIPP (Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion)

The Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion was established in 1995 and has been reconstituted in the year 2000 with the merger of the Department of Industrial Development.

Role and Functions-

Formulation and implementation of industrial policy

Formulation of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy and promotion, approval and facilitation of FDI

Formulation of policies relating to Intellectual Property Rights etc.

CIPAM (Cell for IPR Promotion and Management)

A professional body under the aegis of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) which ensures focused action on issues related to IPRs.

CIPAM assists in simplifying and streamlining of IP processes, apart from undertaking steps for furthering IPR awareness, commercialization and enforcement.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN).

WIPO was created in 1967 "to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world".

WIPO currently has 191-member states.

It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights)

It is an international legal agreement between all the member nations of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

It sets down minimum standards for the regulation by national governments of many forms of intellectual property (IP) as applied to nationals of other WTO member nations.

TRIPS was negotiated at the end of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1994 and is administered by the WTO.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Index

Source- Indian Express

Smriti Irani launches India Size project

Union Minister of Textiles Smriti Irani launched the India Size project in Mumbai.

A first-of-its-kind project in the history of the country, India Size aims to arrive at a standard Indian Size for the ready-to-wear clothing industry, on the lines of the standardized sizes available in countries such as the USA and the UK.

The project will benefit manufacturers, consumers and generate data which will help tap into the potential of the sector.

Topic- GS-2- Government Schemes

Source- AIR

11.02.2019

USA may end zero-tariffs for India
Due to the latest downturn in trade ties was India's new rule on FDI in e-commerce, India could lose a vital U.S. trade concession known as Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) under which it enjoys zero tariffs on \$5.6 billion of exports to the United States.

Related Information

Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)

India is the world's largest beneficiary of a scheme Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) that has been in force since the 1970s.

GSP is the largest and oldest US trade preference programme introduced in 1976.

It is designed to promote economic development by allowing duty-free entry for thousands of products from designated beneficiary countries both developing and developed countries.

It is a preferential tariff system which provides for a formal system of exemption from the more general rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Under it, a wide range of industrial and agricultural products originating from certain developing countries are given preferential access to US markets.

India's case, GSP enables duty-free entry of 3,500 product lines in US markets, which benefits exporters of textiles, engineering, gems and jewelry and chemical products.

The total US imports under GSP in 2017 was \$21.2 billion, of which India was biggest beneficiary with \$5.6 billion, followed by Thailand (\$4.2 billion) and Brazil (\$2.5 billion).

The US Congress in March 2018 had voted to renew GSP from 2020.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International

Relation Source- The Hindu

Successful Flight Test of SFDR

DRDO successfully flight tested the second indigenously developed 'Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR)' propulsion based missile system.

Related Information

Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet technology

It is jointly developed by India and Russia.

It will help both India's surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles to perform better and enhance their strike range, making them more lethal.

India can now have the fastest long-range missiles in two categories, providing full-edged and multi-layered aerial protection from hostile attacks.

Difference between SFDR and Conventional Missiles

Conventional Rocket Motor based BVRAAMs (Beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile) have a higher burning out rate since it works in the same amount of thrust levels from the moment it is fired, which means it can run out of fuel when it reaches its target in longer range and highly maneuverable targets can outrun the missile in the last phase if missile is fired from a long range.

Ramjets, by contrast, maintain their peak energy state for longer, delivering power throughout the flight, providing a high – though slightly slower – average speed and long ranges over a wide operational envelope, from sea level to high altitude.

Unlike traditional rocket motor, SFDR can throttle its engine during different phases of flight especially while approaching its target it can throttle up and able to maneuver and attack even fast maneuvering targets.

Not only does this mean the SFDR will have more energy to maneuver during the endgame of the engagement, but this capability also drastically increases the size of the missile's "no escape zone."

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source-PIB

Medical devices to be treated as drugs

The Centre in a notification said that medical devices — all implantable devices, CT Scan, PET and MRI equipment, defibrillators, dialysis

machines, and bone marrow separators — will be treated as drugs for human beings with effect from April 1, 2020.

The decision was taken in consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board.

Related Information

Drugs Technical Advisory Board

Drugs Technical Advisory Board is the highest statutory decision-making body on technical matters related to drugs in the country.

It is constituted as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

It is part of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

Exercise: Cutlass Express 2019

CUTLASS EXPRESS – 2019 a multinational training exercise which aims to improve law enforcement capacity, promote regional security and progress inter-operability between the armed forces of the participating nations for the purpose of interdicting illegal maritime activity in the Western Indian Ocean.

It was held recently from 27 Jan to 06 Feb 2019.

It was held recently in which INS Trikand, a front-line warship of the Indian Navy, participated.

During the exercise, Naval, Coast Guard, and Marine Police personnel from a number of East African countries were jointly trained by mentors from USA, India, and Netherlands, with the support of international organizations like the IMO, Combined Maritime Force (CMF) and European Naval Forces (EUNAVFOR).

The exercise was conducted in two phases.

The first called the Command Post Exercise (CPX).

The second phase called the Final Training Exercise (FTX).

Topic- GS Paper 3- Defence

Source- Indian Express

Shark Bay: A World Heritage Site at catastrophic risk

Shark Bay is a World Heritage-listed marine ecosystem in Australia.

It was recently devastated by extreme temperatures when a brutal marine heatwave struck off Western Australia in 2011.

A workshop convened by the Shark Bay World Heritage Advisory Committee classified Shark Bay as being in the highest category of vulnerability to future climate change.

Related Information

Shark Bay

It is a World Heritage Site in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia.

The combined Shark Bay invertebrate fishery (crabs, prawns and scallops) is the second most valuable commercial fishery in Western Australia.

Under threat

This iconic and valuable marine ecosystem is under serious threat due to future climate change, given that the temperate seagrass that underpins the entire ecosystem is already living at the upper edge of its tolerable temperature range.

These seagrasses provide vital habitat for fish and marine mammals and help the stromatolites survive by regulating the water salinity.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- Down to Earth

Scientists perform first 'in body' gene editing

Scientists have performed the first gene editing inside the body, altering DNA in adults to try to treat a disease.

Related Information

What is Gene editing?

Genome editing is a way of making specific changes to the DNA of a cell or organism.

An enzyme cuts the DNA at a specific sequence, and when this is repaired by the cell a change or 'edit' is made to the sequence.

CRISPR-Cas9

It is the most common and cheap and efficient system used for genome editing.

CRISPR stands for clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats.

Cas9 stands for CRISPR-associated protein 9, and is the nuclease part that cuts the DNA.

What can be the benefits?

CRISPR could be used to modify disease-causing genes in embryos brought to term, removing the faulty script from the genetic code of that person's future descendants as well.

Genome editing (Gene editing) could potentially decrease, or even eliminate, the incidence of many serious genetic diseases, reducing human suffering worldwide.

It might also be possible to install genes that offer lifelong protection against infection.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science And Technology

Source- The Hindu

National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah)

Parliamentary Standing Committee panel has recommended the Ministry of Home Affairs prepare a detailed and generous rehabilitation-cum-settlement scheme for the cadres of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), the group that signed a Naga Framework Agreement with the Centre in 2015.

National Socialist Council of Nagaland
Khaplang

NSCN (K) came into existence in 1988 under the leadership of S.S. Khaplang.

It is as an offshoot of NSCN which was established with an objective of forming a sovereign state of Nagalim by unifying all the areas inhabited by the Naga people in Northeast India and Myanmar.

Presently NSCN-K is active along the Indo-Myanmar border and has the strength of around 1,000 cadres with several camps across the border in Myanmar.

Greater Nagalim

A "Greater Nagalim" comprising "all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas", along with Nagaland and also included

several districts of Assam, Arunachal and Manipur, as also a large tract of Myanmar.

The Nagaland Assembly has endorsed the 'Greater Nagalim' demand — "Integration of all Naga-inhabited contiguous areas under one administrative umbrella.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

22nd Indian Birding fair organized at Jaipur's Man Sagar Lake

The fair was organized by the Tourism & Wildlife Society of India and supported by Jaipur Zoo and some philanthropic bodies and overseas organizations.

The fair was dedicated to waders.

The Indian subcontinent hosts 84 species of wading birds, 64 of which are migratory.

The Wading Birds which are tiny birds mostly confined to the edges of water and are observed feeding across moist surfaces.

Related Information

Man Sagar Lake

It is an artificial lake named after Man Singh, the then ruler of Amber and a trusted general of Mughal Emperor Akbar.

Man Singh built it in 1610 AD by damming the Dravyavati river.

A palace, Jal Mahal, is situated in the middle of the lake.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- The Hindu

The Great Indian Bustard: Mascot for COP-13

The Centre announced that the Great Indian Bustard GIB will be its mascot for the 13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the UN Convention on the conservation of migratory species (CMS) to be held in Gujarat 2020.

Related Information

Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)

It was formed in order to protect the migratory species throughout their range countries under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme.

It is also referred to as the Bonn Convention, it provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.

Under this convention, migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix I and Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them.

Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention.

India and Migratory Species

India has also signed non-legally binding MOU with CMS on the conservation and management of Siberian Cranes (1998), Marine Turtles (2007), Dugongs (2008) and Raptors (2016).

India is a temporary home to several migratory animals and birds.

The important among these include Amur Falcons, Bar-headed goose, Black-necked cranes, Marine turtles, Dugongs, Humpbacked Whales, etc.

The Indian sub-continent is also part of the major bird flyway network, i.e, the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) that covers areas between the Arctic and Indian Oceans, and covers at least 279 populations of 182 migratory waterbird species, including 29 globally threatened species.

India has also launched the National Action Plan for the conservation of migratory species under the Central Asian Flyway.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- Indian Express

13th edition of Petrotech 2019

India launched the third bidding round under its open acreage licensing policy (OALP), at the 13th edition of Petrotech 2019, a strategic hydrocarbon event held in Greater Noida.

PETROTECH 2019

PETROTECH 2019 is India's flagship biennial international oil and gas conference and exhibition.

It is Asia's largest oil and gas event.

The theme of PETROTECH 2019 is - Shaping the New Energy World through Innovation and Collaboration

This global event aims at bringing Energy Ministers, professionals, industry leaders, -academicians and domain experts from the energy sector on a common platform.

It also showcases the strengths & potential of Indian Hydrocarbon industry to the world besides providing a vibrant platform for sharing of experience, exchange of ideas, knowledge and technological development across various segments of the hydrocarbon industry.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Business Line

Asiatic Lion conservation in Gujarat's Gir

The Ministry of Environment launched a three-year Asiatic Lion Conservation Project in collaboration with the state of Gujarat.

The project will focus on better management of the lion habitat, disease control and veterinary care for them.

The project aimed to protect over 600 lions in the state's Gir sanctuary in its first year.

Asiatic lion

Its range is restricted to the Gir National Park and environs in the Indian state of Gujarat.

IUCN: Endangered

CITES Appendix I

Threats

- Currently exists as a single subpopulation, and is thus vulnerable to extinction from unpredictable events, such as an epidemic or large forest fire.

Poaching

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- The Hindu

12 Assam govt. announces “Arundhati Scheme”

- Under this Scheme, Assam Government is Going to Provide 10gm (1 Tola) Gold to EWS Category Brides of the State.

Rs. 300 Crore is allocated to this Scheme in the recently announced state Budget

Who are the Beneficiaries of this Scheme?

The Annual income of the Bride Family Should not exceed Rs. 5 Lakhs.

The benefit to be Given at the Time of Marriage

Marriage Should be Registered under Assam’s Special Marriage Rules of 1954.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Government Scheme Source- TOI

Himalayan Cloud Observatory set up in Tehri to monitor cloud activities

A Himalayan Cloud Observatory has been set up in Tehri district to receive forecast and monitor cloud burst incidents in the Himalayan region and help minimize the damage.

The Observatory has been established in the SRT campus Badshahithaul and is currently in the testing period.

Cloudburst incidents are very frequent in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand, resulting in a huge loss of life.

This is the second observatory in the country to monitor cloud activities by the Indian Science and Technology Department and IIT Kanpur that can function in high-altitudes.

Topic-GS-3- Environment

12.02.2019

Swachh Shakti 2019

The third edition of the event i.e. Swachh Shakti 2019 is being inaugurated in Kurukshetra.

Swachh Shakti-2019 is a national event which aims to bring in to focus the leadership role played by rural women in Swachh Bharat Mission.

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in association with the Govt. of Haryana is organizing the Swachh Shakti-2019.

Women Sarpanches and Panches from all over the country will be attending the event.

The event will showcase the achievements of Swachh Bharat and the recently conducted Swachh Sunder Shauchalay, (neat and clean toilet) - a unique and first of its kind in the world campaign.

Related Information

Swachh Shakti

Prime Minister launched the Swachh Shakti program first in 2017 at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

It was launched on the occasion of International Women’s Day under the banner of Swachh Shakti 2017.

The second Swachh Shakti event, Swachh Shakti-2018 was held at Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh.

The third edition is being inaugurated from Kurukshetra.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Women Empowerment

Source-PIB

World Sustainable Development Summit 2019

The World Sustainable Development Summit 2019, organized by The Energy and Resources Institute – TERI.

The theme of the 2019 edition of the Summit is - ‘Attaining the 2030 Agenda: Delivering on Our Promise’.

It seeks to bring together global leaders and thinkers in the fields of sustainable development, energy and environment sectors on a common platform.

Related Information

World Sustainable Development Summit

WSDS has replaced the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS).

The first DSDS was organized in 2005.

It underscored the need for businesses and the private sector to take lead in poverty reduction and to ensure rapid & sustained adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

TERI (The Energy & Resources Institute)

It is a non-profit research institution that conducts research work in the fields of energy, environment, and sustainable development.

It aims to focus on formulating local & national level strategies for shaping global solutions to critical issues.

It was established in 1974 as Tata Energy Research Institute and was renamed The Energy and Resources Institute in 2003.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –
Environment Source-PIB
Scheme for Pension and Medical
Aid to Artistes

- The Ministry of Culture is implementing a Scheme namely “Scheme for Pension and Medical Aid to Artistes”.

The objective of the Scheme is to improve the financial and socio-economic status of the old aged artists and scholars who have contributed significantly in their specialized fields of arts, letters etc. but leading a miserable life or are in penury condition.

The Scheme has also provided to provide medical aid facility to such Artistes and his/her spouse by covering them under a convenient and affordable Health Insurance Scheme of the Government.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Government Scheme
Source-PIB
Light House Projects

The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has instituted a challenge for States/ UTs to select six sites across the country for constructing the Lighthouse projects under GHTC-India.

In this 1,000 houses built with innovative technologies that are low-cost, sustainable and disaster-resistant under a pilot project called Lighthouse Project.

The States/ UTs will receive Central Assistance to construct these projects as per the guidelines.

The selected sites for lighthouse projects will be used as an ‘open laboratory’ for live demonstration.

Related Information
Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC-India)

The challenge (GHTC - India) seeks to obtain the best available innovative construction technologies from across the globe through a unique competitive process.

It aims to transform the eco-system of the housing construction sector in the country through lighthouse projects built using advanced proven technologies.

It will foster the development of domestic technological research, and building platforms for knowledge sharing and networking across the sector.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Economic Development Source- Indian Express
Bill to counter exploitation by NRI spouses

In a bid to counter growing incidents of exploitation of Indian women by NRI spouses, External Affairs Minister introduced a Bill in the Rajya Sabha. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated that the Bill will create accountability and protect those who are trapped in fraudulent marriages and are abandoned by their spouses.

Provision of the bill

According to the new Bill, a marriage between an NRI and an Indian citizen will have to be registered within 30 days from the date of marriage.

Necessary legal provisions have been created in the criminal code and the Passports Act, 1967, to initiate action against erring NRI spouses.

Topic-GS Paper 2–Women Empowerment Source- The Hindu
India received a batch of 4 Chinook military helicopters from the USA

India received a batch of 4 CH-47 Chinook military helicopters for the Indian Air Force from the USA.

Related Information
Chinook Helicopters

The Chinook military helicopters are modern heavy lift choppers which have a primary purpose to move troops, artillery, barrier materials, and equipment on the battlefield.

Chinook would be deployed for humanitarian and disaster relief operations and in missions such as transportation of relief supplies and mass evacuation of refugees.

The advanced multi-mission helicopter Chinook will provide the Indian armed forces with unmatched strategic airlift capability across the full spectrum of combat and humanitarian missions.

These helicopters have been used by the US Army since 1962 and were also availed in Vietnam.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Defence Source- AIR

11th February declared as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared 11th February as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

The theme for the day was "Investment in Women and Girls in Science for Inclusive Green Growth."

It helps to achieve full and equal participation and access to women and girls in science and to further achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

Related Information

As per the UNESCO data (2014-16), only about 30% of all female students select STEM-related fields in higher education.

Globally, the enrolment of female students is particularly low in ICT (3%), Natural Science, Mathematics and Statistics (5%) and in Engineering, manufacturing and construction (8%)

Topic-GS Paper 2–Women Empowerment

Source- Indian Express

Helina-Anti Tank Missile successfully tested

The Helicopter-launched anti-tank missile Helina was successfully test fired from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur in Balasore district of Odisha.

Related Information

HELINA

It is designed and developed indigenously for the Indian Army under an integrated guided missile development programme (IGMDP).

It is manufactured by India's sole missile producer, state-owned Bharat Dynamics Limited.

HELINA is the air-launched variant of the Nag, a fire-and-forget ATGM.

It has an operational range of 7-10km (after air-launched).

It is equipped with highly advanced Imaging Infrared Radar (IIR) seeker along with integrated avionics.

It also possesses an advanced passive homing guidance system.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- Indian Express

PM Narendra laid the foundation for Sela Tunnel

The tunnel is being built at an estimated cost of 687 crores by the Border Roads Organisation and is to be completed in three years.

It aims to provide all-weather connectivity to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh and other forward areas

The Sela Pass

The Sela pass is located between the Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

It connects the Tibetan Buddhist town of Tawang to Dirang and Guwahati.

Topic- GS-1-Indian Geography

Source-Livemint

13.02.2019

India and China are greening faster than the rest of the world

According to a new global study, China and India- the two economic powerhouses of Asia- are contributing significantly to the greening of the planet.

The world now has about 5.5 million square kilometers of extra green leaf area round the year compared to 2000.

China has contributed 25 percent to this increase while India added 6.8 percent of the total global net increase in leaf area between 2000 and 2017.

The contribution to the greening by the two countries is much higher though they have less vegetated area than some of the developed countries.

China has 6.6 percent and India only 2.7 percent of the global vegetated area.

Reasons

Earlier studies had identified carbon dioxide fertilization as the main reason for the greening of earth's lands. But this study has found that greening is more due to land use changes.

The increase in green areas is mostly due to a 35 percent increase in food production in both the countries with multiple cropping aided by facilitated by fertilizer use and availability of surface as well as groundwater irrigation.

Related Information

Greening

Greening refers to an increase in total leaf area — forests, croplands, orchards, monoculture plantations, commercial plantations.

Buddhist Tourism Circuit

Union Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned five new projects under the Buddhist Circuit.

The five states where the project under Buddhist Circuit has been sanctioned are Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh.

The Buddhist Circuit is one among the fifteen thematic circuits identified for development under Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

Related Information

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

It is a Central Sector Scheme, was launched in 2014 -15 for integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

UP govt started "Sarathi Sandesh Vahini" vehicles to spread awareness regarding family planning

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister flagged off 33 'Sarathi Sandesh Vahini' vehicles.

The 'Sarathi Sandesh Vahini' is a mission started by the state family welfare department with an aim to spread awareness regarding family planning in urban and rural areas.

The state health department will appoint nodal officers to supervise the campaign.

Under this campaign, vehicles will provide family planning information to the viewers through various documentaries and films.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- Business Standard

National Company Law Appellate

Tribunal (NCLAT)

NCLAT extends the deadline for NCLT Ahmedabad to decide on Essar Steel insolvency case.

Related Information

NCLAT

It was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), with effect from 1st June 2016.

It is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

It is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the Competition Commission of India.

Composition:

After consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the President of the Tribunal and the Chairperson and Judicial Members of the Appellate Tribunal shall be appointed.

The Members of the Tribunal and the Technical Members of the Appellate Tribunal shall be appointed on the recommendation of a Selection Committee consisting of:

- o Chief Justice of India or his nominee—Chairperson.
A senior Judge of the Supreme Court or a Chief Justice of High Court—Member.
- o Secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs—Member.
- o Secretary in the Ministry of Law and Justice—Member.
- o Secretary in the Department of Financial Services in the Ministry of Finance— Member.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- The Hindu

e-Cocoon App

Ministry of Textiles has launched a mobile application for quality certification in the silkworm seed sector.

The app will be used by the Seed Analysts and Seed Officers nominated under Central Seed Act for system and product certification through real-time reporting.

Related Information

Sericulture

It is the cultivation of silk through the rearing of the silkworm.

It is an agro-based industry.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Agriculture

Source- Indian Express

Contempt Of Court

Supreme Court holds Rao and CBI legal advisor guilty of contempt in the case of abuse at Bihar shelter homes.

Related Information

Article 129 & 215 of Indian Constitution provides for contempt powers to Supreme Court and High court respectively.

The Contempt of court Act 1971 provides for two types of contempt

- o Civil contempt
- o Criminal contempt

Civil Contempt: When a person willfully disobeys a court's judgment, order or direction, it comes under civil contempt.

Criminal contempt: It includes one or more of the following

- scandalize or lower the authority of any court;
- prejudice or interfere with the due course of any judicial proceeding
- interfere with or obstruct the

administration of justice in any other manner.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

Scientists use AI app "Hotel-50K" to help kids sold for sex in hotels

Scientists are hoping artificial intelligence (AI) can help identify and rescue child victims of sex trafficking via an app known as Hotel-50K.

Hotels-50K can be used to identify where trafficking victims are being held and to rescue them.

Researchers launched the app in 2016 to collect photographs of 50,000 hotels around the world.

It sifts through a database of hotel room pictures to match with online ads.

These pictures could be matched up with online advertisements placed by traffickers.

Traffickers often use selfies taken by their victims in hotel rooms.

According to the International Labor Organization, there are 4.5 million people in sexual slavery around the world.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

LAWASIA Human Rights Conference

The first LAWASIA Human Rights Conference was recently organized by LAWASIA, in association with the Bar Association of India.

The theme of the Conference: "State Power, Business and Human Rights: Contemporary Challenges".

The conference aims to provide a unique opportunity for lawyers and associated professional members to exchange insights and expertise on topics of significant importance to all.

LAWASIA

It is a regional association of lawyers, judges, jurists and legal organizations.

It advocates for the interests and concerns of the Asia Pacific legal profession.

It provides a platform to promote the cross-jurisdictional exchange of legal knowledge; as a voice of the legal profession; and as a conduit for

encouraging adherence to mutually-held principles of the rule of law, professional integrity and the protection of human rights.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Social

Justice Source- Indian Express

14.02.2019

e-AUSHADHI portal

Minister of State (IC) for AYUSH launched the e-AUSHADHI portal, for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs and related matters at New Delhi.

The portal is intended for increased transparency, improved information management facility, improved data usability and increased accountability.

The e-portal is an acronym for Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy Automated Drug Help Initiative.

Related Information

Ministry of AYUSH

The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy, abbreviated as AYUSH.

It is a governmental body in India purposed with developing, education and research in the field of alternative medicines including Ayurveda, yoga, unani, naturopathy, siddha and homoeopathy.

The ministry is headed by a Minister of State (Independent Charge).

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health

Issue Source-PIB

Credit Linked Capital Subsidy and Technology Up-gradation Scheme

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the Credit Linked Capital Subsidy and Technology Up-gradation Scheme (CLCS-TUS) beyond the 12th Plan for three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Related Information

This scheme aims at improving the competitiveness of MSMEs by integrating various ongoing schematic interventions aimed at up-grading technology through

Credit Linked Capital Subsidy (CLCS)

Hand holding for zero defect zero effect manufacturing (ZED)

Increasing productivity through waste reduction (Lean), design intervention (Design)

Cloud computing (Digital MSMEs), Facilitation of intellectual property (IPR)

Nurturing new ideas (Incubation).

Special provisions have been made in this scheme to promote entrepreneurship for SC/STs, women NER, Hill States (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand) Island Territories (Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep) and the Aspirational Districts/ LWE Districts.

Note:

The Zero Defect & Zero Effect, component will promote a reduction in emission level of greenhouse gases and improve the competitiveness through a reduction in defect/wastage during the manufacturing process of the products. It will also promote the innovation, digital empowerment of MSMEs, design interventions and support the protection of intellectual property of MSMEs.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source-PIB

Macedonia officially changed its name to North Macedonia

The Republic of Macedonia has officially changed its name to North Macedonia.

On 6th Feb. 2019, NATO member states signed an accession protocol allowing North Macedonia to join the alliance and become the 30th member.

Related Information

North Macedonia

- North Macedonia officially the Republic of North Macedonia is a country in the Balkan Peninsula in Southeast Europe.

It is a landlocked country, North Macedonia has borders with Kosovo to the northwest, Serbia to the northeast, Bulgaria to the east, Greece to the south, and Albania to the west

Its Capital is Skopje and Currency Macedonian Denar

Topic-GS Paper 2 –International relation Source- Indian Express

Clouded Leopard’ to be Mascot for National Games 2022

The Sports and Youth Ministry has chosen the ‘Smiling Clouded Leopard’ to be the Mascot for the National Games 2022.

National Games 2022 will be hosted by Meghalaya which is coinciding with its 50 years of statehood.

Related Information

Clouded Leopard

It is found in Himalayan foothills throughout the forests of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

It is threatened due to habitat loss, poaching for its skin and is also as a live pet trade.

The IUCN status Vulnerable’.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

Citizenship, triple talaq Bills lapse

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and the triple talaq Bill that criminalises instant divorce in a Muslim marriage has lapsed.

Related Information

Citizenship Bill that proposed to grant citizenship to six religious minorities — Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists — from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who came to India before December 31, 2014.

The Bill was seen as violating the terms of the 1985 Assam Accord that had set March 24, 1971, as the cut-off for granting citizenship.

How a bill lapsed in Parliament on the dissolution assembly?

A Bill pending in the assembly lapses (whether originating in the assembly or transmitted to it by the council).

A Bill passed by the assembly but pending in the council lapses.

A Bill pending in the council but not passed by the assembly does not lapse.

A Bill passed by the assembly (in a unicameral state) or passed by both the houses (in a bicameral state) but pending assent of the governor or the President does not lapse.

A Bill passed by the assembly (in a unicameral state) or passed by both the Houses (in a bicameral state) but returned by the president for reconsideration of House (s) does not lapse.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

Subarnarekha port in Odisha

Odisha CM laid the foundation stone of the Subarnarekha port in Balasore district of Odisha.

The proposed port is being developed by Tata Steel and Creative Port Development Pvt. Ltd.

It is an all-weather port which is situated on the Subarnarekha river mouth on the Bay of Bengal.

Related Information

Subarnarekha River

The Subarnarekha River (also called the Swarnarekha) flows through the Indian states of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha.

Tributaries

The prominent tributaries of the Subarnarekha are Kharkai, Roro, Kanchi, Harmu Nadi, Damra, Karru, Chinguru, Karakari, Gurma, Garra, Singaduba, Kodia, Dulunga and Khaijori.

The Kharkai meets the Subarnarekha at Sonari (Domuhani), a neighbourhood of Jamshedpur.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Important

port Source- The Hindu

Kerala takes the lead in the fight against trans fat

- The Kerala government health Department has drawn up an action plan to generate public awareness of the harmful effects of Trans fatty acids.

Related Information

Trans-fats

Trans-fatty acids (TFAs) are the most harmful type of fats which can have

much more adverse effects on our body than any other dietary constituent.

These fats are largely produced artificially but a small amount also occurs naturally.

Artificial TFAs are formed when hydrogen is made to react with the oil to produce fats resembling pure ghee/butter.

The natural TFAs are present in meats and dairy products, though in small amounts.

Trans fats, also known as trans fatty acids or TFA, are a type of fat found in small amounts in a wide variety of foods.

Harmful effects

They are considered a 'bad' fat because, like saturated fats, they can increase levels of LDL-cholesterol in the blood.

Trans fats can also decrease the level of 'good' HDL cholesterol and may increase the level of triglycerides, another type of fat in the blood.

TFAs pose a higher risk of heart disease than saturated fats.

It is also associated with a higher risk of developing obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, infertility, and certain types of cancers.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

99.82 % of projects in forests got the nod

India's apex National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)- charged with allowing forest land in Protected Areas to be diverted for the industry — cleared 682 of the 687 projects (99.82%) that came up for scrutiny

Related Information

National Board for Wild Life

It is a "Statutory Organization" constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

It serves as an apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approve projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries.

The board is "advisory" in nature and advises the Central Government on framing policies and measures for conservation of wildlife in the country.

No alternation of boundaries in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries can be done without the approval of the NBWL.

Composition

The NBWL is chaired by the Prime Minister which consists of 47 members.

Among these, 19 members are ex-officio members.

Other members include three Members of Parliament (two from Lok Sabha and one from Rajya Sabha), five NGOs and 10 eminent ecologists, conservationists and environmentalists.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- The Hindu

9. Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan Scheme

The Union govt is formulating a Scheme 'Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (KUSUM)' which aims to promote the use of solar energy among the farmers.

About the Scheme

Setting up of grid-connected renewable power plants each of 500 KW to 2 MW in the rural area.

Installation of standalone off-grid solar water pumps to fulfil irrigation needs of farmers not connected to grid.

Solarization of existing grid-connected agriculture pumps to make farmers independent of grid supply and also sell surplus solar power generated to Discom and get extra income.

The farmers will have to tolerate only 10% of the total expenditure to acquire an install a solar pump.

The Central Govt. will provide 60% cost while the remaining 30% will be taken care of by bank as credit.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

Selenium nanoparticles may act like antibacterial agents

- Scientists found that selenium nanoparticles, owing to their unique structure and properties, may be more effective than antibiotics as they have a larger surface area and therefore can be more in contact with the external environment.

Selenium nanoparticles were made by combining sodium selenite with vitamin C.

The antibacterial effect may be due to the fact that at a particular concentration nano-selenium interacts with the bacterial cell surface and penetrates into the cell, thus causing damage.

Selenium in excess is toxic. Though silver nanoparticles are also being used for similar purposes, researchers chose selenium due to their stable nature.

Related Information

Selenium

Selenium is a chemical element with symbol Se and atomic number 34.

Selenium is found naturally in wheat, eggs, cheese, nuts and sea-food.

It is an antioxidant and immunity booster.

15.02.2019

Criticism without incitement to violence isn't sedition: Supreme Court

Under Section 124A of the IPC, the offence of sedition is committed when any person by words or otherwise brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the government established by law.

Sedition is a cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable offence under the law, entailing life imprisonment as maximum punishment, with or without a fine.

What did the Supreme Court rule in the case (Kedar Nath case)?

The court examined whether the constitutionality of Section 124A could be protected as a reasonable restriction on the right to free speech, with particular reference to the security of the state and public order.

Supreme Court ruled in the Kedar Nath case that any act that had the "effect of subverting the Government" by violent means or create public disorder would come within the definition of sedition.

The court ruled that disapproval of the measures of government with a view to their improvement or alteration by lawful means is not sedition.

It held that "comments, however strongly worded, expressing disapprobation of actions of the Government, without exciting those feelings which generate the inclination to cause public disorder by acts of violence" would not attract the penal offence.

Related Information

Sedition was not a part of the original IPC that was enacted in 1860.

It was introduced in 1870 when it was said it had been dropped from the original IPC draft by mistake.

The court faced two directly conflicting interpretations of Section 124A — one by the Federal Court in Niharendu Dutt's case; the other by the Privy Council in the Sadashiv Narayan Bhalerao case.

Note: Tilak was sentenced to six years in jail after he was held guilty of sedition by the Privy Council for writing a piece in his newspaper, Kesari, under the heading "The misfortune of the country".

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

Kerala's mystery frog: Mysticellus Frankie

Scientists have discovered a new amphibian — a mysterious narrow-mouthed frog, that makes only a four-day appearance in seasonal roadside puddles every year in Kerala's Wayanad district.

The frog Mysticellus Frankie is not just a new species but also belongs to a completely new genus, Mysticellus.

Genetic studies revealed that the frog is around 40 million years old and its nearest relatives live more than 2,000 km away, in Southeast Asia (including Indo-Burma, Malaysia and Vietnam).

This Southeast Asian connection adds strength to the theories that India and Southeast Asia were connected in the past by land bridges, suggest the authors.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Biodiversity
 Source- The Hindu

Andhra merges PM Kisan scheme with Annadatha Sukhibhava

- Andhra Pradesh has made a significant move by merging Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman scheme with its own Annadatha Sukhibhava scheme.

This move will further allow a fixed amount of Rs. 10,000 per annum to all farmers in the state, irrespective of the size of their land.

PM-Kisan scheme will not only cover the marginalized farmers, but also the tenant farmers who will be facilitated with 'Cultivation Certificates' and 'Loan Eligibility Certificates' to avail the benefits of the scheme.

Other than Rs. 6000 per household which will be given under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, farmers will also receive Rs. 4000 from Andhra Pradesh government.

Related Information Annadata Sukhibhava Scheme

The Andhra Pradesh Government has announced the Annadata Sukhibhava Scheme for the welfare of farmers in the state budget 2019.

Under the implementation of Annadata Sukhibhava Scheme Government of state has enhanced the subsidies for paddy, sugarcane, cotton, groundnut crops, maize, pulses and sunflower crop.

Features of the Scheme

Development of the farmers

The primary objective of this scheme is to offer better income opportunities for agricultural workers. Apart from the subsidy on crops, they will also attain other financial assistance.

Selected crops

Under this farmer development project, the state will offer subsidy on crops like paddy, sugarcane, maize, sunflower, cotton, groundnut and pulses.

Financial Plan

The state finance minister has announced that for the implementation of this new scheme, the state government will have shell out Rs. 5000 crore.

Eligibility Criteria

This scheme is applicable only for the permanent resident of Andhra Pradesh state.

Any person holding farming land or he/she should be a tenant farmer can take the benefit of the scheme.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Government Scheme
 Source- Indian Express

Dolphin numbers have shrunk in Odisha: Annual census of dolphins

Odisha's recent annual census of dolphins in its waters have thrown up some shocking numbers, with the aquatic mammals' population declining from 469 in 2018 to 259 this year.

The 2019 dolphin census report revealed that Gahirmatha is the home of the state's largest dolphin population, having 126 animals.

Reasons for declining Population

The reduction in the number of dolphins compared to last year could be due to the migration of species from the Chilika lake and other water bodies to the deep sea.

Related Information

Dolphins have been included in Schedule I of the Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972.

It is in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

In the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) it is in Appendix II IUCN Status - Endangered

Topic-GS Paper 3–Environment Biodiversity
 Source- Down to Earth

Nord Stream 2 marks a failure for EU energy policy

European Union has agreed to tighten its rules on natural gas pipelines — in a way that may force a restructuring of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project to bring Russian gas under the Baltic Sea direct to Germany.

European Parliament two months ago passed a motion condemning it as a “political project that poses a threat to European energy security”.

The EU wanted to bring pipelines coming into the bloc under its energy rules. But Germany feared that would make the new pipeline uneconomic and unviable.

After sustained German pressure, the European Union agreed how its energy rules should apply to Nord Stream 2.

Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline

Nord Stream 2, the planned gas pipeline that would link Russia and Germany below the Baltic Sea.

It would allow Germany to effectively double the amount of gas it imports from Russia.

Where is it?

Berlin and Moscow agreed on the 1,200-kilometer (746-mile) route, which would connect the Ust-Luga area near Saint Petersburg with Greifswald in northeastern Germany.

The pipes would run across the Baltic Sea, for the most part following the route of the pre-existing Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which became operational in 2011.

Why is it controversial?

The planned route bypasses central and eastern European countries such as Slovakia and Poland, leaving them without a chance to collect lucrative gas transit fees.

Moreover, with Russia having means to directly deliver gas to its most important buyer, Germany; it would be much easier for the Russian government to shut off existing pipelines leading through Eastern Europe.

The project also runs contrary to Brussels' efforts to wean Europe off Russian gas.

Russia could easily cut off gas supplies to Ukraine in order to put pressure on Kyiv.

In April 2018, the EU Commission refused to back the project, saying it did not contribute to the EU goals of diversifying the gas supplies.

Separately, environmentalists claim the pipeline would be harmful to the flora and fauna of the Baltic Sea.

Related Information

Baltic members-

The Baltic states, also known as the Baltic countries, are the three countries in northern Europe on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The Baltic states cooperate on a regional level in several intergovernmental organizations, principally through the Baltic Assembly.

All three countries are members of the European Union, NATO and the Eurozone.

Estonia and Latvia are also members of the OECD.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International relation

Source- Economics Times

6. Bihar government announced Mukhya Mantri Vriddha Pension Yojana

Bihar Chief Minister announced an Universal Old Age Pension scheme, named Mukhya Mantri Vriddha Pension Yojana (MMVPY).

This Yojana is eligible for all irrespective for all caste, community, religion, except for those who are retired from government organizations.

The scheme facilitates the amount of Rs. 400 monthly pension for all in the state above the age of 60 who are not getting a pension from the government.

The scheme will come into its enforcement from 1st April 2019.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

Government panel recommended raising the minimum wage to Rs 375 a day

An expert committee set up by the government has recommended setting the minimum wage at Rs 375 a day, higher than the existing rate of Rs 321 for agriculture or unskilled workers and Rs 371 for semi-skilled workers.

The committee has come up with a new methodology that does away with the variation in wages based on sector, skills and location.

It has proposed a “balanced diet approach” to compute minimum wages.

An additional Rs 55 has been proposed as rent allowance for workers in urban India.

The committee has also recommended reviewing the consumption basket every five years.

It is subject to the availability of NSSO-CES data, and – within the period of 5 years - revising and updating the basic minimum wage at least in line with the consumer price index (CPI) every six months, to reflect changes in the cost of living.

Related Information

- The ministry of labour and employment had constituted the committee under the chairmanship of Anoop Satpathy, the fellow of the VV Giri National Labour Institute, in January 2017 to review and recommend ways to calculate the national minimum wage.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

India revoked Most Favoured Nation status granted to Pakistan

India announced that it had decided to withdraw the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status granted to Pakistan and would also take all possible steps to isolate the country at the international level after the car bomb attack in the Kashmir Valley.

Related Information

What is the Most Favoured Nation status (MFN)?

According to the MFN principle of the WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) — to which India is a signatory/contracting party — each of the WTO member countries should “treat all the other members equally as ‘most-favoured’ trading partners.”

The MFN status was accorded to Pakistan in 1996 as per India's commitments as a WTO member.

The WTO says, "Grant someone special favour (such as a lower customs duty rate) and you have to do the same for all other WTO members."

Hence, though MFN sounds like special treatment, in effect it means non-discrimination.

18.02.2019

Inland Waterways Authority of India launched "LADIS" portal

Inland Waterways Authority of India launched "LADIS" portal for real-time information on available depth on stretches of National Waterways.

LADIS (Least Available Depth Information System)

It will ensure that real-time data on least available depths is disseminated for ship/barge and cargo owners so that they can undertake transportation on NWs in a more planned way.

It will enhance the credibility and efficiency of information sharing to achieve seamless operations on National Waterways, besides preempting problems that may occur during the movement of vessels.

Initially, LAD information will be available for NW-1, NW-2, Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route and NW-3, along with the date of the survey.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PI B

Great Indian hornbills can adapt to modified habitat: study

Great Indian Hornbill

The great hornbill also known as the great Indian hornbill or great pied hornbill, is one of the larger members of the hornbill family.

It is predominantly fruit eating, but is an opportunist and preys on small mammals, reptiles and birds.

IUCN status: Vulnerable (Uplisted from Near Threatened in 2018).

It is also listed in Appendix I of CITES.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

National Emergency Declared in the United States

President of the United States Donald Trump declared a National Emergency Concerning the Southern Border of the United States.

President Donald Trump, citing an "invasion" of drugs and criminals, declared a national emergency to fund construction of a border wall along US-Mexico Border.

US President can now bypass the opposition in Congress (Parliament in the United States) and can redirect billions of dollars in federal funds to build the wall.

Emergency Powers in the United States Constitution

In the United States Constitution, neither the term "emergency" nor any comparable term appears in the text.

The President in the United States has Emergency Powers derived from the National Emergencies Act, 1976.

National Emergencies Act, 1976

Under the National Emergencies Act, the president can declare a national emergency, providing a specific reason for it.

The act offers no specific definition of "emergency" and allows a president to declare one entirely at his or her discretion.

The acts require a president to notify Congress publicly of the national emergency and to report every six months.

The law also says the president must renew the emergency every year, simply by notifying Congress.

The Congress can revoke a declaration by majority vote, though it would take a two-thirds vote by each house to override an expected presidential veto.

Previous Stances of Emergency Declaration

President Barack Obama declared a national emergency in 2009 during the swine flu outbreak to allow hospitals and local governments to establish sites to deal with the virus.

In 2001, President George W. Bush declared a national emergency days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks that

suspend certain aspects of the law, including provisions that limit the size of the military.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – International Relation

Source- Indian Express

Iran to promote Chabahar as curbs will hit the main port

When U.S. sanctions threatening Iran's main port of Bandar Abbas, the Iranian government is planning to promote the Chabahar port being developed by India in a major conference on February 26, highlighting the potential of the Indian Ocean port beyond India-Afghan trade alone.

The advantage of Chabahar was that it had received a waiver from the U.S.

This exception relates to reconstruction assistance and economic development for Afghanistan.

Related Information

Chabahar Port

Chabahar Port is a seaport in Chabahar located in southeastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman.

It serves as Iran's only oceanic port, and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti.

The port gives access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf nations' southern coast.

The Chabahar Agreement was signed in June 2015 and approved by Iran's Guardian Council in November 2016.

It is being seen as a gateway for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with Central Asian countries.

The first and foremost significance of the Chabahar port is the fact that India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan.

Chabahar port will be beneficial to India in countering Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the Gwadar port.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – International Relation

Source- The Hindu

The last of the elusive pangolins

- Obsession for its supposedly medicinal scales in China is believed to have made the ant-eating Chinese Pangolin, one of two species found in South Asia, extinct in India.
- The pangolin is the most trafficked mammal in the world.
- It is hunted for its meat across the northeastern States and in central India and the demand for its scales in China has made it the most critically endangered animal in less than a decade.

Related Information

Pangolin

Pangolin is only scaly mammal on the planet.

According to Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of the eight species of pangolin worldwide, two are found in India.

They are Chinese pangolin, mostly found in northeast India and Indian pangolin.

Chinese pangolin has been listed as "critically endangered" in (IUCN) Red List.

Indian pangolin has been listed as "endangered" in IUCN Red List.

It is listed as Schedule I category protected animal, under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972).

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

EXERCISE VAYU SHAKTI-2019

EXERCISE VAYU SHAKTI-2019 is held close to the border with Pakistan at Pokhran in Rajasthan by Indian Air Force.

The Indian Air Force showcased repower capability of indigenously-developed platforms like Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) and efficacy of Akash surface-to-air missile and Astra air-to-air missile.

Related Information

Vayu Shakti and Gagan Shakti are the two important exercises held by Indian Airforce.

Gagan Shakti

It is the biggest military exercise in decades undertaken by India to showcase its air dominance over the entire extended area of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

As per military protocol, both Pakistan and China have been kept in the loop about the exercise.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- Indian Express

Punjab's blackbuck fight for existence

It is found that most of the blackbuck in Punjab is dying due to injuries caused by stray dog attacks.

Blackbuck (Indian antelope)

They are found in India, Nepal and Pakistan (extinct in Bangladesh).

Blackbuck is the state animal of Andhra Pradesh, Haryana & Punjab.

The IUCN status: least concern.

In India, hunting of blackbuck is prohibited under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

It is under Appendix III (Nepal) in CITES.

Note: Bishnoi community of Rajasthan is known worldwide for their conservation efforts to blackbuck and Chinkara.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

Bullock cart racing

The Punjab government paved the way for the revival of bullock cart races at the annual Kila Raipur rural sports meet in Ludhiana.

Background

The bullock cart races were prohibited by the Supreme Court in 2014.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (Central Act 59 of 1960) was enacted to prevent the infliction of unnecessary cruelty and suffering on animals.

Related Information

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act

Enacted in 1960 to prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals and to amend the laws relating to the prevention of cruelty to animals.

As per the provisions of the law, the government of India formed the Animal Welfare Board of India.

What are the activities that would amount to cruelty to animals under the Act?

According to Section 11 of the PCA, the following instances would amount to animal treatment:

Willful & unreasonable administration of injurious drugs or substances to any animal.

Confining of any animal in a cage that measures insufficiently in height, length and breadth such that the confined animal is not able to move reasonably.

The owner of an animal not providing it with enough food, drink or shelter.

Inciting an animal to fight just for the purpose of entertainment.

Animal Welfare Board of India

It is a statutory advisory body on Animal Welfare Laws and promotes the welfare of animals in the country.

The board ensures that animal welfare laws are followed in the country; it also offers grants to other animal welfare organizations; and advises the GOI on issues of animal welfare.

The Board consists of 28 Members.

The term of office of Members is for a period of 3 years.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

9. Scientists discover massive mountains under Earth's crust

Scientists have discovered massive mountains in the Earth's mantle, an advance that may change our understanding of how the planet was formed.

In a study published in the journal Science, scientists used data from an enormous earthquake in Bolivia to find mountains and other topography on a layer located 660 km straight down, which separates the upper and lower mantle.

Related Information

Sources of Information about the Earth's Interior

There are two sources for information about the interior of the earth –

Direct Sources

Indirect Sources:

Direct Sources: Mining, drilling and volcanic eruption are examples of direct sources.

Indirect Sources: Seismic waves, gravitational field, magnetic field, falling meteors etc. are example of indirect sources.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

Pahari Dam Modernization Project

Prime Minister inaugurated the Pahari Dam modernization project in Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh.

Pahari Dam is a water storage dam situated on Dhasan River in Jhansi district.

The Dhasan River is a right bank tributary of the Betwa River which is originated in Madhya Pradesh.

The project will benefit farmers by reducing the water leakage from the dam and make more water available for the farmers.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

NASA's Mars Rover Opportunity Concludes a 15-Year Mission

Opportunity, a robotic rover that was active on Mars from 2004 to 2018.

It was Launched on July 7, 2003, as part of NASA's Mars Exploration Rover program, it landed in Meridiani Planum on January 25, 2004, three weeks after its twin Spirit (MER-A) touched down on the other side of the planet.

Related Information

Opportunity was not the first rover on Mars, and not the last.

NASA's Sojourner explored the planet for about three months in 1997, and three weeks before Opportunity arrived, its identical twin, Spirit, landed on the other side of Mars.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- New York Times

19.02.2019

Union Home Minister launched

ITSSO and Safe City
 Implementation Monitoring
 Portal for women safety

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi launched a range of citizen safety initiatives in New Delhi.

It includes the Emergency Response Support System, ERSS, for women safety in 16 states and Union territories.

The states include Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir. The service has already been launched in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland.

Persons in distress can dial a pan-India number: 112.

Under this system, all the states have to set up a dedicated Emergency Response Centre, ERC.

The ERCs are connected to District Command Centres and the Emergency Response Vehicles, and assistance to victims is facilitated through them.

The Home Minister also launched two portals - Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences and Safe City Implementation Monitoring Portal.

Related Information

Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO)

It is an online module available to law enforcement agencies at all levels- National, State, District and Police Station that allows State to undertake real-time monitoring and management for completion of investigation in rape cases in 2 months.

It leverages the existing CCTNS database, which covers nearly 15000 police stations in the country.

It would greatly strengthen States ability for analytics and prognosis for timely investigation and prosecution in rape cases.

Other

The Criminal Law Amended in April 2018 prescribes stringent penal provisions including the death penalty for rape of a girl below the age of 12 years.

For swift administration of justice in such cases, the Act also inter-alia mandates completion of investigation and trials within 2 months.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Women Empowerment

Source- PIB + AIR

4th Agri Leadership Summit 2019

- Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare inaugurated the 4th Agri Leadership Summit 2019 at the India International Horticulture Market (IIHM) in Ganaur, Sonapat district, Haryana.
- The theme of the summit was "Entrepreneurship & Agri-Business; Agri Allied – A Promising Sector and Agri Service- Direct Marketing".
- Punjab, Haryana and Delhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) were the Institutional Partner at the summit.
 - It helps to increase the income and quality of life of the farmers and to attract investments in agriculture-related industries of the State.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Business Standard

Iran Unveils New 'Fateh' Submarine

The Iranian President has unveiled a "state-of-the-art" domestically produced submarine capable of firing cruise missiles.

It is Iran's first submarine in the semi-heavy category.

The submarine can operate more than 200 metres below sea level for up to 35 days.

It has subsurface-to-surface missiles with a range of about 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles), making it capable in reaching Israel and U.S. military bases in the region.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Defence Source- The Hindu

Kulbhushan Jadhav case: India to seek consular access

India asked the UN's top court to give consular access to former Indian Navy officer Kulbhushan Jadhav, who was arrested in Baluchistan in 2016 on charges of espionage and sentenced to death by a military court in Pakistan.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) urgently ordered Pakistan in 2017 to stay the execution of Jadhav, pending hearings on the broader Indian case that take place this week in The Hague.

Related Information

International Court of Justice

International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial body of the UN.

It was established in 1945 via the UN Charter and its jurisdiction is worldwide.

It is located in "The Hague" in the Netherlands and has 193 state parties.

The major functions of ICJ are to settle legal disputes submitted to it by states and to provide advisory opinions on legal questions submitted to it by duly authorized international organs, agencies, and UN General Assembly.

It is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms of office by UNGA and UN Security Council.

In order to ensure the measure of continuity, one-third of ICJ is elected every three years.

Note: Dalveer Bhandari was re-elected as the fifth judge to the International Court of Justice.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –International Institution

Source- Indian Express

New report flags use of antibiotics on animals

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) revealed a report on antimicrobial agents which intended for use on animals, indicates that the use of antimicrobials as growth promoters is still being practised.

Highlights of the report:

In the report, it is found that the highest priority critically important antimicrobial such as tylosin and colistin is being used by many countries as growth promoters.

Colistin is also a "reserve" category antibiotic according to the World Health Organization (WHO), implying that it should only be considered for use when all other alternatives fail.

The use of antimicrobials as growth promoters in India has been commonly practised.

Antimicrobials relevant for human health are routinely used in poultry or aquaculture for non-therapeutic purposes.

These are administered in sub-optimal doses through feed or mixed with water.

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, in 2018, revealed how Venky's Ltd, a conglomerate involved in poultry farming and raising chickens on contract to supply to fast food industries, has been supplying colistin to farmers to help fatten chickens.

The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) recently garnered appreciation for setting up standards for antibiotic residues in food-animal products such as meat, milk, etc.

The FSSAI provides food standards for colistin indicating that such "last resort" antibiotics can still be used in rearing food-animals as long as it remains undetected while monitoring residue.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- Down to Earth

Munich Security Conference

The 55th Munich Security Conference (MSC) concluded in Germany.

It is an annual conference on the international security policy that takes place in Munich, Germany since 1963.

During the MSC 2019, India raised the issue of the Pulwama terror attack during bilateral meetings with several countries, including the US, Germany, and Russia.

It is an independent venue for policymakers and experts for open and constructive discussions about the most pressing security issues of the day and of the future.

The Munich Security Report is annually published by MSC which is an annual digest of relevant figures, maps, and research on crucial security challenges.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International Institution
Source- Indian Express

Scientists identify proteins linked with wheat infection

Indian researchers have figured out how fungus *Tilletia indica*, which causes the Karnal Bunt disease in wheat, infects the crop.

This may help the scientist to tackle from this diseases which destroy more than thousands of tones of wheat.

Related Information

Karnal Bunt

Karnal Bunt was first recorded in 1931 in Karnal.

It not only reduces the yield but also the quality of grains as they start giving off foul fishy odour and taste.

This makes grains unsuitable for human consumption.

The disease also occurs in the United States, Mexico, South Africa, Nepal, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Currently, the disease is controlled by spraying the wheat crop with fungicides but they are not very effective.

Many proteins identified to reduce the effect of this fungus eg. malate dehydrogenase which helps produce oxaloacetate, which is a precursor of oxalic acid, a key element in phytopathogenic fungi like *Tilletia indica* that makes them cause diseases.

SC directs states to sensitise cops about scrapping of Section 66A of IT Act

The Supreme Court has directed all state governments to sensitise their police personnel about scrapped

Section 66A of Information Technology Act, so that people are not unnecessarily arrested under the provision.

Related Information

Section 66A of IT Act provided for the jail term to people who post offensive content online and it was scrapped by the apex court in March 2015.

Topic- GS-2- Indian Polity

Source- AIR

20.02.2019

7 islands in Andamans, Lakshadweep identified for seaplane operations

During the 5th meeting of the Island Development Agency, Four islands in the Andamans and three in Lakshadweep have been identified for seaplane operations, while private sector participation has been invited for tourism-based projects.

These islands are Swaraj Dweep, Shaheed Dweep, Hutbay and Long Island in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Kavaratti, Agatti and Minicoy in Lakshadweep have been identified for seaplane operations.

Related Information

Island Development Agency (IDA)

It was set up on June 01, 2017 for the holistic development of islands.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

SPHEREx : NASA new Telescope to investigate the Universe in 2023

NASA will launch a new space telescope, SPHEREx, in 2023, which could provide a glimpse of the first moments in the history of the universe.

The Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization and Ices Explorer (SPHEREx) mission is a planned two-year mission.

Objectives

NASA's SPHEREx mission will help astronomers understand both how our universe evolved and how common are the ingredients for life in our galaxy's planetary systems.

Astronomers will use the mission to gather data on more than 300 million galaxies, as well as more than 100 million stars in our own Milky Way.

The mission will create a map of the entire sky in 96 different colour bands, far exceeding the colour resolution of previous all-sky maps.

It also will identify targets for more detailed study by future missions, such as NASA's James Webb Space Telescope and Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Science Daily

Aussie mammal the first 'climate change extinction'

Australia officially declared a Great Barrier Reef rodent extinct making it the first mammal believed to have been killed off by human-induced climate change.

The rat-like Bramble Cay melomys whose only known habitat was a small sandy island in far northern Australia has not been spotted in a decade.

Reason for disappearance

Available data on sea-level rise and weather events in the Torres Strait region "point to human-induced climate change is the root cause of the loss of the Bramble Cay melomys

Also low-lying island on a coral reef over the last decade, which had resulted in dramatic habitat loss.

Note: The Melomys rubicola is the only mammal's species endemic to the Great Barrier Reef's.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

Cabinet approves the proposal of National Policy on Electronics 2019

The Policy envisions positioning India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing - (ESDM) by encouraging and driving capabilities in the country for developing core components, including chipsets, and creating an enabling environment for the industry to compete globally.

Salient Features of NPE 2019

Create eco-system for globally competitive ESDM sector: Promoting domestic manufacturing and export in the entire value-chain of ESDM.

Provide incentives and support for manufacturing of core electronic components.

Provide a special package of incentives for mega projects which are extremely high-tech and entail huge investments, such as semiconductor facilities display fabrication, etc.

Formulate suitable schemes and incentive mechanisms to encourage new units and expansion of existing units.

Provide incentives and support for significantly enhancing the availability of skilled manpower, including re-skilling.

Create a Sovereign Patent Fund (SPF) to promote the development and acquisition of IPs in the ESDM sector by 2025.

Promote trusted electronics value chain initiatives to improve national cybersecurity profile.

Background

The implementation of the Schemes/ Programmes under the aegis of the National Policy on Electronics 2012 (NPE 2012) has successfully consolidated the foundations for a competitive Indian ESDM value chain. NPE 2019 proposes to build on that foundation to propel the growth of ESDM industry in the country.

The National Policy of Electronics 2019 (NPE 2019) replaces the National Policy of Electronics 2012 (NPE 2012).

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

OFB gets clearance for producing 114 long-range artillery gun 'Dhanush'

The Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) has received a bulk production clearance from the Indian Army and the Defence Ministry for production of 114 'Dhanush' artillery guns.

Dhanush

Dhanush' is the first long-range artillery gun to be produced in India.

It has been developed by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), Kolkata based on requirements of Indian Army and manufactured by Jabalpur-based Gun Carriage Factory (GCF).

It is also known as desi Bofors because it is an upgraded version of Swedish Bofors howitzers, which India procured in the mid 1980s, based on its original designs.

It has a strike range of 40 kilometres with accuracy and precision.

It also has night firing capability in direct fire mode.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- Indian Express

Attukal Pongala: World's largest religious congregation of women

Kerala to host the Attukal Pongala festival which is considered as one of the world's largest religious gathering of women on a single day.

Related Information

Attukal Pongala

It is celebrated at the Attukal Temple, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

These women prepare a divine food made of rice in earthen pots and offer it to the Goddess of the Temple.

The pongala preparation starts with the ritual called 'Aduppuvettu'.

This is the earliest Pongala festival in Kerala.

Attukal temple is also called 'women's Sabarimala' as only women perform the ritual.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- AIR

Eco Circuit: Pathanamthitta – Gavi – Vagamon – Thekkady' Inaugurated

The Union Tourism Minister inaugurated the 'Eco Circuit: Pathanamthitta – Gavi – Vagamon – Thekkady' project at Vagamon, Kerala.

This project is a part of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

Eco Circuit

The Eco Circuit project was sanctioned in December 2015.

It has been developed as a 150 km circuit and includes Eco-Adventure Tourism Park at Vagamon, Cultural Centre at Kadamanitta, Eco Log Huts at Peerumedu, Idukki, Approach Roads, Walking trails, Rain Shelters at Pine Valley Forest, Thekkady, Kumily, Moozhiyar Dam, Penstock and Kakki .

The eco-tourism circuit aims to protect the flora and fauna of Pathanamthitta and Idukki districts including places like Gavi, Peerumedu.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- TOI

Cabinet approves setting up a new company under the Department of Space

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the Setting up of a new company under Department of Space (DoS), to commercially exploit the research and development work carried out by Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) Centers and constituent units of DOS.

Salient features:

The following areas/avenues provide opportunities for commercial exploitation of ISRO programmes:

Small satellite technology transfer to industry, wherein the new company shall take a license from DoS/ISRO and sub-license to industries;

Manufacture of the small satellite launch vehicle (SLV) in collaboration with the Private Sector;

Productionisation of Polar SLV through industry;

Productionisation and marketing of Space-based products and services, including launch and applications;

Transfer of Technology developed by ISRO Centers and constituent units of DoS;

Marketing of some spin-off technologies and products, both in India and abroad etc.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source-PIB

106 coastal and marine sites identified as conservation reserves: Govt report

The Centre has identified over 100 coastal and marine sites as conservation reserves under its National Wildlife Action Plan for 2017-2031, a biennial report released by the government.

As per the second biennial update report (BUR) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), submitted to the UN body on climate change in December 2018, India is encouraging participation of local communities in governance by recognising the conservation reserves.

Highlights of the Report

Around 106 coastal and marine sites have been identified as conservation or community reserves to increase participation of local communities in governance.

Under the National Wildlife Action Plan for the period 2017 to 2031, the government is working towards the conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems from the impacts of climate change.

"Towards the fulfilment of India's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), several initiatives have been taken to meet the targets set under SDG 14- Life Below Water.

The coastal and marine sector is also a source of valuable fish protein not only for the growing population but also contributes to the global food basket and in turn provides valuable foreign exchange to the country.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

21.02.2019

1. Commerce Minister launched 'SWAYATT' on GeM

Union Minister of Commerce has launched SWAYATT in New Delhi.

SWAYATT-an initiative to encourage Start-ups, Women and Youth Advantage Through eTransactions on Government e-Marketplace (GeM).

It aims at creating a conducive atmosphere for interaction between

keystakeholders within our entrepreneurial ecosystem and Government e-Marketplace which is the national procurement portal.

It is an initiative under the collaboration of GeM with Startup India, established to provide help to start-ups, registered with Startup India so that it can gain access to the public procurement market and sell innovative products and services to government buyers.

Related Information

Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is a one-stop portal to facilitate online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Government

Departments/Organizations /PSUs.

GeM aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement.

It provides the tools of e-bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation to facilitate the government users to achieve the best value for their money.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source-PIB

Operation Digital Board

The Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry launched "Operation Digital Board" on the lines of Operation Blackboard to provide better digital education in school.

The government has aimed to equip 9 lakh classrooms in schools and colleges across the country with digital facilities for teaching by 2022.

Benefits of Digital Board

Operation Digital Board', the aim of which is to have digital and interactive boards in every classroom".

It will help to improve the quality of education and offer new opportunities and new ways of teaching and learning.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Education

Source- AIR

KhadiGramodyogVikas Yojana

The Cabinet Committee has given the approval to continue the existing schemes of MPDA, Khadi Grant, ISEC and Village Industry Grant, all subsumed under 'Khadi and Gramodyog Vikas Yojana' for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Khadi Vikas Yojana includes Market Promotion & Development Assistance (MPDA), Interest Subsidy Eligibility Certificate (ISEC), Workshed, Strengthening Weak Infra, Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana, Khadi Grant.

'A new component called Rozgar Yukt Gaon' introduce to enterprise-based operation in the Khadi sector and to create employment opportunities.

Related Information

Market Promotion and Development Assistance Scheme (MPDA)

It was launched as a unified scheme by merging different schemes implemented by the Khadi sector including publicity, marketing, market promotion, and marketing development assistance.

The overall objective of the scheme is to ensure increased earnings for artisans.

Rozgar Yukt Gaon (RYG)

It aims at introducing an 'Enterprise-led Business Model' in place of 'Subsidy-led model' through a partnership among 3 stakeholders-Khadi Reform and Development Programme (KRDP)-assisted Khadi Institution, Artisans and Business Partner.

It will be rolled out in 50 Villages by providing 10,000 Charkhas, 2000 looms & 100 warping units to Khadi artisans, and would create direct employment for 250 Artisans per village.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Important Scheme

Source-PIB

"KALIA Chhatra Bruti' scholarship

Odisha government launched 'KALIA Chhatra Bruti' scholarship for farmer's children under the KALIA Scheme.

About Scheme

It aims at providing financial assistance for technical and professional education to farmers' children by creating a provision for the State government to bear all expenses involved in various levels of education.

KALIA Scheme

Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) is a support scheme of Odisha whose primary targets are small farmers, cultivators and landless agricultural labourers.

The scheme involves payments to encourage cultivation and associated activities.

The scheme strives to target rural activities as a whole by supporting farming on a small scale, sharecropping, fishing and animal herding which doesn't get covered under loan waiver schemes.

The state government would provide Rs 10,000 per family as assistance for cultivation, Rs 5,000 each in the Kharif and Rabi seasons, for five cropping seasons between 2018-19 and 2021-22.

The scheme also includes life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh and additional personal accident cover of Rs 2 lakh will be provided to both cultivators and landless agriculture labourers.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

Department of Justice launched Tele-law mobile app, Nyaya Bandhu

A tele-law mobile application 'Nyaya Bandhu' was launched by the Department of Justice.

It is pro bono legal service which is designed to connect practising lawyers and the registered eligible beneficiaries in a hassle-free manner.

It will enable the paralegal volunteers (PLV)'s to perform on-field pre-registration of cases with a facility to seek appointment from the panel lawyer on date and time suitable to them.

It contains the facility to confirm and register the pre-registered cases, to enable the online interface between the beneficiary and the panel lawyer through video conferencing and telephone facility.

The application will benefit PLVs of National Legal Service Authority and State Legal Services Authorities (SLSA) in the country who will be associated under Tele-Law service.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Social Justice

Source-PIB

India & China should not get special rights: US to WTO

The US has proposed withdrawal of special rights and exemptions for emerging economies such as India and China, which are members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Group of 20 (G20).

These countries classified as “high income” by the World Bank or account for more than 0.5% of global merchandise trade. ”

Related Information

The WTO Agreements contain special provisions which give developing countries special rights and which give developed countries the possibility to treat developing countries more favourably than other WTO Members.

These special provisions include, for example, longer time periods for implementing Agreements and commitments or measures to increase trading opportunities for developing countries.

These provisions are referred to as “special and differential treatment” (S&D) provisions.

The special provisions include:

- longer time periods for implementing Agreements and commitments,
- measures to increase trading opportunities for developing countries,
- provisions requiring all WTO members to safeguard the trade interests of developing countries,

support to help developing countries build the capacity to carry out WTO work, handle disputes, and implement technical standards, and

provisions related to a least-developed country (LDC) Member

India’s Position in Global Trade

India’s share in global exports was 1.68% in 2017 while that in global imports was 2.48%.

The US claimed that India used its status as a developing member to press for continued exemption from its commitments of some \$30 billion in input subsidies, a rule intended to address some of the poorest farmers.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- Indian Express

AntBot, the first walking robot that navigates without GPS

AntBot is the first walking robot to have navigational capabilities without GPS or mapping.

It has been designed by Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and Aix-Marseille University researchers at ISM, on lines similar to desert ants that use polarised lights and UV radiation to navigate in space.

It consists of an optical compass which determines its movements by the help of polarised light.

Weighing only 2.3 kg, this robot has six feet for increased mobility, allowing it to move in complex environments, precisely where deploying wheeled robots and drones can be complicated.

Related Information

Various Satellite Navigation System

- GPS by the US
- GLONASS by Russia
- European Union’s Galileo
- China’s BNS
- NavIC by India

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- Science Daily

22.02.2019

India decided to stop its share of river waters which flow into Pakistan

The Government has decided to stop the share of river waters which flow into Pakistan.

The government of India will divert water from Eastern Rivers and supply it to the people in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.

Related Information

Indus Waters Treaty

It was signed in Karachi in 1960 by the Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and then President of Pakistan Ayub Khan.

According to the Treaty, India got the full rights for utilization of waters of the three Eastern Rivers namely Ravi, Beas, and Satluj while Pakistan controls the right to use water in western rivers, namely, the Indus, the Jhelum and the Chenab.

The construction of the dam has started at Shahpur-Kandi on the Ravi River and the Ujh project will store India's share of water for use in Jammu and Kashmir and the balance water will flow from second Ravi-Beas Link to provide water to other basin states.

These projects have been declared as National project.

What are the advantages of national project status?

The main advantage of a project which has received national project status is that 90 % of the funding for the project will be given by the central government.

Usually, big multipurpose projects involving irrigation, power generation, storage of water etc., which require a huge amount of capital for construction, are given national project status because state governments cannot afford such huge capital.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- AIR

ILP will be applicable to entire Nagaland, including Dimapur'

Nagaland government has decided to make the Inner Line Permit applicable throughout the State, including the commercial hub of Dimapur.

Related Information

Inner Line Permit

It is an official travel document issued by the Government of India to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period.

It is obligatory for Indian citizens from outside those states to obtain a permit for entering into the protected state.

The document is an effort by the government to regulate movement to certain areas located near the international border of India.

This is an offshoot of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873, which protected Crown's interest in the tea, oil and elephant trade by prohibiting "British subjects" from entering into these "Protected Areas". The word "British subjects" was replaced by Citizen of India in 1950.

ILP's valid for tourism purposes are granted as a matter of routine.

The states which require the permit are:

Arunachal Pradesh

Mizoram

Nagaland

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG)

It has unveiled by Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) at Aero India 2019.

The Atmospheric Water Generator is being manufactured by BEL in collaboration with CSIR-IICT and MAITHRI, a start-up company based in Hyderabad.

It is an innovative solution to meet the ever-increasing need for drinking water worldwide.

BEL's Atmospheric Water Generator can be used to generate water straight from the humidity present in the atmosphere and purify it.

It uses heat exchange technique for condensing the atmospheric moisture to produce pure, safe and clean potable water.

The AWG comes with a Mineralisation Unit, which is used to add minerals which are required to make the water potable.

The AWG is configurable in static and mobile (vehicular) versions and is available in 30 litres/day, 100 litres/day, 500 litres/day and 1,000 litres/day capacities.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

Digital Bharat, Saksham Bharat -A Compendium on Digital India

A Digital India Compendium on Digital Bharat, Saksham Bharat was released by Ministry for Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice.

The objective of the document is to disseminate and propagate the success of Digital India among masses.

The document is divided into two sections-

- o Digital profile of India
- o Digital profile of States & UTs.

A digital profile of India comprises an in-depth analysis, comparative study of the implementation of Digital India Programme and transformation it has brought out in the lives of citizens. It has simplified the way citizens avail various Government services and has brought transparency and accountability.

A digital profile of States/ UTs reflects the State/ UT-wise implementation of various initiatives taken under Digital India Programme.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance Source-PIB

5. President promulgates four Ordinances

The President of India recently has promulgated the following four Ordinances, namely: –

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Second Ordinance, 2019

The Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Second Ordinance, 2019

The Companies (Amendment) Second Ordinance, 2019

The Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance, 2019

Related Information

Ordinance making powers of the President

Article 123 of the Constitution grants the President certain law-making powers to promulgate Ordinances when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session and hence it is not possible to enact laws in the Parliament.

An Ordinance may relate to any subject that the Parliament has the power to legislate on. Conversely, it has the same limitations as the Parliament to legislate, given the distribution of powers between the Union, State and Concurrent Lists.

Thus, the following limitations exist with regard to the Ordinance making the power of the executive:

- o Legislature is not in session: The President can only promulgate an Ordinance when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session.
- o Immediate action is required: The President cannot promulgate an Ordinance unless he is satisfied that there are circumstances that require taking 'immediate action'.
- o Parliamentary approval during the session: Ordinances must be approved by Parliament within six weeks of reassembling or they shall cease to operate.
- o They will also cease to operate in case resolutions disapproving the Ordinance are passed by both the Houses.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

Sixth International Conference on

Mycetoma

Recently Sixth International

Conference on Mycetoma was held in Khartoum, Sudan.

Mycetoma

It is an inflammatory disease of the skin, connective tissue, muscle and bone, results from an infection caused by more than 70 bacterial or fungal microorganisms.

It is a disease characterized by disabling deformities and associated with severe morbidity.

Infection is most probably acquired by traumatic inoculation of certain fungi or bacteria into the subcutaneous tissue.

The tropical disease is known to affect rural populations, particularly those who walk barefoot, like agricultural labourers and herdsmen.

If not detected and managed early, this disease can cause limb deformity and, in advanced cases, lead to amputation and death.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- TOI

KP-BOT- India's first humanoid police robot

Kerala Chief Minister inaugurated India's first Humanoid Sub-Inspector Police Robot named KP-BOT.

With this, the Kerala State Police Headquarters has become the first police department in the country to use a robot for police work.

The robot's gender is declared female keeping in mind women empowerment and gender equality.

KP-BOT

She will perform Front Office duties of the police headquarters like receiving visitors and direct them as required.

Visitors can directly interact with her and she is capable of tasks like fixing appointments with officers, provide ID cards and open new files based on the grievances.

She can also identify higher officials and greet them with a salute.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science &

Technology Source- Indian Express

4th India-ASEAN Expo Summit

The 4th India-ASEAN Expo and Summit was held in New Delhi.

The India-ASEAN Expo Summit was organised with FICCI to carry forward the momentum and to further strengthen India-ASEAN relations under the Act-East Policy.

The 4th Summit aims to build upon the success of the previous edition of ASEAN-India Business and Investment Meet and Expo which was held in 2018 as a precursor to India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit.

The Summit aims to provide a platform for the policy makers, industry captains and business leaders to come together and forge a common vision for India and ASEAN's mutual growth and progress.

Related Information

ASEAN

Established in 1967 in Bangkok via Bangkok Declaration.

Currently, there are 10-member states are part of it.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organisation comprising ten Southeast Asian states which promote intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, military, educational and cultural integration amongst its members and Asian states.

Its headquarter is in Jakarta, Indonesia.

India is not a member of it.

The 10-member states of ASEAN are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam.

The ASEAN Way- the doctrine that the member countries will largely business when it comes to internal matters of member countries.

ASEAN Plus Three: Was created to improve existing ties with China, Japan and South Korea.

ASEAN Plus Six: includes China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Australia and India.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

NABH New Portal "HOPE" for hospitals simplified and digitalised

In order to extend benefits associated with IRDAI and Ayushman Bharat scheme to small scale hospitals across India, the government has digitalized and simplified the NABH accreditation process.

The revised process is driven through a new portal called HOPE - Healthcare Organizations' Platform for entry-level-certification with a focus to promote quality at nascent stages by enrolling a wide range of hospitals across the country including healthcare organizations (HCOs) and small healthcare organizations (SHCOs).

HOPE is not just confined to certification of HCOs/SHCOs but also enables them to comply with quality protocols, improve patient safety and the overall healthcare facility of the organization.

The online platform provides smooth and secure registration and a self-explanatory questionnaire to be filled by the HCO/SHCOs.

A mobile application has also been developed to support HCO/SHCOs for directly uploading geo-tagged and time-stamped evidences required for compliance to the standards.

National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Organizations (NABH)

It is a constituent body of Quality Council of India (QCI), handling global accreditation in Indian healthcare sector under the ministry of commerce and industry has revamped the entry-level certification process to make it simpler, digital, faster and user-friendly.

Topic-GS-2- Government Policies

Source- Livemint

LOFAR radio telescope reveals secrets of solar storms

The team showed that solar storms can accelerate particles simultaneously in several locations by combining data from the Low-Frequency Array, LOFAR, with

images from NASA, NOAA and ESA spacecraft.

The sun is the closest star to Earth, and like many stars, it is far from quiet. Sunspots many times the size of Earth can appear on its surface and store enormous reservoirs of energy.

And it is within these regions that huge explosions called solar storms occur.

Solar storms are spectacular eruptions of billions of tonnes of hot gas travelling at millions of kilometres an hour.

These results may in the future help researchers to produce more accurate forecasts of solar radio bursts and determine how solar storms impact the Earth—they can produce beautiful displays of the Aurora, but they can also cause problems with communication and navigation systems and power grids.

Related Information

LOFAR

It is a large radio telescope network located mainly in the Netherlands, completed in 2012 by ASTRON, the Netherlands Institute for Radio Astronomy and its international partners, and operated by ASTRON's radio observatory, of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- Science Daily

25.02.2019

PM Modi gets Seoul Peace Prize for fostering global links

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was given the Peace Prize for 2018 for his contribution to international cooperation and fostering global economic growth.

The Prime Minister dedicated the \$200,000 (1.42 crore) prize money to the Namami Gange programme that seeks to stop pollution in the Ganga and rejuvenate the river.

Related Information

Seoul Peace Prize

The Seoul Peace Prize is sponsored by the Seoul Peace Prize Foundation.

The Seoul Peace Prize was established in 1990 to commemorate the success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul, the capital of South Korea.

The Seoul Peace Prize reflects the wishes of the Korean people and to crystallize their desire for everlasting peace on earth.

The Seoul Peace Prize is awarded to Individuals or institutions which have made great contributions to the harmony of mankind and world peace in each field of endeavor around the world regardless of nation, race, religion, or ideology.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu
RBI bundles NBFCs into one category

To provide NBFCs with greater operational flexibility, harmonization of different categories of NBFCs into fewer ones shall be carried out based on the principle of regulation by activity rather than regulation by entity RBI created a single category for them by bundling their present three-tier structure.

Asset finance, loan, and investment companies have been merged into a new category called NBFC-Investment&Credit Companies.

Related Information
About NBFC

A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956.

Difference between banks & NBFCs

NBFCs lend and make investments, and hence their activities are akin to that of banks; however, there are a few differences as given below:

1. NBFC cannot accept demand deposits; NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself.

Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in case of banks.

Unlike Banks which are regulated by the RBI, the NBFCs are regulated by multiple regulators; Insurance Companies- IRDA, Merchant Banks- SEBI, Micro Finance Institutions- State Government, RBI and NABARD.

The norm of Public Sector Lending does not apply to NBFCs.

The Cash Reserve Requirement also does not apply to NBFCs.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- Economics times

India to have own DNS for safe browsing

The government will soon roll out a public Domain Name Server, or DNS, for India aimed at providing a faster and more secure browsing experience for Internet users in the country, while ensuring that citizens' data is stored locally.

The purpose for having own DNS

The main aim of bringing our own public DNS is to ensure availability, particularly for smaller Internet Service Providers (ISPs) who don't have credible DNS.

Bigger ones usually have their own DNS.

Related Information

A DNS is like a directory for the Internet. It helps to convert domain names that are easy for people to remember into IP addresses, which are used by computers/machines to communicate.

If the DNS is either slow or fails to work, users will not be able to locate web addresses.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology Source- The Hindu

Flying bulldog': World's largest bee

The world's largest bee — a giant insect roughly the size of a human thumb — has been rediscovered in a remote part of Indonesia in its first sighting in nearly 40 years.

About the Megachile pluto

Megachile pluto, also known as Wallace's giant bee, is a very large Indonesian resin bee.

It is the largest known living bee species.

Its status is 'vulnerable' in IUCN red list. It was believed to be extinct until several specimens were discovered in 1981; there were again no further confirmed sightings until two were collected and sold on eBay in 2018.

The bee (Megachile pluto), which lives in the Indonesian island region of North Moluccas, makes its nest in termite mounds, using its large fang-like mandibles to collect sticky resin to protect its home from the termites.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

Olympic dream under threat as the visa is denied to 2 Pak. shooters

India's future as a host for sporting events remained uncertain following a decision by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

What is the issue?

The issue arose when India refused visa requests from two Pakistani shooters expected to participate in the ongoing ISSF (International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) World Cup 2019 in Delhi.

According to the IOC the Indian government authorities failed to grant an entry visa to the Pakistani delegation comprising two athletes and one official who was meant to participate in the ISSF World Cup.

This is a qualification competition for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 in which direct quotas are earned by the respective NOCs.

What's next?

The IOC Executive Board decided to suspend all discussions with the Indian NOC [National Olympic Committee] and government regarding the potential applications for hosting future sports and Olympic-related events in India.

The IOC Executive Board required a clear written guarantee from the Indian government to ensure the entry of all participants in such events in full compliance with the rules of the Olympic Charter.

- It also recommends the IFs [International Sports Federations] neither award to nor holds sports events in India until the guarantees are obtained.

About International Olympics Committee

The International Olympic Committee is a non-governmental sports organization based in Lausanne, Switzerland.

It is the authority responsible for organizing the modern Summer and Winter Olympic Games.

The IOC is the governing body of the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), which are the national constituents of the worldwide Olympic Movement.

The current president of the IOC is Thomas Bach of Germany.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International Institution

Source-PIB

Travel on a jet plane, using a little cooking oil

The Dehradun-based Indian Institute of Petroleum has successfully finished a pilot test to convert used cooking oil into bio-aviation turbine fuel (Bio-ATF), which can be blended with conventional ATF and used as aircraft fuel.

The Institute collected used cooking oil from caterers and hotels in Dehradun for the pilot, which has now set the platform for commercial use of the technology.

The chemical composition of the used cooking oil is identical to other plant-based oils that have been converted to Bio-ATF.

The pilot test has proven that it is very similar to Bio-ATF derived from jatropha oil.

Related Information

The test assumes importance as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched the Repurpose Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative to collect and convert used cooking oil into bio-fuel.

The food safety body says that by 2020, it should be possible to recover about 220 crore liters of used cooking oil for conversion into biofuel.

About Bio Fuels

Biofuel is defined as any fuel whose energy is obtained through the process of biological carbon fixation.

It can be characterized on basis of their source biomass.

Generations of Biofuels

1G Biofuel:

They produced directly from food crops such as wheat and sugar etc.

2G Biofuel:

They are produced from marginal croplands unsuitable for food production or non-food crops. For example- Jatropha.

It overcomes over food vs. fuel debate in the first-generation biofuel.

3G Biofuels:

It is based on improvements in the production of biomass by taking advantage of specially engineered energy crops such as algae as its energy source

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

Labour Bureau files MUDRA job report

The Labour Bureau has completed its survey on employment generated by the MUDRA loan scheme, giving the Centre a potential data tool to combat other reports showing a dismal scenario on jobs.

Highlights of the Report.

According to reports, a leaked copy of the NSSO's findings showed that unemployment hit a 45-year high of 6.1% in 2017-18.

Central government ministers and officials have already attempted to use the MUDRA scheme's performance to combat criticism based on the leaked NSSO job survey report.

Related Information

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana was introduced in April 2015 as an effort to extend affordable credit to micro and small enterprises.

Loans up to 10 lakh are extended to these non-corporate, non-farm enterprises by the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) through last-mile financial institutions.

About MUDRA

MUDRA stands for Micro-Units Development and Refinance Agency

Objective:

The core objective of the bank is to fund the unfunded. It will finance to "Last Mile Financiers" of small/micro businesses. The lending priority will be given to SC/ST enterprises

MUDRA Bank

MUDRA Bank will be set up as a statutory body

It will regulate and refinance all MFI who lend to MSME engaged in small manufacturing, trade or services.

It will partner all state/regional level coordinators to provide easy finance to even the remote investors.

To address the three segments, MUDRA Bank has launched three loan instruments:

- o Shishu: covers loans up to Rs 50,000/-
- o Kishor: covers loans above Rs 50,000/- and up to Rs. 5 lakh
- o Tarun: covers loans above Rs 5 lakh and up to Rs 10 lakh

It provides a loan at low rates to small entrepreneurs

The bank has been allotted a Refinance Fund of Rs. 20,000 Crores from the shortfalls of Priority Sector Lending.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source-PIB

Ganga basin States stare at the three-fold rise in crop failures by 2040

According to an assessment by the World Bank submitted to the Central Water Commission the Ganga river basin could see crop failures rise three-fold and drinking water shortage can go up by as much as 39% in some States between now and 2040.

Highlights of the Report

The report says that Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar are likely to face a deficit in irrigation water of 28%, 10%, 10% and 15% respectively in 2040 as compared to the current levels if no proper steps are taken.

During the same period Madhya Pradesh would see a 39%, Delhi 22% and Uttar Pradesh a 25% deficit in drinking water.

Related Information

Ganga basin is the largest river basin in India in terms of the catchment area, constituting 26% of the country's land mass and supporting about 43% of its population.

The basin covers 11 states of Uttarakhand, U.P., M.P., Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Delhi.

The current focus of World Bank funded National Ganga River Basin Projects (NGRBP) of NMCG is on five major states on the main stem of river Ganga namely Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, and West Bengal.

Note: Over one-third of India's available surface water is provided by the Ganga basin which contributes more than half the national water use, of which 90% is for irrigation.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Important Report

Source- The Hindu

Explained: Why are there protests in Arunachal Pradesh over PRC?

The violence in Arunachal Pradesh capital Itanagar as a protest against the probability of granting Permanent Residence Certificate (PRC) to members of six communities – Adivasi, Deori, Gorkha, Mishing, Moran, and Sonowal Kachari – mainly inhabiting Namsai and Changlang districts of the state.

Related Information

What is permanent resident certificate?

The permanent resident certificate is a legal document issued to Indian citizens that serve as evidence of residence and is required to be submitted as residential proof for official purpose.

What has the state government proposed?

The government in the state is considering issuing the certificate to the six non-APSTs communities living in Namsai and Changlang districts and to the Gorkhas living in Vijaynagar.

Amongst those communities are Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Morans, Adivasis and Mishings.

Most of these communities are recognized as Scheduled Tribes in neighboring Assam.

A Joint High Power Committee (JHPC), after holding discussions with the stakeholders, recommended granting PRC to the six communities, who are not natives of Arunachal Pradesh but have been living in Namsai and Changlang districts for decades.

Why are people in Arunachal protesting against PRC?

There is resentment among several community-based groups and organizations in Arunachal Pradesh, who feel the rights and interests of indigenous people will be compromised if the proposal is implemented.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

UN body hails Odisha on Women reservation

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) has complimented the government of Odisha for proposing 33% reservation for women in Parliament and the State Assemblies.

Related Information

About UN Women

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, is a United Nations entity working for the empowerment of women.

It became operational in January 2011.

They are a member of the United Nations Development Group.

It's headquarters at New York, USA

UN Women's Office based in New Delhi covers four countries: India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka.

In these countries, the organization strengthens women's rights by working with women, men, feminists, women's networks, governments, local authorities and civil society.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Women Empowerment

Source-PIB

11. Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

The External Affairs Minister of India has been invited for the first time to address the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Foreign Ministers meet.

About the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC):

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states spread over four continents.

The Organization claims that they are the collective voice of the Muslim world.

It endeavours to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

The Organization was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco on 25 September 1969.

The first OIC Charter was adopted by the 3rd ICFM Session held in 1972.

The Charter laid down the objectives and principles of the organization and fundamental purposes to strengthen the solidarity and cooperation among the Member States.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organization

Source- TOI

Bandipur, Wayanad forests face fire fury

Recently there was a major fire outbreak in the forestlands of Bandipur.

According to an alert from NASA's Fire Information for Resource Management System (NASA-FIRMS), 21 fires or hotspots were detected during the satellite overpass.

Related Information

About forest fires:

The forest fire is a common hazard in forests. They pose a threat to the forest wealth and also to the flora and fauna, thus disturbing the bio-diversity and the ecology and environment of a region.

What are the causes of forest fires?

Climatic conditions - such as temperature, level of moisture in soil and atmosphere and duration of dry spells naturally cause fires.

The friction of tree branches swaying due to high wind velocity or rolling stones which sparks and sets off fires in leaf litter.

Anthropogenic activities - Traditional practice of shifting cultivation in northeastern regions and eastern coastal regions burn forested land. Introduction of fire in forests due to an open flame, cigarette buds, electric spark or any source of ignition by Man leads to forest fires.

About Counterfire

The counterfire is a technique in which wildfire is doused by deliberately setting the fire in the opposite direction of the raging flames.

The inward movement of the counter fire consumes all vegetation and leaves a bare strip of land with no fuel to burn and the wildfire gets extinguished naturally.

Note: It has been estimated that 90% of forest fires in India are man-made when people enter forests to graze cattle, collect fuelwood, timber and other minor forest produce.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- The Hindu

Niyamgiri's Dongria Kondh gird for 'resistance' after SC order

With a recent Supreme Court order triggering panic among forest dwellers over possible eviction, Odisha's Niyamgiri's Dongria Kondh tribals have resolved to resist any attempt to force them out.

What was the issue?

The issue of possible eviction of tribals, whose applications for regularisation under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, had been rejected.

The Dongria Kondh are currently holding their annual 'Niyamraja festival' on the picturesque hilltop of Niyamgiri.

Due to their successful resistance against the Vedanta Group's plan to mine bauxite in the ecologically and mineral-rich Niyamgiri hill range the tribe came into the limelight.

Relate Information**About the Dongria Kondh Tribe**

The Dongria Kondh people are a tribe residing in the Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha.

They are forest dwellers and sustain themselves from the resources of the Niyamgiri forests, practising horticulture and shifting cultivation.

The Dongria have distinctive jewellery, tattoos, and hairstyles. Women wear many rings through their ears and three through their noses, while boys wear two nose rings.

Dongria girls wear clips in their hair and rings and beads around their necks.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture
Source- Business Standard

26.02.2019

PM Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)

The Prime Minister launched the PM-KISAN Scheme on 24th February 2019 at Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh (UP) to electronically transfer the First Installment into the bank accounts of eligible Farmers of 24 States and the Union Territories.

Under the Scheme, Rs 6,000 will be given each year to eligible Small and Marginal Farmer families having combined land holding/ownership of up to 2 hectares.

The amount will be given in three instalments of Rs.2000 each.

Related Information

The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) under the Scheme PM-KISAN is being done through the System of Public Finance Management System.

PFMS is a web-based payment and MIS IT application of the Government of India administered by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

All DBT payments for the Government of India Schemes are being done through PFMS.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source-PIB

Afghanistan launches a new export route to India through Iran

Afghanistan has launched a new export route to India through the through the Chabahar Port of Iran.

The Chabahar Port of Iran provides easy access to the sea for Afghanistan.

This route allows both India and Afghanistan to engage in trade bypassing Pakistan.

The new route is one of the many initiatives undertaken by the governments of India and Afghanistan to enhance trade relations.

Related Information

India-Afghanistan Trade Afghan exports to India stood at \$740 million in 2018 and India is the largest export destination for Afghanistan.

To boost the trade relations, both India and Afghanistan had established an air corridor in the year 2017.

Note:

After the withdrawal from JCPOA and reimposing of sanctions on Iran, US had granted an exception to certain US sanctions that allowed development of Chabahar port as part of a new transportation corridor designed to boost Afghanistan's economy and meet their needs of non-sanctionable goods such as food and medicines.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International
Relation Source- Indian Express

'Hothouse' conditions

Researchers warned that Marine clouds that protect us from hothouse Earth conditions by reflecting sunlight back into space could break up and vanish if CO2 in the atmosphere triples.

Related Information

If the concentration of CO2 increases in the atmosphere the Stratocumulus clouds which cover about 20% of subtropical oceans, mostly near western seabords such as the coasts of California, Mexico and Peru may disappear.

Impact

"When the Stratocumulus clouds disappear, Earth warms dramatically, by about eight degrees Celsius — in addition to the global warming that comes from enhanced greenhouse concentrations alone," according to the study.

A temperature increase of that magnitude would melt polar ice and lift sea levels tens of metres.

The last time the planet was that hot, some 50 million years ago during the Eocene Epoch, crocodiles roamed the Arctic.

The 2015 Paris climate treaty enjoins nations to cap the rise in temperatures at "well below" 2C.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –

Environment Source- The Hindu

Deloitte announces the global initiative in India to empower females

Deloitte has announced the launch of its global initiative 'WorldClass' in India for the empowerment of women.

In India, the initiative aims to support 10 million girls and women by 2030 through education and skills development.

Related Information

WorldClass programme in India will focus on improving girl's retention rate in school, higher educational outcomes, and skills development for women to access employment.

The initiative aims to give a boost to women education since almost 40 percent of girls aged 15- 18 years drop out of school and college, and only 26 percent of women are employed.

Globally, the WorldClass initiative seeks to prepare 50 million people by 2030, to be better equipped for the future of work, in-line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Women Empowerment

Source- TOI

Air Force commissions aerial surveillance

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has commissioned the development of an aerial surveillance system for monitoring suspicious movements under dense foliage cover along the international border and some parts within the country.

This programme is the first for the country seeks to locate and identify suspicious movements and is expected to be operational in the next two years.

Related Information

- This hyperspectral imagery programme which will help to identify the presence of a human below trees, dense foliage, shrubs or inside a structure, whether it is day or night.

It can detect human presence from the air even if their clouds cover dense fog or snow cover.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- The Hindu

EVM is 'information' under RTI

The Central Information Commission has ruled that An Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) is "information" under the Right to Information Act.

According to the definition of information under Section 2(f) of the RTI Act includes "any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advice, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form.

Related Information

Central Information Commission

It was established in 2005 by the Central Government under provisions of Right to Information (RTI) Act (2005).

It is not a constitutional body but it has quasi-judicial powers.

The Commission includes 1 Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and not more than 10 Information Commissioners (IC) who are appointed by the President of India.

Functions

The Commission has certain powers and functions mentioned in sections 18, 19, 20 and 25 of the RTI Act, 2005.

These broadly relate to

- Adjudication in the second appeal for giving information;
- direction for record keeping, suo motu disclosures receiving and enquiring into a complaint on the inability to file RTI etc;
- imposition of penalties and Monitoring and Reporting including preparation of an Annual Report.

The decisions of the Commission are final and binding.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- The Hindu

Mukhyamantri Yuva Swabhiman

Yojana

Madhya Pradesh government launched the State Government's flagship scheme 'Mukhyamantri Yuva Swabhiman Yojana' that guarantees 100 days of employment every year to urban youth from economically weaker sections.

Related Information

Under the scheme, Rs 4,000 stipend per month during 100 days of the period would be given to the youth and they will also be given skill development training in order to become independent.

Only those youths, whose family's annual income is less than Rs 2 lakh and who are in the age group of 21-30 years, are eligible for the scheme.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source- NDTV

Nine new items added to MSP for minor forest produce scheme

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has added nine minor forest produce (MFP) items to its minimum support price (MSP) for MFP scheme.

The nine new items are: Bakul (dried bark), Kutaj (dried bark), Noni/Aal (dried fruits), Sonapatha/Syonak pods, Chanothi seeds, Kalihari (dried tubers), Makoi (dried fruits), Apang plant & Sugandhrnantri roots/tubers. Tribal communities are dependent on MFP. They collect hundreds of forest products and survive on them.

Related Information Minimum Support Price (MSP)

It is a form of market intervention by the Government of India to ensure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices.

The minimum support prices are announced by the Government of India at the beginning of the sowing season for certain crops on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACAP).

Food Corporation of India (FCI) is the designated central nodal agency for price support operations for cereals, pulses and oilseeds.

Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) is the central nodal agency for undertaking price support operations for Cotton.

Minor Forest Produce (MFP)

The MSP for MFP scheme was started in 2013 to ensure fair and remunerative prices to MFP gatherers. Note: Generally forest products can be divided into two parts i.e.

Major Forest Produce (Pulpwood, Sandalwood, Fuel, Timber etc.)

Minor Forest Products (tamarind, curry leaf, Tendu Patta, gallnut, Cane, Soapnut, Bamboo etc.)

Schemes by government similar to MSP Market Intervention Scheme

It is implemented on the request of State Governments for procurement of perishable and horticultural commodities in the event of fall in market prices.

Price Supports Scheme (PSS)

The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation implements the PSS for procurement of oil seeds, pulses etc., through NAFED which is the Central nodal agency, at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) declared by the government.

Price Deficiency Procurement Scheme

The scheme directly pays farmers the difference between the MSP and the sale price, instead of procuring his crop.

Twelve Indian Air Force Mirage-2000 fighter jets entered Pakistani airspace and dropped 1,000-kg laser-guided bombs

Twelve Indian Air Force Mirage-2000 fighter jets, made by Dassault Aviation, the French company who also manufactures the Rafale Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircrafts, entered Pakistani airspace and dropped 1,000-kg laser-guided bombs on Jaish-e-Mohammed terror launch pads across the Line of Control.

Related Information

IAF Mirage 2000

The Mirage-2000 is undoubtedly one of the Indian Air Force's (IAF) most versatile and deadliest aircraft and it was first commissioned in 1985.

Soon after inducting the Mirage, IAF gave it the name – Vajra – meaning lightning thunderbolt in Sanskrit.

It was developed by Dassault Aviation and took its first flight in 1978 and was inducted in the French Air Force in 1984.

Apart from India, Dassault sold the Mirage 2000 to 8 other countries, including the home country of France, Egypt, UAE, Peru, Taiwan, Peru, Greece and Brazil.

The Mirage-2000 played a decisive role in the 1999 war of Kargil and turned it in India's favour.

In 2011 a contract was signed to upgrade the existing Mirage-2000 jets to Mirage 2000-5 Mk, increasing the life of the jets that are now ready to serve till 2030.

Specifications

The Mirage-2000 uses a single shaft engine that is light and simple as compared to other fighter jet engines and is called SNECMA M53.

It has a length of 14.36 metre and a wingspan of 91.3 meters.

The plane weighs 7500 kg (dry) and has a total takeoff weight of 17000 kg. It has a maximum speed of Mach 2.2 (2336 kmph) and can travel 1550 km with drop tanks.

In comparison, India's other fighter and more advanced fighter jet - Russia made Sukhoi Su30MKI has a speed of 2120 kmph (Mach 2), slower than the Mirage-2000 and is heavier too. This gives the Mirage-2000 an advantage in quick operations.

In terms of the armament, the Mirage 2000 can carry laser-guided bombs, air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles and has a Thomson-CSF RDY (Radar Doppler Multi-target) radar on board.

27.02.2019

Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023

World Health Organization (WHO) has been launched Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023 in December 2013.

It will help health care leaders to develop a solution that contributes to a broader vision of improved health and patient autonomy.

The strategy has two key goals:

To support Member States in harnessing the potential contribution of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) to health, wellness and people-centred health care.

To promote the safe and effective use of T&CM through the regulation of products, practice and practitioners.

These goals will be reached by implementing three strategic objectives are

- 1) Building the knowledge base and formulating the nation's policies
- 2) Strengthening safety, quality and effectiveness through regulation

Promoting universal health systems

Related Information

WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014–2023 was developed and launched in response to the World Health Assembly resolution on traditional medicine (WHA62.13).

The Project Collaboration Agreement (PCA) was signed between WHO and Ministry of AYUSH in 2016.

It will provide cooperation on promoting the quality, safety and effectiveness of service provision in traditional and complementary medicine between WHO and Ministry of AYUSH (2016-2020).

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health and services Source-PIB

Sampriti 2019: India-Bangladesh Joint Military Exercise

It is a joint military exercise between India Bangladesh will be conducted at Tangail, Bangladesh.

This will be the eighth edition of the exercise which is hosted alternately by both countries.

The exercise is aimed to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability & cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies.

The exercise will involve tactical level operations in a counterinsurgency and counter terrorism environment under the UN mandate.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence Source- Business Standard

India successfully test fires surface-to-air missile: QRSAM

India successfully tests fired the short-range Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QRSAM) from a test range along the coast of Odisha.

It has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Specification of Missile

The missile has a strike range of 25 km to 30 km and has a capability of engaging multiple targets.

It has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

It has been developed for the Indian Army.

The indigenously developed QRSAM will replace the 'Akash' missile defence system.

This is an all-weather, all-terrain missile with electronic countermeasures against jamming by aircraft radars.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

Global health leaders adopted the 'Delhi Declaration' in 4th digital health intergovernmental meeting

The global intergovernmental meeting on digital health was hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP).

On the occasion of Global intergovernmental meeting on digital health, the global health leaders adopted the 'Delhi Declaration'.

The Delhi Declaration based on digital health firmly aligns with our Prime Minister 'Digital India.'

It will help to establish a specific mechanism to centrally coordinate digital health to assist its Member States.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health and Services Source-PIB

5. Key missions launched on foundation day of Department of Biotechnology

Department of Biotechnology in the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, celebrated its 33rd Foundation Day in New Delhi.

The theme is "Celebrating Biotechnology: Building Indian as an Innovation Nation"

The Minister announced key missions at the foundation day ceremony including:

Atal JaiAnusandhan Biotech Mission - Undertaking Nationally Relevant Technology Innovation (UNaTI), which is expected to transform the Health, Agriculture and Energy sectors during the next 5 years.

GARBH-ini- A Mission to Promote Maternal and Child Health and develop prediction tools for the pre-term berth,

IndCEPI- A Mission to develop affordable vaccines for endemic diseases, Development of Biofortified and Protein Rich wheat - contributing to POSHAN Abhiyan,

Anti Microbial Resistance mission- for Affordable Diagnostics and Therapeutics

Clean Energy Mission– a mission to develop Innovative Technology interventions for Swachh Bharat.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source-PI B

RBI takes 3 banks off prompt corrective action framework

Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)

PCA is a framework under which banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI.

It was introduced in 2002 by RBI as a structured early-intervention mechanism for banks that become undercapitalised due to poor asset quality, or vulnerable due to loss of profitability.

It aims to check the problem of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in the Indian banking sector.

The framework was reviewed in 2017 based on the recommendations of the working group of the Financial Stability and Development Council on Resolution Regimes for Financial Institutions in India and the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission.

PCA is intended to help alert the regulator as well as investors and depositors if a bank is heading for trouble.

The PCA framework deems banks as risky if they slip some trigger points - capital to risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR), net NPA, Return on Assets (RoA) and Tier 1 Leverage ratio.

Certain structured and discretionary actions are initiated in respect of banks hitting such trigger points.

The PCA framework is applicable only to commercial banks and not to co-operative banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- The Hindu

Angkor did not suffer a sudden collapse'

Angkor, the ancient capital of the Khmer empire, appears to have suffered a gradual decline rather than a catastrophic collapse, according to a study.

Related Information

Angkor

Angkor was the capital city of the Khmer Empire, which also recognized as Yasodharapura.

It was flourished from approximately the 9th to 15th centuries.

The city houses the magnificent Angkor Wat, one of Cambodia's popular tourist attractions.

The Angkorian period began in AD 802, when the Khmer Hindu monarch Jayavarman II declared himself a "universal monarch" and "god-king", and lasted until the late 14th century.

It is protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

Britain should hand over Chagos islands to Mauritius'- ICJ

International Court of Justice said that Britain has an obligation to end its administration of the Chagos archipelago.

The sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago is disputed between the UK and Mauritius.

Related Information

Background

The Chagos islands are home to the U.S. military base of Diego Garcia, under lease from the United Kingdom since the 1960s.

Since 1971, only the atoll of Diego Garcia is inhabited, and only by military and civilian contracted personnel.

The United Kingdom excised the archipelago from Mauritian territory in 1965, three years before Mauritius gained independence in 1968.

On 25 February 2019, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the United Kingdom should relinquish the archipelago. The British government rejected any jurisdiction of the court to deliberate these matters.

Chagos Archipelago

It is a group of seven atolls comprising more than 60 individual tropical islands in the Indian Ocean about 500 kilometres south of the Maldives archipelago.

This chain of islands is the southernmost archipelago of the Chagos-Laccadive Ridge, along with submarine mountain range in the Indian Ocean.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Relation

Source- The Hindu

Ministry of Railway launched 'Rail Drishti Dashboard'

'Rail Drishti Dashboard' has been launched by Ministry of Railway.

The dashboard (raildrishti.cris.org.in) brings information from various sources on a single platform and gives access to key statistics and parameters to every citizen of the country.

It contains information related to passenger and freight trains and links to live feeds of IRCTC kitchens.

It encompasses all the digitization efforts in Indian Railways and promotes transparency and accountability.

It consists of 6 services, namely, PNR enquiry, ODC application enquiry, Complaint Enquiry, Tender Enquiry, Shramik Enquiry and Freight related enquiries.

SUGAM – The Freight App is one of the services provided by the dashboard.

It helps customers keep track of their consignment.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

28.02.2019

IAF plane shot down, a pilot has taken captive by Pakistan army
MiG-21 takes a hit while trying to intercept Pakistan's planes Ministry of External Affairs demands 'safe and immediate return' of Wing Commander under Geneva Convention.

Related Information

Geneva Convention

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 comprise four treaties and three additional protocols that define the standards of international law for humanitarian treatment in war.

The convention mandates the parties to the war to remain humane to non-combatants such as civilians and medical personnel, as well as to combatants who are no longer participating in hostilities, such as prisoners of war, or wounded in action.

Four Conventions

The first Geneva Convention protects wounded and sick soldiers on land during war.

The second Geneva Convention protects wounded, sick and shipwrecked military personnel at sea during the war.

The third Geneva Convention applies to prisoners of war.

The fourth Geneva Convention affords protection to civilians, including in occupied territory.

Three additional protocols

Additional Protocol I - international conflicts

Additional Protocol II - non-international conflicts

Additional Protocol III - additional distinctive emblem

India's Stance

As of now, India has signed the 4 Conventions and Protocol III but still has not acceded to Protocols I and II. Protocol-II is related to internal conflict, while Protocol-I is related to war against colonial domination.

Common Article 3 of Geneva Conventions

Article 3 is common to all the four Geneva Conventions to which India is a party.

They include traditional civil wars, internal armed conflicts that spill over into other States or internal conflicts in which third States or a multinational force intervenes alongside the government.

Common Article 3 establishes fundamental rules from which no derogation is permitted.

It is like a mini-Convention within the Conventions as it contains the essential rules of the Geneva Conventions in a condensed format and makes them applicable to conflicts not of an international character:

It requires humane treatment for all persons in enemy hands, without any adverse distinction. It specifically prohibits murder, mutilation, torture, cruel, humiliating and degrading treatment, the taking of hostages and unfair trial.

It requires that the wounded, sick and shipwrecked be collected and cared for.

It grants the ICRC the right to offer its services to the parties to the conflict.

It calls on the parties to the conflict to bring all or parts of the Geneva Conventions into force through so-called special agreements.

It recognizes that the application of these rules does not affect the legal status of the parties to the conflict.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Convention

Source- The Hindu

PRANAM Act

Assam Chief Minister has launched the Parents Responsibility and Norms for Accountability and Monitoring (PRANAM) Commission.

It is a panel set up to look after the issues with respect to the PRANAM Bill brought in for protection of parents of state government employees at Guwahati, Assam.

It was approved by the state cabinet in 2018.

Highlights of the Bill

According to the Bill, if the PRANAM Commission gets a complaint that parents of a state government employee is being ignored, then 10% or 15% of the employee's salary will be deducted by the government and paid to the parents or differently abled siblings.

Private companies' employees and central government employees in Assam would also be covered by the Bill at a later stage.

Related Information

Parents and Senior Citizens Bill, 2007

Highlights of the Bill

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Bill, 2007 seeks to make it a legal obligation for children and heirs to provide maintenance to senior citizens.

It also permits state governments to establish old age homes in every district.

Senior citizens who are unable to maintain themselves shall have the right to apply to a maintenance tribunal seeking a monthly allowance from their children or heirs.

State governments may set up maintenance tribunals in every subdivision to decide the level of maintenance.

Appellate tribunals may be established at the district level.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –

Governance Source-PIB

BioAsia 2019

The 16th edition of BioAsia 2019 - Asia's largest biotechnology and life-sciences forum was conducted in Hyderabad, Telangana.

The theme of the conference was "Life Sciences 4.0 – Disrupt the Disruption".

Related Information

BioAsia

BioAsia is an annual event organised by the Government of Telangana and it largely focuses on re-imagining healthcare after technological disruptions.

The event agenda will touch upon many areas ranging from innovation

and R&D, manufacturing, digital healthcare, diagnostics and hospital infections to anti-microbial resistance.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology
Source- The Business Standard

Centre brings 42 non-scheduled cancer drugs under price control

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) brings 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs under price control through trade margin rationalization.

It has done under Para 19 of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013.

Related Information

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)

NPPA is an independent body under the Department of Pharmaceuticals under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.

It was set up in 1997.

The NPPA currently fixes prices of drugs placed in the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) under Schedule-I of the DPCO.

The calculation for essential drugs is based on a simple average of all medicines in particular therapeutic segment with sales of more than 1%.

Non-scheduled drugs are allowed an increase of up to 10% in prices every year, which is monitored by the NPPA.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health and services
Source- The Hindu

Cuttack-based National Rice Research Institute releases 4 climate-smart varieties

The Cuttack-based National Rice Research Institute (NRRRI), a constituent institute of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, released four new rice varieties, including two high-protein and two climate-smart varieties.

The institute has recently released two high-protein rice varieties (CR Dhan 310 and CR Dhan 311) and two climate-smart varieties (CR Dhan 801 and CR Dhan 802).

These varieties are tolerant to both submergence and drought and few biotic stresses to face the challenges of climate change.

Related Information

Central Rice Research Institute

The National Rice Research Institute is situated in Cuttack Odisha.

It is one of the premier national research institutes under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

NRRRI is the nodal agency for planning, implementation and monitoring of the Bringing Green Revolution in Eastern India programme.

Important ICAR institutions

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Indian Agricultural Research Institute | New Delhi |
| Indian Veterinary Research Institute | Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh |
| National Dairy Research Institute | Karnal, Haryana |
| Central Institute of Fisheries Education | Mumbai, Maharashtra |
| Central Institute for Research on Buffaloes | Hissar, Haryana |
| Central Institute of Cotton Research | Nagpur, Maharashtra |
| Central Sheep and Wool Research Institute | Avikanagar, Rajasthan |
| Indian Institute of Horticultural Research | Bengaluru, Karnataka |
| Indian Institute of Spices Research | Calicut, Kerala |
| Indian Institute of Sugarcane Research | Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh |

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology
Source- Indian Express

6. Union Textiles Minister inaugurates Titanwala Museum in Rajasthan's Bagru

Union Textiles Minister inaugurated the 'Titanwala Museum' in Bagru that showcases the Chhipa community's hand-block printing.

Related Information

Bagru Block Printing

Bagru printing is one of the traditional techniques of printing with natural colour followed by the chhipas of a remote place of Rajasthan.

Bagru printers use a technique called dabu in which a mixture of black clay, acacia gum, spoiled wheat flour, limestone is printed onto the fabric.

The fabric can then be dyed and left in the sun to dry.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and
Culture Source- Indian Express

SHREYAS: The Scheme for Higher
Education Youth in Apprenticeship and
Skills

The Minister for Human Resources
Development launched the Scheme
for Higher Education Youth in
Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS).

The program aims to enhance the
employability of Indian youth by
providing 'on the job work exposure'
and earning of stipend.

SHREYAS is a programme basket
comprising the initiatives of three
Central Ministries, namely the
Ministry of Human Resource
Development, Ministry of Skill
Development & Entrepreneurship and
the Ministry of Labour & Employment.

SHREYAS portal will enable educational
institutions and industry to log in and
provide their respective demand and
supply of apprenticeship.

The State Governments are expected to
play a major role in securing
apprenticeship opportunities, apart
from the Sector Skill Councils, so
that general degree students passing
out in April 2019, gain the option of
industry & service sector
apprenticeship.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –
Governance Source-PIB

Red sanders are now free of
export restrictions

All red sanders farmers, who weren't
allowed to export their products as
the foreign trade policy prohibited it,
now can.

The Directorate General of Foreign
Trade (DGFT), an agency of the
Ministry of Commerce and Industry
revised its export policy to permit its
export if it is obtained from cultivated
land.

Related Information

Red sanders

Red sanders, known for its rich hue
and therapeutic properties.

The tree is endemic to several
districts in Andhra Pradesh and some
parts of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

It has high demand across Asia,
particularly in China and Japan, for
use in cosmetics and medicinal
products as well as for making
furniture, woodcraft and musical
instruments.

Red sanders listed in Appendix II of
CITES (Convention on International
Trade in Endangered Species of Wild
Fauna and Flora).

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and
Biodiversity
Source- Down to Earth



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