

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**“Light House Projects challenge”**

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.

Key facts:

- The winning six States/ UTs that score the highest marks across the prescribed criteria will be awarded lighthouse projects.
- The States/ UTs will receive Central Assistance to construct these projects as per PMAY (U) guidelines.
- In addition to this, a Technology Innovation Grant (TIG) for the States/ UTs is provisioned to offset the impact of any additional cost implication due to the use of new technology and to absorb the issues related to economies of scale and other related factors.
- The selected sites for lighthouse projects will be used as an ‘open laboratory’ for live demonstration and will receive due attention from academia (Civil Engineering, Planning, Architecture), practitioners (Public/ Private), policy makers (Central/ State) and media apart from felicitation/ recognition in Grand Expo-cum-Conference.

“Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC- India)”:

- The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has already launched a “Global Housing Technology Challenge-India (GHTC- India)”.
- The challenge has three components viz. i) Conduct of Grand Expo-cum-Conference, ii) Identifying Proven Demonstrable Technologies from across the globe and iii) Promoting Potential Technologies through the establishment of Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators- India (ASHA-I) for incubation and accelerator support.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Promotion and Protection of Maithili Language and its scripts**

A committee constituted for making a report for the Promotion and Protection of Maithili Language and its scripts, has submitted its report to MHRD in which it has made several recommendations for promotion and protection of Maithili language.

Important recommendations of the committee are as follows:

- To establish a Script and Manuscript Centre at Darbhanga in any one of the Universities viz. Kameshwar Singh Sanskrit University or Lalit Narayan Mithila University.
- Early completion of the work pertaining to Unicode Scripts of Mithilakshar by Technology Development of Indian Languages (TDIL) and
- To prepare audio-visual teaching materials for teaching the Mithilakshar scripts.

Background:

- Mithilakshar or Tirhuta is the script of broader cultural Mithila. It is an extremely ancient script and is one of the scripts of the broader North Eastern India.
- The scripts of Mithilakshar, Bangla, Assamese, Nebari, Odia and Tibetan are part of the family.
- Mithilakshar had come to its current shape by 10th Century AD. The oldest form of Mithilakshar is found in the Sahodara stone inscriptions of 950 AD. Afterwards, the scripts has been used throughout Mithila from Champaran to Deoghar.

Need for protection: Use of this script has been on decline since last 100 years and therefore our culture is getting decimated. Because its own script is not being used, the Maithili language is getting developed in a composite manner despite having been accorded a constitutional status in the constitution.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Rajasthan to scrap education criterion**

The Rajasthan Assembly has passed two Bills which seek to end the minimum education criterion for panchayat and civic poll candidates– Rajasthan Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and the Rajasthan Municipality (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Background: The education criteria was introduced by the previous government, which stipulated that for contesting the zila parishad or panchayat samiti polls, a contestant must have a minimum qualification of secondary education (Class X). To contest the sarpanch elections, an aspirant from the general category must have passed Class VIII and a SC/ST aspirant must have passed Class V.

Why has it been scrapped?

- Few experts are of the opinion that the requirement of minimum qualification for contesting elections is against the very spirit of 73rd and 74th amendments.
- It also violates the right of every citizen to vote and to contest elections, which form the basic structure of the constitution.
- It may be noted here that due to these restrictions, many able candidates were debarred from contesting elections. In one way, it can be said that this law has prevented many people from coming to the mainstream.

Supreme Court's Order:

- Even Haryana had passed a similar law mandating minimum education qualification for those contesting in Panchayat Raj Institutions. The constitutional validity of this law of Haryana was questioned in the Supreme Court.
- The Supreme Court had upheld the constitutional validity of the law enacted by Haryana government to bar the illiterate from contesting panchayat polls in the state. The Supreme Court had ruled that "it is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad".
- The Supreme Court's interpretation is based on the fact that uneducated or illiterate people getting elected to the local bodies can easily be misled by officials if they don't know to write and read. In such cases, administrative actions that they are going can pose many challenges. The Court has further observed that it is only the education which can give people the power to differentiate between right and wrong, and good and bad.

Bill to counter exploitation by NRI spouses

In a bid to counter growing incidents of exploitation of Indian women by NRI (Non Resident Indian) spouses, the government has introduced a Bill in the Rajya Sabha.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bill is aimed at prevent victimisation of Indian nationals in fraudulent marriages.
- The Bill will create accountability and protect those who are trapped in fraudulent marriages and are abandoned by their spouses.
- 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.

Background: The introduction of the Bill was necessitated by the Ministry of External Affairs due to numerous complaints received from Indian nationals, mostly women deserted or harassed by their Non-Resident Indian spouses. It is expected that the Bill will serve as a deterrent for NRI spouses, who use marriages as a tool of exploitation.

Government introduces bill in Rajya Sabha to amend Cinematograph Act

The union government has introduced a bill in the Rajya Sabha to amend the Cinematograph Act and impose strict penalty to combat the menace of film piracy.

Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2019

- The Bill seeks to amend provisions of Cinematograph Act, 1952, in order to tackle film piracy by including penal provisions for unauthorized camcording and duplication of films
- It aims to check piracy, particularly the release of pirated versions of films on the internet that causes huge losses to the film industry and the exchequer.

Curbing Piracy

- The bill proposes to make film piracy offences punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and fines that may extend to ₹10 lakh or both.

- The proposed amendment states that any person, who without the written authorisation of the copyright owner, uses any recording device to make or transmit a copy of a film, or attempts to do so, or abet the making or transmission of such a copy, will be liable for such a punishment.

Expected Outcomes

- The film industry has been demanding for a long time that the government consider amendments to the law preventing camcording and piracy.
- The proposed amendments would increase industry revenues, boost job creation, fulfil important objectives of India's National Intellectual Property policy.
- It will give relief against piracy and infringing content online.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

'GiveItUp' campaign

A recent govt reports that nearly 1.04 crore LPG consumers have voluntarily surrendered their LPG subsidy under 'GiveItUp' campaign.

About the campaign:

- 'Give it Up' scheme encourages well-to-do households to voluntarily give up their liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) subsidy so that it could be targeted to the poor who remain reliant on polluting cooking fuels such as wood, dung, crop residues and coal.
- The money surrendered under this movement will be utilised for poor to get LPG connection in rural as well as in urban areas who are still using firewood for cooking.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

LAWASIA Human Rights Conference

The first LAWASIA Human Rights Conference was organised by LAWASIA, in association with the Bar Association of India recently with the theme: "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. The conference explored a wide range of human rights issues of relevance in the Asia Pacific region.

LAWASIA:

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

INDIAN ECONOMY

National Productivity Week

National Productivity Council (NPC), an autonomous registered society under Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, NPC is celebrating its 61st Foundation Day on 12th February with the theme "Circular Economy for Productivity & Sustainability". NPC observes foundation day as Productivity Day and the National Productivity Week from February 12-18, 2019.

Significance of the theme: This year theme represents a unique opportunity for circular business model for Make à Use à Return. It presents an opportunity for long term economic prospects and regeneration of materials. Transitioning to an efficient circular economy will benefit industry and all stakeholders now and in future.

Circular Economy:

- The circular economy follows the principle of preservation and enhancement of natural capital by controlling finite stocks and balancing renewable resource flows. The other principles suggest optimizing of resource yields by circulating products, components, and materials at their highest utility at all times, in both technical and biological cycles.

- Circular economy has the potential to increase productivity and create jobs, whilst reducing carbon emissions and preserving valuable raw materials.
- It provides for a way of creating value. It works by extending product life span through improved design and servicing and relocating waste from the end of the supply chain to the beginning – in effect, using resources more efficiently by using them over and over.

NPC:

- NPC is national level organization to promote productivity culture in India.
- Established by the Ministry of Industry, Government of India in 1958.
- It is an autonomous, multipartite, non-profit organization with equal representation from employers' & workers' organizations and Government, apart from technical & professional institutions and other interests.
- NPC is a constituent of the Tokyo-based Asian Productivity Organisation (APO), an Inter Governmental Body, of which the Government of India is a founder member.
- Functions: NPC teams up with its clients to work out solutions towards accelerating productivity, enhancing competitiveness, increasing profits, augmenting safety and reliability and ensuring better quality. It provides reliable database for decision-making, improved systems and procedures, work culture as well as customer satisfaction both internal & external.

DEFENCE**Defence Innovation Hubs set up**

The Defence Innovation Organisation set up under Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework has announced setting up of two Defence Innovation Hubs (DIHs) in Tamil Nadu (Coimbatore) and Maharashtra (Nashik).

Defence Innovation Hubs (DIHs):

- The Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework of the Government envisages setting up and managing independent Defence Innovation Hubs (DIHs).
- These DIHs will serve as platforms where innovators can get information about needs and feedback from the Services directly and create solutions for India's major defence platforms. This structure is also geared towards attracting more innovators to work for the defence sector in India.
- The Framework to Fund Defence Innovation Hubs under iDEX, approved by the Board of Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO) prescribes the following minimum criterion for setting up Defence Innovation Hubs:

Any Central Government recognized Incubator including :

- Department of Science and Technology (DST) recognized Incubators.
- Atal Innovation Mission, NITIAayog created Atal Incubation Centers (AICs) and Established Incubation Centers (EICs).
- Ministry of MSME recognized incubators.
- Any other incubator recognized or funded through any Central government scheme.
- The incubator located in districts mentioned in the list of SME clusters hosted by the Ministry of MSME in collaboration with UNIDO.
- Incubator / Hub promoted by local industry associations.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

**Your lack of dedication is an insult to those who
believe in you.**