

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Ongole cattle**

Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu has called for protecting Ongole cattle breed.

Ongole cattle:

- It is an indigenous cattle breed that originates from Prakasam District in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The breed derives its name from the place the breed originates from, Ongole.
- The Ongole breed of cattle, *Bos Indicus*, has a great demand as it is said to possess resistance to both foot and mouth disease and mad cow disease.
- The Ongole is one of the heaviest breeds.
- These cattle are commonly used in bull fights in Mexico and some parts of East Africa due to their strength and aggressiveness. They also participate in traditional bull fights in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- It has a great similarity with the Gaolao breed of Madhya Pradesh and also has a resemblance to the Bhagnari type of cattle in the north of India.

GEOGRAPHY**'Room for the River' project**

At his recent European tour, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had made a stop at Noordward in the Netherlands, the site of the 'Room for the River' project.

About the project:

- The flagship project of the Dutch government is centered around protecting areas adjoining rivers from routine flooding and improving water management systems in delta regions.
- The basic premise of the 'Room for the River' project is essentially to provide more space for the water body so that it can manage extraordinary high water levels during floods. The project, implemented at over 30 locations across the Netherlands and funded at a cost of 2.3 billion euros, involves tailor-made solutions for each river.
- Among the nine measures which define the project are lowering the flood plain, deepening the summer bed, strengthening of dykes, relocation of dykes, reducing the height of the groynes, increasing the depth of the side channels and removing obstacles.
- A key aspect of the project is also to improve the surroundings of the river banks through fountains and panoramic decks. The landscapes are altered in a way that they turn into natural sponges which can accommodate excess water during floods.

Need:

- The Netherlands has historically been prone to flooding of rivers due to its low elevation. Much of the country lies below the sea level. The country is located in the delta region of several major rivers like the Rhine, the Meuse and the Scheldt.
- In fact, the rise of water levels in the sea and rivers due to the effects of climate change is one of the major challenges facing the Dutch. But over the years, the country's expert water management techniques and creation of independent local government bodies for flood control have borne praise across the world.

Relevance for Kerala: The LDF government in Kerala believes the project and its foundational ideals can be replicated in Kuttanad, the state's rice bowl located below the sea-level. In the floods last year, Kuttanad and adjoining regions in Kottayam and Alappuzha districts remained submerged for weeks. Since the major rivers in the state empty out into Kuttanad, there's a need for long-term comprehensive solutions on the lines of the Dutch project to prevent flooding in the region.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**WTO's dispute settlement mechanism**

The World Trade Organization's (WTO's) dispute settlement mechanism is going through a "crisis": the body is struggling to appoint new members to its understaffed Appellate Body that hears appeals in trade. Over 20 developing countries met in New Delhi last week to discuss ways to prevent the WTO's dispute resolution system from collapsing due to the logjam in these appointments.

Challenges and concerns: Unless the issue is resolved, the body could become defunct, and countries locked in international trade disputes will be left with no forum for recourse.

What is the WTO's Appellate Body, and why is it important?

- The Appellate Body, set up in 1995, is a standing committee of seven members that presides over appeals against judgments passed in trade-related disputes brought by WTO members.
- With over 500 international disputes brought to the WTO and over 350 rulings issued since 1995, the organisation's dispute settlement mechanism is one of the most active in the world, and the Appellate Body is the highest authority in these matters.

Who can approach?

- Countries involved in a dispute over measures purported to break a WTO agreement or obligation can approach the Appellate Body if they feel the report of the panel set up to examine the issue needs to be reviewed on points of law. Existing evidence is not re-examined; legal interpretations are reviewed.
- The Appellate Body can uphold, modify, or reverse the legal findings of the panel that heard the dispute. Countries on either or both sides of the dispute can appeal.

Significance:

- The WTO's dispute settlement procedure is seen as being vital to ensuring smooth international trade flows. The Appellate Body has so far issued 152 reports. The reports, once adopted by the WTO's disputes settlement body, are final and binding on the parties.
- Over the last two years, the membership of the body has dwindled to just three persons instead of the required seven. This is because the United States, which believes the WTO is biased against it, has been blocking appointments of new members and reappointments of some members who have completed their four-year tenures. Two members will complete their tenures in December this year, leaving the body with just one member.
- At least three people are required to preside over an appeal, and if new members are not appointed to replace the two retiring ones, the body will cease to be relevant.

Concerns:

- The understaffed appeals body has been unable to stick to its 2-3 month deadline for appeals filed in the last few years, and the backlog of cases has prevented it from initiating proceedings in appeals that have been filed in the last year. The three members have been proceeding on all appeals filed since October 1, 2018.
- In February 2019, the body said it would be unable to staff an appeal in a dispute between Japan and India over certain safeguard measures that India had imposed on imports of iron and steel products. The panel had found that India had acted "inconsistently" with some WTO agreements, and India had notified the Dispute Settlement Body of its decision to appeal certain issues of law and legal interpretations in December 2018.
- The body has so far been unable to review at least 10 appeals that have been filed since July 2018.

What can happen if this situation is not addressed in time?

- With the Appellate Body unable to review new applications, there is already great uncertainty over the WTO's dispute settlement process. If the body is declared non-functional in December, countries may be compelled to implement rulings by the panel even if they feel that gross errors have been committed.
- Should such a country refuse to comply with the order of the panel on the ground that it has no avenue for appeal, it will run the risk of facing arbitration proceedings initiated by the other party in the dispute.

How does it affect India?

- This does not bode well for India, which is facing a rising number of dispute cases, especially on agricultural products. In the last four months alone, four cases have been brought to the WTO against India's alleged support measures for its sugar and sugarcane producers.
- Also, the overall weakening of the WTO framework could have the effect of undoing over two decades of efforts to avoid protectionism in global trade. This is a major concern currently, as trade tensions, for example between the US and China and the US and India, are on the rise.

Way forward:

- While new appointments to the Appellate Body are usually made by a consensus of WTO members, there is a provision for voting where a consensus is not possible.
- The group of 17 least developed and developing countries, including India, that have committed to working together to end the impasse at the Appellate Body can submit or support a proposal to

this effect, and try to get new members on the Appellate Body by a majority vote. This, however, may be an option of the last resort, as all countries fear unilateral measures by the US as a consequence of directly opposing its veto.

Japan and India to build a port in Sri Lanka

The three countries are set to sign a memorandum of understanding to build out the east container terminal at the Port of Colombo. Sri Lanka will control 51% of the project with India and Japan jointly controlling the other 49%. Unlike the Chinese-owned Hambantota port in southern Sri Lanka, Colombo port project is a commercially viable venture.

Why India and Japan are building a port in Sri Lanka?

- Japan has been pushing its plans to be a bigger player in the region under its “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.”
- China’s Belt and Road Initiative investments in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region have forced India to be more proactive in offering reliable alternatives to Beijing’s rising economic clout.
- China’s politically controversial investments in Sri Lanka became an election issue in 2015.

Failure of Chinese Port in Sri Lanka

- The nine-year-old Hambantota port in southern Sri Lanka almost has no container traffic and operating in heavy loss.
- It has become a prime example of what can go wrong for countries involved in Belt and Road.
- Sri Lanka borrowed heavily to build the port, couldn’t repay the loans, and then gave China a 99-year lease for debt relief.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

International Day for Biological Diversity

- United Nations (UN) has adopted May 22 as The International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. Objective of observing this day is to spread awareness about species turning endangered or going to extinct.
- 2019 theme is – “Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health.”
- First Biological Diversity International Day was observed by Second Committee of the UN General Assembly on December 29, 1993. Few years later in year 2000, UN General Assembly adopted 22 May as International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB).

Carbon dioxide and Global Warming

Recently, global concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was measured to have crossed the 415 parts per million (ppm) mark for the first time. The higher the concentration of carbon dioxide, the greater the greenhouse gas effect that causes the Earth’s atmosphere to heat up.

When did it start to increase?

- For several thousand years, the carbon dioxide concentration remained constant around 270-280 ppm, before the industrial revolution began to slowly push it up.
- In 1958, concentrations were around 315 ppm. It took nearly 50 years for it to reach 380 ppm, a mark first breached in 2004, but thereafter the growth has been rapid.
- Currently, the carbon dioxide concentration is growing at more than 2 ppm per year and is likely to reach 3 ppm a year from this year.
- However, in recent years, the growth in global carbon dioxide emissions has slowed down considerably.

Why such rapid growth?

- The increase in atmospheric concentrations is caused by the carbon dioxide being constantly emitted in different, mostly man-made, processes
- The rapid rise in the atmospheric concentrations is mainly due to the fact that carbon dioxide has a very long lifespan in the atmosphere, between 100 and 300 years.
- Even if the emissions were to be reduced to zero all of a sudden, it would have no impact on the atmospheric concentrations in the near term.

Where does the emitted carbon dioxide go?

- About half of emitted carbon dioxide is absorbed by plants and oceans, leaving the other half to go into the atmosphere.

- An addition of about 7.5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere leads to a 1 ppm rise in its atmospheric concentration.
- The absorption of carbon dioxide by plants follows a predictable seasonal variability.
- Plants absorb more carbon dioxide during the summer and a lower amount of carbon dioxide is added to the atmosphere in the summer months.

How the Global community has planned to fight climate change?

- The global goal has been defined in terms of temperature targets, not carbon dioxide concentrations.
- The stated effort of the Paris Agreement is to keep the rise in average surface temperatures below 2°C higher than during pre-industrial times, and if possible, below 1.5°C.
- The carbon dioxide concentration level corresponding to a 2°C rise in global temperatures is generally understood to be 450 ppm.
- At current rates of growth, that level would be reached in less than 12 years, that is by 2030.
- The corresponding carbon dioxide level for a 1.5°C rise is not very clearly defined.
- The net-zero needs to be achieved by 2075 to attain the 2°C target.
- Net zero is achieved when the total emissions are neutralized by absorption of carbon dioxide through natural sinks like forests, or removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through technological interventions.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report emphasized the need to achieve net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases, not just carbon dioxide, by 2050 to keep temperature rise to within 1.5°C.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

RISAT-2B

ISRO successfully launched radar imaging satellite RISAT-2B on-board PSLV-C46 from Sriharikota. RISAT-2B was placed into an orbit of 555 km with an inclination of 37 degree to the equator. This is the fourth flight unit of the RISAT programme and it would be used for reconnaissance, strategic surveillance and disaster management.

Key facts:

- It has been developed for military and general surveillance purposes. The data will also be used in fields of agriculture, forestry and disaster management support.
- RISAT-2B is equipped with a synthetic aperture radar that can take pictures of the earth during day and night, and also under cloudy conditions.
- With this advanced earth observation satellite, ISRO has introduced a complex new technology. That is a 3.6 metre unfurlable radial rib antenna. This is also going to be the technology of the future.
- RISAT-2B is going to replace RISAT-2, which was placed in the orbit in 2009. RISAT-2 was RISAT-1's replacement, a microwave remote sensing satellite that was launched in 2012. RISAT-2 was actively used by India to monitor activities in camps across the border in Pakistan to thwart infiltration bids by terrorists.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new one.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Question: Write a brief note on the Dispute Settlement Board of WTO. Highlight what are the institutional issues with WTO.

The Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) makes decisions on trade disputes between governments that are adjudicated by the Organization. Settling disputes is the responsibility of the DSB (the General Council in another guise), which consists of all WTO members. The DSB has the sole authority to establish “panels” of experts to consider the case, and to accept or reject the panels’ findings or the results of an appeal. It monitors the implementation of the rulings and recommendations, and has the power to authorize retaliation when a country does not comply with a ruling.

Issues with WTO

Many analysts have said that the Buenos Aires summit has highlighted the existential crisis faced by WTO especially during a time when emerging economies have adopted assertive and developed economies have adopted protectionist attitudes.

Institutional Issues with WTO**Persistent North-South divisions**

- WTO talks are mainly seen as a showdown between the North and the South. This is particularly so with the growth in strength of the developing countries and their regional and continental groupings.
- Because of this no agreement has happened over the issue of agriculture subsidies despite of several rounds of talks.

Structure and operational procedure of WTO

- In WTO decision making is through consensus. This has translated into making the WTO decision making long and subject to external manipulation.
- Most of the time political and ideological differences come in a way of reaching a consensus.

Implementation problem

- This relates basically to the difficulties that mainly developing countries face in meeting their obligations under the WTO agreements.
- The two main areas that have affected implementation by developing countries have been the TRIPS and the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures agreements.

Not all countries joined

- Not all countries have joined it which makes it a less effective organization. Countries such as Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Uzbekistan have not joined WTO yet.
- With an increasingly global trading system, member countries do not operate in isolation and trade with WTO member countries only.

Strong influence of Corporate

- The WTO essentially protects multinational corporations based in the North and acts as a tool of rich and powerful countries – notably the US, the EU, Japan and Canada.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. Recently in news, the cattle Ongole belong to which of the following states of India?
(a) **Andhra Pradesh**
(b) Tamil Nadu
(c) Karnataka
(d) Telengana
2. Recently in the news, the project 'Room for the River' belongs to which of the following countries?
(a) **Netherlands**
(b) Sweden
(c) Israel
(d) France
3. Which of the following statement is not true about the WTO?
(a) WTO is a permanent organisation
(b) Uruguay round gave the birth to the WTO
(c) Ministerial Conference is the highest policy making body of the WTO
(d) **WTO was officially constituted on 1 January 1991.**
4. Which of the following countries has partnered with India and Sri Lanka to develop the Port of Columbo?
(a) **Japan**
(b) China
(c) Vietnam
(d) France
5. Consider the following statements w.r.t International Day for Biological Diversity?
 1. It is celebrated every year on 23 May.
 2. The theme for the day in 2019 was "Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health."Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) **2 only**
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Consider the following statements:
 1. A carbon tax is a tax on the carbon content of fuels (principally coal, oil, and natural gas) that generate CO₂ emissions when burned
 2. Carbon subsidies are measures that keep prices for consumers below market levels or for producers above market levels or reduce costs for consumers and producersWhich of the above statements given above is/are incorrect?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) **Neither 1 nor 2**
7. Consider the following w.r.t carbon sequestration
 1. Ocean
 2. Forest
 3. Depleted oil reserves
 4. MinesWhich of the above act as carbon sinks?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 2 only
(d) **1, 2, 3 and 4**
8. Which of the following statements is/are correct about RISAT-2B?
 1. It is a Radar imaging satellite.
 2. It will help military as well as in the fields of agriculture, forestry and disaster management support.Select the correct answer using codes given below
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) **Both 1 and 2**
(d) Neither 1 nor 2