

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Coffee Table Book for partnership between India and the UN World Food Programme**

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has launched a Coffee Table Book to commemorate five decades of partnership between the Ministry and the UN World Food Programme towards addressing food and nutritional security in India.

Coffee Table Book

- The Book showcases key milestones achieved by the Government of India in its efforts to make the nation free from hunger and malnutrition and WFP's role in this Endeavour.
- Some of the major turning points in India's journey towards food and nutrition security captured in the book include the Green Revolution, the White revolution, improvements in livestock and dairy development and digitization of food safety nets.

About World Food Programme

- The World Food Programme (WFP) is the food-assistance branch of the United Nations.
- It is the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security.
- According to the WFP, it provides food assistance to an average of 91.4 million people in 83 countries each year.
- From its headquarters in Rome and from more than 80 country offices around the world, the WFP works to help people who cannot produce or obtain enough food for themselves and their families.
- It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and part of its executive committee.

Bharatmala Pariyojana

The Government of India has approved Phase-I of Bharatmala Pariyojana with financial outlay of Rs 5,35,000 crore to develop 24,800 km Highways along with 10,000 km residual NHDP stretches over a period of five years.

What is Bharatmala project?

Bharatmala Project is the second largest highways construction project in the country since NHDP, under which almost 50,000 km of highway roads were targeted across the country. Bharatmala will look to improve connectivity particularly on economic corridors, border areas and far flung areas with an aim of quicker movement of cargo and boosting exports.

NHAI: The National Highways Authority of India was constituted by an act of Parliament, the National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988. It is responsible for the development, maintenance and management of National Highways entrusted to it and for matters connected or incidental thereto. The Authority was operationalised in Feb, 1995.

Kaushal Yuva Samwaad:

- Commemorating World Youth Skills Day on July 15, 2019 and celebrating 4th Anniversary of the Skill India Mission, the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship has announced launch of "Kaushal Yuva Samwaad" (A Youth Dialogue).
- Kaushal Yuva Samwaad is aimed at creating an open dialogue with the youth across all skill training centres to hear their views, ideas, opportunities and recommendations which could help the Ministry in scaling the existing programs and improve overall efficiency of its projects.
- Kaushal Yuva Samwaad is being organized across all Skill India training centres, namely, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK), Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), Polytechnics, Institutes under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Shikshan Sansthan, DDU-GKY Centres and other fee-based training centres across the country.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**African Union FTA**

Recently 12th Summit of the African Union (AU) was concluded at Niamey, the capital of the Niger Republic. The summit saw 54 of 55 of its member states signing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCFTA) for goods and services. Half of the countries have already ratified it. This project has the potential to create an African Common Market of 1.2 billion people and a GDP of over

\$3.4 billion. AFCFTA would become the world's largest Free Trade Agreement and it would have a global impact.

Which are the main hurdles?

- African Union has been largely ineffective in dealing with the continent's problems such as decolonization, underdevelopment, Islamic terrorism, and the Arab Spring. Earlier projects of African Union such as Africa Unity project etc. have been spectacular flops. So, there is natural skepticism about the viability of AFCFTA.
- National economies in Africa are generally weak with a low manufacturing base. They lack competitiveness and mutual complementarity. Only a sixth of Africa's current total trade is within the continent.
- AFCFTA seems to be countercyclical to the ongoing global protectionist trends as seen in the U.S.-China trade conflict, Brexit, etc. World trade is likely to grow only by 2.6% in 2019. Commodity prices are stagnant and globalization is often being reversed.

Where is the scope for optimism?

- Greater collective self-reliance through African economic integration makes eminent sense in this volatile world.
- AFCFTA can build upon the experience of the continent's five regional economic blocks.
- AU Commission has prepared an extensive road map towards the AFCFTA with preliminary work on steps such as elimination of non-tariff barriers, supply chains, dispute settlement, etc. So, this is a deviation from its earlier plans.
- Political will is strong enough to overcome the different challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, poor connectivity, etc.

How should India act?

- Africa is an important economic partner for India with total annual merchandise trade estimated at \$70 billion or nearly a tenth of India's global trade.
- India is Africa's third-largest trading partner. While India's global exports have been largely stagnant, those to Africa have surged.
- Africa has unfulfilled demand for Indian commodities e.g. automobiles, pharmaceuticals, consumer goods, etc. and services e.g. IT/IT-Enabled Service, skilling, expertise in management and banking, financial services and insurance, etc.
- So, India needs to anticipate the AFCFTA's likely impact on its interests and try to influence and leverage it to enhance India-African economic ties.
- Indian firms can co-produce the goods and services in partnership with local manufacturers in Africa.
- AFCFTA is likely to open new opportunities for Indian stakeholders in fast-moving consumer goods manufacturing, connectivity projects and the creation of a financial backbone.
- India can help the African Union Commission prepare the requisite architecture, such as common external tariffs, competition policy, intellectual property rights, and natural persons' movement.
- It can identify various African transnational corporations which are destined to play a greater role in a future continental common market and engage with them strategically.
- The cross-linkage of a three million Indian diasporas spread across Africa can also be very valuable.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Utkarsh 2022

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) board has finalised a three- year roadmap to improve regulation and supervision, among other functions of the central bank.
- This medium term strategy — named Utkarsh 2022 — is in line with the global central banks' plan to strengthen the regulatory and supervisory mechanism.
- Worldwide, all central banks strengthen the regulatory and supervisory mechanism; everybody is formulating a long-term plan and a medium-term plan.
- So, the RBI has also decided it will formulate a programme to outline what is to be achieved in the next three years.

- While around a dozen areas were identified by the committee, some board members felt that areas could be filtered and lesser number of areas can be identified for implementation in the next three years.

Why such move?

- The idea is that the central bank plays a proactive role and takes preemptive action to avoid any crisis.
- We are very much aware of the IL&FS debt default issue and the crisis of confidence the non-banking financial sector faced in the aftermath.

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

Black Gold

Using gold nanoparticles Indian scientists have developed a new material called “black gold”, which can potentially be used for applications ranging from solar energy harvesting to desalinating seawater, according to a study.

Black Gold

- To develop the material, the team from Mumbai-based Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) rearranged size and gaps between gold nanoparticles.
- It has unique properties such as capacity to absorb light and carbon dioxide (CO₂).
- Gold does not have these properties therefore ‘black gold’ is being called a new material.
- In appearance it is black, hence the name ‘black gold’, according to the findings published in Chemical Science
- The researchers varied inter-particle distance between gold nanoparticles using a cycle-by-cycle growth approach by optimizing the nucleation-growth step.
- They used dendritic fibrous nanosilica, whose fibers were used as the deposition site for gold nanoparticles.

Features of Black Gold

- One of the most fascinating properties of the new material is its ability to absorb the entire visible and near-infrared region of solar light.
- It does so because of inter-particle plasmonic coupling as well as heterogeneity in nanoparticles size.
- Black gold could also act as a catalyst and could convert CO₂ into methane at atmospheric pressure and temperature using solar energy.
- If we develop an artificial tree with leaves made out of black gold, it can perform artificial photosynthesis, capturing carbon dioxide and converting it into fuel and other useful chemicals.
- The efficiency of conversion of CO₂ into fuel, at present, is low but researchers believe it could be improved in future.
- The material can be used as a nano-heater to convert seawater into potable water with good efficiency, the researchers said.

EDITORIALS

The importance of democratic education

Need for democratic education:

- Democratically elected governments in our times are neither efficient nor wise. They show a propensity to fail at achieving their national goal — a high quality of life for all people. High rate of literacy, alone, would not solve the problem.
- The solution then is not just education per se, but universal education of a certain kind, one that is focused on improving the quality of our democracy. Our current education system does not focus on education in democracy or what we might call democratic education. Nor does it build on elements of democratic culture embedded in our traditions.

What are the core elements of democratic education?

- It requires the cultivation of democratic virtues. For instance, the ability to imagine and articulate a minimally common good. This requires that we distinguish what is merely good for me from what is the good of all. And since each of us may develop our own distinct idea of the common good, to find an overlapping common good.

- An ability to handle difference and disagreement and to retain, despite this difference, the motivation to arrive at the common good through conversation, debate, dialogue and deliberation.
- Also crucial is a spirit of compromise, of moderation, and a willingness, within acceptable value parameters, of mutual give and take.
- More important is the ability to participate in a particular historical narrative. Members of a political community become better citizens when they relate to critical issues through historically inherited terms of debate, a continuing narrative, a specific ongoing conversation. The reflection of that debate in political decision-making is central to the members' feeling of engagement and participation.
- Individuals become effective and meaningful citizens only by learning the terms set by debates around these specific issues. Since a useful entry to them is available through rich debates in the Constituent Assembly, a familiarity with them is a crucial ingredient of democratic education in India.

What is democratic education?

- Conceived broadly, it is a historically specific enterprise, determined by the inherited vocabulary of specific political languages and the terms of debates in a particular community. It is designed specifically to enable conversation on issues central to a particular community, to strive for agreement where possible and to live peacefully with disagreement where it is not. In short, it involves social and historical awareness and key democratic virtues.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT

Odisha to have registry for accurate government-to-citizen services

The state government has initiated the process for development of the Social Registry and Integrated Social Protection Delivery Platform (SPDP) for accurate and quicker delivery of Government to citizen (G2C) services. For that a national level workshop was held where experts from World Bank, various States and the Union Government shared knowledge, experience and best practices on the matter.

Need and Objective:

- The State has a wide variety of social assistance programmes which account for a large share of GSDP annually. These programmes are administered by departments concerned with their own database and beneficiary registers. This workshop is intended to capture the requirements of respective departments and other stakeholders for establishing a social registry. The practices adopted by other States and abroad would also be looked into for working out the best-suited method in Odisha context.
- SPDP is based on 5T principles of the government and this will help cater to citizens' need more efficiently.
- The need for SPDP is to build a social registry of citizens with concrete and authenticated database.

Highlights of Odisha government's work in US

A BJD spokesman highlighted the significant achievements of the State Government at the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Odisha Society of America organised at New Jersey.

Highlights

- Odisha Government is focusing on generating opportunities through its flagship schemes like Start-up Odisha and Invest Odisha.
- The investment intents received during Make in Odisha conclave will soon convert into real investments making Odisha an industrial hub.
- The Government's 'Mo School' campaign and other programmes initiated to boost education in the State besides the success of World Cup Hockey.
- Successful rescue and relief operation during cyclone Fani on May 3 this year.
- The Odisha Society of America sought support from the state government for opening of a Non Resident Odia (NRO) Cell in the state.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Look in the mirror. That's your competition.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Why Africa is important for India? What are challenges to India's developmental activities in Africa?

Ans: India's relations with Africa date back several centuries. The presence of Indians in East Africa is documented in the 'Periplus of the Erythraean Sea' or Guidebook of the Red Sea by an ancient Greek author written in 60 AD. After India got independent, it raised voice for African liberation taking their case to all the available international forums. End of racial struggle and decolonization became the rallying point of India-Africa relations. India's policy of NAM provided the world with the third front at the time of heightened cold war rivalry between US and USSR, where African nations acted as the strengthening factor.

Importance of Africa

- Africa is home to over half a dozen of the fastest growing countries of this decade such as Rwanda, Senegal, and Tanzania etc making it one of the growth pole of the world.
- Real GDP in Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa in the past decade has grown by more than twice the rate in 1980s and 90's.
- A large chunk of Indian diaspora continues to live in African countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius, and Nigeria.
- African continent has a population of over one billion with a combined GDP of 2.5 trillion dollars making it a huge potential market.
- Africa is a resource rich nation dominated by commodities like crude oil, gas, pulses and lentils, leather, gold and other metals, all of which India lack in sufficient quantities.
- India is seeking diversification of its oil supplies away from the Middle East and Africa can play an important role in India's energy matrix.

India in Africa

- Engagement at all levels with African countries has increased in the last two decades with a large number of public and private sector companies from India investing in Africa.
- India's duty-free tariff preferential scheme for Least Developed Nation (LDCs) launched in 2008 has benefited 33 African states.
- India's engagement with African nations remains at three levels: Bilateral, Regional and Multilateral.
- Multilateral engagement was launched with the first India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in 2008.
- India is investing in capacity building providing more than \$1 billion in technical assistance and training to personnel under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program.
- As a full member of African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), India has pledged \$1 million towards ACBF's sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and capacity building initiative.
- India has invested \$100 million in the Pan-African E-Network to bridge the digital divide in Africa, leveraging its strengths in information technology.
- Indian military academies offer training to military officers from a number of African states.
- India has also unveiled the Vision Document of the Asian Africa Growth Corridor which is jointly prepared by Indian and Japanese think tanks.
- The corridor will focus on Developing Cooperation Projects, Quality Infrastructure and Institutional Connectivity, skill enhancement, and People-to-People Partnership.
- India postulates that its partnership with Africa is an amalgam of development priorities in keeping with the African Union's long term plan and the Africa Agenda 2063, as well as India's development objectives.

Challenges

- Ethnic and religious conflicts and governance issues in some countries make foreign contributors averse to venture in the region.
- India's substantive presence in Africa has remained marginal as it focused on its own periphery through much of the Cold War period which limited its capabilities.
- Since the end of the Cold War China's presence has grown in Africa, who has been providing soft loans to African states which has resulted in Chinese growing influence in the continent.
- With government institutions and businesses working in separate silos, India has no coordinated Africa policy nor does there seem to be an avenue where the strengths of both actors can be leveraged.

Way Forward: New Delhi will need to start delivering on the ground if the India-Africa partnership has to move beyond high level visits. Indian investments in Africa need to expand and diversify towards 'broad' range and not remain restricted to traditional sectors of investments. In order to keep the momentum of building political and economic ties with this increasingly important region, steps should be taken towards tailoring and funding joint projects for the sustainable development of the Africa.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCOS

1. Consider the following statements w.r.t UN World Food Programme.
 1. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security
 2. It is headquartered in New York.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only**
 (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Which of the following are the features of the ambitious BharatMala Project?
 1. Connectivity to border areas and backward areas.
 2. Connectivity to coastal areas.
 3. Connectivity improvement programme for Chardham.
 Select the correct answer from the codes given below:
 (a) 1 and 2
 (b) 1 and 3
 (c) 2 and 3
 (d) **1, 2 and 3**
3. Which of the following day is celebrated as World Youth Skills Day?
 - (a) July 8
 - (b) July 10
 - (c) July 11
 - (d) **July 15**
4. Consider the following statements w.r.t the African Union and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCFTA).
 1. Recently 12th Summit of the African Union (AU) concluded at Niamey.
 2. African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCFTA) for goods and services was signed by a number of countries.
 3. If implemented, AFCFTA would become the world's largest Free Trade.
 Select the correct answer using codes given below
 (a) 1 and 2
 (b) 1 and 3
 (c) 2 and 3
 (d) **1, 2 and 3**
5. Consider the following statements w.r.t Utkarsh 2022.
 1. It is a medium term strategy to be in line with the global central banks' plan to strengthen the regulatory and supervisory mechanism.
 2. It will be jointly implemented by RBI and SEBI on collaboration.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 (a) **1 only**
 (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Which of the following are the features of the newly developed Black Gold?
 1. It is capable to absorb the entire visible and near-infrared region of solar light.
 2. It can act as a catalyst and could convert CO₂ into methane at atmospheric pressure and temperature using solar energy.
 3. It can be used as a Nano-Heater to covert seawater into potable water.
 Select the correct answer using codes given below
 (a) 1 and 2
 (b) 2 and 3
 (c) 1 and 3
 (d) **1, 2 and 3**
7. Consider the following statement w.r.t The Odisha Society of the America.
 1. It is an organization aimed to promote the culture of the Odissa in the North American Region.
 2. It was founded in the year 1970.
 Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
 (a) 1 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) **Neither 1 nor 2**