

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**1/4 of world's population faces huge water stress, bulk in India**

- The World Resource Institute (WRI) has released Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas. It has ranked water stress, drought risk and riverine flood risk countries.
- According to the atlas, 1/4 of world's population is facing huge water stress.
- WRI has provided a list of 17 most water stress countries. Qatar has been ranked as the most water stress country followed by Israel, Lebanon, Iran, and Jordan.
- India has been ranked 13th. The WRI has noted that India has more than three times the population of the other 16 water stressed countries.
- The WRI report has also highlighted that agriculture, industry, and municipalities are using 80% of available surface and groundwater in an average year in these 17 countries.
- 12 out of the 17 most water-stressed countries are in the Middle East and North Africa and climate change will worsen water scarcity in the region.
- The World Bank has had noted that this region has the greatest expected economic losses from climate-related water scarcity, estimated at 6%-14% of GDP by 2050.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Currency Manipulation**

The US Treasury Department has declared China as a currency manipulator. This move comes after the People's Bank of China (PBOC), which is the central bank of China, allowed the yuan to suddenly depreciate (or lose value) relative to the dollar by 1.9% - one of the biggest single-day falls.

Background

- China's currency move came as a result of new tariffs announced by the US President on \$300 billion of Chinese imports.
- The move roiled markets, with S&P 500 Index sliding more than 1% in Asia.
- The S&P 500 or Standard & Poor's 500 Index is a market-capitalization-weighted index of the 500 largest U.S. publicly traded companies.
- Also, a weaker yuan makes Chinese exports more competitive, or cheaper to buy with foreign currencies.
- The US government has said that it will now engage with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to eliminate the unfair competitive advantage created by China's latest actions.
- It seems that the ongoing trade war between the world's two biggest economies is now turning into a currency war as well.

Currency Manipulation

- Currency manipulation happens when governments try to artificially tweak the exchange rate to gain an "unfair" advantage in trade.
- The US Treasury department defines currency manipulation as when countries deliberately influence the exchange rate between their currency and the US dollar to gain "unfair competitive advantage in international trade".
- Once a country is designated as a currency manipulator by the U.S., the next step taken by the US government is to seek negotiations with the government accused of manipulation.
- But officials in Beijing and Washington have already been engaged in trade talks for more than a year.
- If there is no progress a year after the designation, China could face possible sanctions including its firms being prohibited from competition for US government contracts and excluded from getting financing from an American government agency for development projects.

UNSC Resolution 47 on Kashmir

Pakistan's PM cried foul on the move to scrap Art. 370 terming it as illegal. It said that no unilateral step by the Government of India can change the disputed status, as enshrined in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.

The UNSC Resolution 47

- Pakistan referred to Resolution 47 of the UNSC that focuses on the complaint of the Government of India concerning the dispute over the State of J&K that India took to the Security Council in January 1948.

- In October 1947, following an invasion by soldiers from the Pakistan Army in plainclothes and tribesmen, the Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh sought assistance from India and signed the Instrument of Accession.
- After the first war in Kashmir (1947-1948), India approached the UN Security Council to bring the conflict in Kashmir to the notice of Security Council members.

Who were the UNSC members who oversaw the issue?

- The UN Security Council increased the size of the investigating council to include six members along with permanent members of the UNSC.
- Along with the five permanent members, China, France, UK, US & Russia, non-permanent members included Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Syria and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

What happened at the UNSC?

- India's position was that it was ready to hold a plebiscite, a direct vote in which an entire electorate votes on a specific proposal, to know of the people's desire and accept the results of the vote.
- Pakistan denied its involvement in the conflict and counter-accused India.
- UNSC ordered for the conflict to cease and to create conditions for a "free and impartial plebiscite" to decide whether Jammu and Kashmir would accede to India or Pakistan.

What did the UNSC order Pakistan to do?

1. The UNSC ordered that Pakistan was to withdraw its tribesmen and Pakistan nationals who had entered the State for the purpose of fighting.
2. It ordered Pak to prevent future intrusions and to prevent "furnishing of material aid to those fighting in the State".
3. The UNSC also stated that it gave "full freedom to all subjects of the State, regardless of creed, caste or party, to express their views" and the freedom to vote on the issue of the accession of the State.
4. It was also ordered Pakistan to cooperate with maintaining peace and order.

What did the UNSC order India to do?

- The UNSC had a more comprehensive set of orders for India.
- It said that after the Pakistani withdrawal from the State and the fighting had ceased, India was to submit a plan to the Commission for its withdrawing forces from J&K and to reduce them over a period of time to the minimum strength required for civil maintenance of law and order.
- India was ordered to appraise the Commission of the stages at which steps had been taken to reduce military presence to the minimum strength and to arrange remaining troops after consultations with the Commission.
- Among other instructions, India was ordered to agree that till the time the Plebiscite Administration found it necessary to exercise the powers of direction and supervision over the State forces and police,
- These forces would be held in areas to be agreed upon with the Plebiscite Administrator.
- It also directed India to recruit local personnel for law and order and to safeguard the rights of minorities.

How did India & Pakistan react to the UNSC Resolution 47?

India

- Both countries rejected Resolution 47.
- India's contention was that the resolution ignored the military invasion by Pakistan and placing both nations on an equal diplomatic ground was a dismissal of Pakistan's aggression.
- The Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh had signed the Instrument of Accession to India.
- India also objected to the Resolution's requirement that did not allow India to retain military presence which it believed it needed for defence.
- The Resolution's order to form a coalition government would also put Sheikh Abdullah, the Prime Minister of the Princely State of Jammu & Kashmir, in a difficult position.
- India also believed that the powers conferred on the Plebiscite Administrator undermined the state's sovereignty.

Pakistan

- India also wanted Pakistan to be excluded from the operations of the plebiscite.

- Pakistan on the other hand, objected to even the minimum presence of Indian forces in Kashmir, as allowed by the resolution.
- It also wanted an equal representation in the state government for the Muslim Conference, which was the dominant party in Pakistani-held Kashmir.
- Despite their differences with the provisions of Resolution 47, both India and Pakistan welcomed the UN Commission and agreed to work with it.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Changed Regulations for Insurance Marketing Firms

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has recently notified the changes to regulations governing Insurance Marketing Firms (IMFs). The amendments to the regulations have been introduced from the perspective of increasing insurance penetration by providing an enabling environment. IRDAI had also constituted a committee under Suresh Mathur that made many recommendations including a reduction in the net worth, expansion of the area of operation of IMFs, as well as the basket of products.

New Regulations

- For IMFs applying to launch operations in only one district, which is an aspirational district as defined by NITI Aayog or an economically backward district, a net worth limit of Rs.5 lakh would suffice.
- The net worth would continue to be a minimum of Rs.10 lakh for all other cases.
 - The Suresh Mathur committee had pointed out that the Rs.10 lakh norm was high for tier-II and III cities.
 - An IMF is allowed to register for three districts in a State, with at least one of them being aspirational district.
- Another amendment permits the IMFs to engage with Agriculture Insurance Company of India and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation.
 - This would be in addition to existing norms allowing them to solicit business for two life, two general and two health insurers.
- IMFs can now solicit business for all kinds of products sold on individual and/or retail basis, including crop insurance for non-loanee farmers and combination products. Property, group personal accident, group health and term insurance policies for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) form part of the products list.

National Time Release Study

India's first national Time Release Study (TRS) is being conducted by the Ministry of Finance as part of its strategic commitment to improve global trade.

- Time Release Study exercise will be conducted every year across 15 ports including sea, air, land and dry ports.
- The national TRS will establish baseline performance measurement and have standardized operations and procedures across all ports.
- TRS initiative for accountable governance, will measure rule-based and procedural bottlenecks (including physical touchpoints) in the clearance of goods, from the time of arrival until the physical release of cargo.
- The TRS is an internationally recognized tool advocated by the World Customs Organization to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of international trade flows.
- Objective: Identify and address bottlenecks in the trade flow process and take the corresponding policy and operational measures required to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of border procedures, without compromising efficient trade control.
- Expected beneficiaries: Will be export-oriented industries and Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) who will enjoy greater standardization of Indian processes with comparable international standards.
- Significance: TRS initiative will help in improving the Ease of Doing Business (EODB), particularly on the trading across borders indicator which measures the efficiency of the cross border trade ecosystem.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

The recently released unit-level data of the PLFS, (PLFS was launched by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 2017), suggests that job market conditions in the country are more worrisome than what the headline numbers reveal.

- According to Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18, 6.1% of India's labour force, and 17.8% of young people (15-29 years) in the labour force are unemployed.
- The data shows that the proportion of the workforce engaged in regular wage/salaried jobs increased by 5 percentage points between 2011-12 (when the last NSSO employment unemployment survey was conducted) and 2017-18.
 - But this increase was partly because of the denominator effect (the overall workforce declined by 4 percentage points between 2011-12 and 2017-18).
 - As a share of the population, regular workers increased only by one percentage point to 8% over the same period.
 - Moreover, it is worth noting that India still lags far behind its South Asian neighbours and developing economies such as China (53.1%), Brazil (67.7%) and South Africa (84.8%) in the share of salaried or regular jobs.
- The median daily earnings were higher for men and women in regular jobs, as compared to self-employment and casual work.
 - However, not all salaried jobs guarantee high pays as around 45% of salaried workers — the best-paid workers in India — earned less than Rs.10,000 per month, and only about 4% of them earned more than Rs.50,000 per month in 2017-18.
 - Overall, 72% of regular workers earned below the minimum monthly salary of Rs.18,000 prescribed by the 7th Pay Commission.
- Across categories of the workforce, wages and earnings were higher in urban areas than in rural areas, and for men than for women.
- About 15% of regular workers were engaged in elementary occupations such as building caretakers, garbage collectors and manual workers.
- This includes 21% of women regular workers and 13% of men regular workers.
- The median earnings of these workers was only about one-fourth of the top-earning occupational group (legislators, senior officials and managers).
- The median earnings in elementary occupations is followed by service workers and those engaged in skilled agricultural work and fisheries (median earnings of Rs.8000 per month for both sets of workers).
- Regular jobs are important and in high demand globally because they tend to offer better pay and job security.
- About 71% of the regular workers in the non-agricultural sector did not have a written job contract in 2017-18.
 - Absence of a written job contract undermines job security, and the proportion without a job contract increased for both men and women regular workers between 2011-12 and 2017-18. So did the proportion of workers who were not eligible for paid leave.
- There was a 5.8 percentage points decline in the proportion of regular workers who were not eligible for any social security benefits between 2011-12 and 2017-18. This number continues to be high, and around half of the regular workers were not eligible for any social security benefits in 2017-18.

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

Aquaponics

Aquaponics is an ecologically sustainable model that combines Hydroponics with Aquaculture.

Hydroponics is the soilless growing of plants, where soil is replaced with water. Aquaculture is the raising of fish.

- With Aquaponics both fish and plants can grow in one integrated ecosystem.
- The fish waste provides an organic food source for the plants, which in turn naturally filter the water for the fish, creating a balanced ecosystem.
- The third participant i.e. microbes or nitrifying bacteria converts the ammonia from the fish waste into nitrates which plants need to grow.

Benefits and Weaknesses of Aquaponics

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) put out a technical paper in 2014, detailing the positives and negatives of the practice:

Benefits:

- Higher yields (20-25% more) and qualitative production.
- Can be used on non-arable land such as deserts, degraded soil or salty, sandy islands.

- Creates little waste.
- Daily tasks, harvesting and planting are cut down to a great extent, thereby saving labour and time.
- Both fish and plants can be used for consumption and income generation.

Weaknesses:

- Expensive initial startup costs compared with soil production or hydroponics.
- Knowledge of fish, bacteria and plant production is needed.
- Optimal temperature ranges needed (17-34°C).
- Mistakes or accidents can cause catastrophic collapse of system.
- Daily management is mandatory.
- Requires reliable access to electricity, fish seed and plant seeds.
- If used alone, aquaponics will not provide a complete diet

MISC**5th National Handloom Day**

- The 5th National handloom day was celebrated across the country on 7th August 2019.
- The National handloom day is observed annually on 7th August to honour the handloom weaving community and highlight the importance of India's handloom industry.
- Bhubaneswar, Odisha has been chosen as the venue for the celebration of handloom day, due to its rich tradition of handlooms and to empower women and girls of the region.
 - More than 50% of total weavers population of India resides in Eastern and North Eastern region of the country.
- August 7 was chosen as the National handloom day to commemorate the Swadeshi movement which was based on the Gandhian ideology of Swadeshi.
 - Swadeshi movement was launched on 7th August, 1905 in Calcutta town hall to protest against the partition of Bengal (by the British Government) by reviving domestic products and production processes.
- The first National handloom day was inaugurated on 7th August 2015.
- National handloom day seeks to focus on the contribution of handloom to the socio-economic development of the country.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**Abolition of SAT: Orissa HC refuses stay on Centre's notification**

- The Orissa High Court directed both the Centre and the State to present their stand on abolition of the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) while refusing to put a stay on the notification which has already been issued by the central government.
- Hearing a writ petition filed by the SAT Bar Association challenging the Centre's August 5 notification scrapping the tribunal, the High Court has refused to stay the abolishment order and directed both the Centre and Odisha government to make their stand clear on the issue.
- The High Court has scheduled September 5 as the next date of hearing in the matter. The court said that the abolition of SAT will now allow litigants to file their cases in the High Court, however, it has also maintained that the government does not have any rights to transfer the old pending cases to the High Court.
- It may be noted that despite having a sanctioned strength of six members including a chairman, the tribunal had been functioning with only an acting chairman. The absence of members in the tribunal has led to pendency of over 70,000 cases.
- The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions on Monday issued a gazette notification for abolishing the SAT. The State government had earlier moved the Centre seeking its nod for scrapping the tribunal after getting permission from the Orissa High Court. The State cabinet had also approved winding up of the SAT in September 2015.
- However, a day after the notification was issued by the Centre, the SAT Bar Association challenged the move citing that the decision as 'illegal' and 'ultra-vires.'

QUOTE OF THE DAY

A setback is a set for a comeback.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: The tribunals perform an important and specialized role in justice delivery mechanism.

The 42nd Amendment Act 1976 inserted Part XIV-A to the Constitution of India consisting of Articles 323A and 323B establishing administrative tribunals.

- Article 323A: Provides for the establishment of Administrative Tribunals for adjudication or trial of disputes and complaints with respect to recruitment, conditions of service of persons appointed to public services and other allied matters.
- Article 323B: Makes provision for the creation of Tribunals for adjudication or trial of disputes, complaints or
- Offences connected with tax, foreign exchange, industrial and labour disputes, land reforms, ceiling on urban property, election to Parliament and State Legislatures, etc.

Parliament has power to enact any law under Article 323A while both Parliament and State Legislatures can make laws on matters of Article 323B, subject to their legislative competence. Further, Article 262(2) provides for the creation of tribunal to adjudicate the disputes relating to water of interstate rivers or valleys.

Advantages

- Inexpensive and speedy adjudication: Tribunals provide inexpensive and speedy relief to government servants in service matters. They are not bound by the strict rules which should be followed by the court i.e. rules of evidence; and are characterized by informality. Tribunals are provided special powers to work according to rules of natural justice.
- Specialization: Tribunals are constituted to dispense justice in special subjects thus affording specialization to achieve better adjudication e.g. Income Tax Administrative Tribunal (ITAT) is a quasi judicial institution set up in January, 1941 and specializes in dealing with appeals under the Direct Taxes Acts. Thus special tribunals are more suitable than ordinary courts for specialized adjudication.
- Relieving courts of pendency burden: Tribunals relieving judiciary of huge burden of the cases of High Court from their jurisdiction.
- Availability of writs against tribunals: The prerogative writs of certiorari and prohibition are available against the decisions of administrative tribunals. Hence tribunal cannot dispose the matters as final arbitrator. Thus, fundamental rights of individuals and power of higher judiciary are not compromised.
- However, tribunals also suffer from certain issues, such as:
 - Lack of independence due to procedure of appointment through selection committees.
 - High pendency of cases in some tribunals indicates that the objective of setting them up has not been achieved, as observed by Law Commission.

Conclusion

As welfare state has increasingly taken over itself extensive administrative activities, the specialized Administrative tribunals are required to adjudicate complex disputes which arise during exercise of functions. Therefore, necessary steps should be taken to ascertain independence of tribunals and mechanisms to ensure speedy disposal of cases.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. Consider the following statements w.r.t the recently published Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas.
 1. It is released by the UNCLoS.
 2. As per this report India is the most water-stressed country.
 Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2

2. Recently in news, the term 'Currency Manipulation' is related to which of the following?
 - (a) Foreign Trade**
 - (b) Monetary Policy
 - (c) Capital Market
 - (d) Direct Taxes

3. Which of the following statements is/are incorrect with reference to 'Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)',
 3. It was launched by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in April 2017.
 4. It measures quarterly changes of various labour market statistical indicators in urban areas and generates annual estimates of these indicators for both rural and urban areas.
 5. According to Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18, 6.1% of India's labour force, and 17.8% of young people in the labour force are unemployed.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 only**
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) 1 and 2
 - (d) 2 and 3

4. With reference to 'Aquaponics', which of the following statements is/are correct?
 1. It is an ecologically sustainable model that combines Hydroponics with Aquaculture.
 2. By using this model, both fish and plants can grow in one integrated ecosystem.
 3. It needs much lesser initial startup costs compared with soil production or hydroponics.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 1 and 2**
 - (c) 2 and 3
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3

5. Consider the following statements:
 1. India's first national Time Release Study (TRS) is being conducted by the Ministry of Shipping.
 2. TRS is specifically referred to in Article 7.6 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) as a tool for Members to measure and publish the average release time of goods.
 3. TRS is an internationally recognized tool advocated by the World Meteorological Organization to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of international trade flows.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only**
 - (c) 2 and 3
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3

6. Consider the following statement w.r.t Central Administrative Tribunal
 1. It was established on the basis of the 44th Constitutional Amendment Act
 2. It was established in 1985.
 3. The Chairman is a retired Chief Justice of a High Court.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 1 and 3
 - (c) 2 and 3**
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3

7. National Handloom Day is celebrated on which date?
 - (a) 5th August
 - (b) 7th August**
 - (c) 9th August
 - (d) 11th August