

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**India's First and Longest Sea Ropeway**

India's first and longest sea ropeway project that will connect Mumbai with the Elephanta Caves, is scheduled to start by the end of the year 2019.

- The 8-km ropeway will begin from Sewri in Mumbai's east coast and end at Raigad district's Elephanta Island.
- Need: The caves see an annual footfall of nearly seven lakh visitors and are one of the must-visit places around Mumbai. Presently, it takes around an hour for the 10-km cruise from Mumbai and vice versa.
- The 14-minute ride by 30-seater cable cars will give a major boost to tourism.
- It is Rs. 700 crore PPP (Public-Private Partnership) project which will be executed by the Mumbai Port Trust, under the Ministry of Shipping.

Elephanta Caves

- The Elephanta caves, located on the Elephanta Islands (in the Arabian Sea), off Mumbai, was declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1987.
- Known locally as Gharapuri Caves, these were constructed about the mid-5th to 6th centuries AD.
- The seven caves constitute one of the most striking collections of rock-art in India.
- There are two groups of caves. To the east, Stupa Hill (named because of a small brick Buddhist monument at the top) contains two caves, one of which is unfinished, and several cisterns.
- To the west, the larger group consists of five rock-cut Hindu shrines.
- The main cave is universally famous for its carvings to the glory of Shiva, who is exalted in various forms and actions. The cave consists of a square plan mandapa whose sides measure about 27 m.

GEOGRAPHY**Uranium mining**

- Joint Forum for People's Democratic Rights, a civil society group, is protesting against Uranium mining in Nallamala ranges in Andhra Pradesh. Protestors say Uranium mining in the forests would inevitably damage the delicate ecology of the region, and claimed that Chenchu tribes of the region would be immediately affected.
- The waste is generally buried inside the earth. However, protestors allege government is doing a sub-par job at management and the waste is exposed to human beings and ecology
- The rains in Nallamala will inevitably end up in Krishna River. If any of the waste washes down into the river, it will pollute the river to a large extent

Uranium Reserves:

- Jaduguda in Singhbhum Thrust Belt (in the state of Jharkhand) is the first uranium deposit to be discovered in India in 1951.
- Only 3% of power in the country is provided by uranium.
- Largest viable deposits are found in Australia, Kazakhstan, and Canada.
- The Chu-Sarysu basin in central Kazakhstan; Olympic Dam and the Ranger mine in Southern Australia are some of important mines in world.
- High-grade deposits are only found in the Athabasca Basin region of Canada.

Kajin Sara lake

- A newly-discovered lake in Nepal is likely to set a new record of being the world's highest lake
- As per the measurement of the lake taken by the team, it is located at an altitude of 5,200 metres, which is yet to be officially verified. It is estimated to be 1,500-metre-long and 600-metre-wide.
- Currently Tilicho Lake holds the title of the world's highest lake. It is situated at an altitude of 4,919 metres in Nepal.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas Campaign**

The central government has decided to launch the People's Plan Campaign, also known as "Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas" from September 2019. It aims to draw up Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) in the country and place them on a website where anyone can see the status of the various government's flagship schemes.

Background

- A pilot exercise conducted in 2018 suggests that a majority of the GPs scored between 41% and 50% on a scale of 100, showing glaring deficiencies.
 - Merely 0.1% and 0.6% GPs fell in the high 91-100 and 81-90 score respectively.
- A comparison of the performance among the larger states shows that Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, in that order, were the top scorers, while GPs in Jharkhand, Assam, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh were at the bottom.
- A recent study of 100 randomly chosen GPs by National Institute of Rural Development has shown that several GP has reported improvements while others have slipped down over the past year. A fresh survey is, therefore, significant.

Gram Panchayat Development Plans

- Gram Panchayats have been mandated for the preparation of GPDP for economic development and social justice utilizing the resources available to them.
- The GPDP planning process will be comprehensive and participatory by involving full convergence with the schemes of all related Central Ministries / Line Departments.
- The People's Plan Campaign initiated under "Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas" is an intensive and structured exercise for planning at Gram Sabha through convergence between Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and concerned departments of the State.

About the process

- Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) will include 48 indicators covering various aspects such as health and sanitation, education etc.
- After each GP is scored out of 100 — with 30 marks for infrastructure, 30 marks for human development, and 40 marks for economic activity— the GPs will be ranked.
- The data on the 48 indicators would come from Census 2011 (for physical infrastructure), Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (for Household-level deprivation data), and fresh survey starting in September 2019 that will be carried out by local facilitators.
- The score for each GP will reflect the local needs and priorities.
 - For instance, for a drought-prone area, water conservation would be accorded the highest priority.
 - Within this ranking, households suffering the worst deprivations would be prioritised further.
- The entire ranking exercise is meant to identify the gaps at the GP level, make an assessment of where it stands, and accordingly plan the interventions.

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

Recently, the Conference on e-Governance was held in Shillong, Meghalaya. The Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG), in association with Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India has adopted the Shillong Declaration.

Shillong Declaration Highlights

- Timely implementation of India Enterprise Architecture (IndEA) and implementing a single sign-on for interoperability and integration among e-Government applications throughout the country.
- Common application software across states.
- Ensure improvement in ease of living and ease of doing business by shifting from the role of government from Service Provider to Service Enabler, such as Unified Payment Interface (UPI).
- Improving telecommunication connectivity in the North Eastern States by formulating and implementing a comprehensive telecom development plan.
- Improving the Electronics Sector Skill Council in the North-Eastern States and explore the possibility of opening an electronics skill centre in Shillong.
- Promote the use of e-Office and move towards less paper State Secretariats in the North-Eastern States and in the District level offices.
- Improve the quality of delivery of e-Services in the North East to fulfill the vision of improved citizen experience.
- Develop India as a global cloud hub and facilitate the development of Government applications and databases on Cloud by default.
- Adopt emerging technologies for finding e-Governance solutions.

- Promote the Digital India Projects with a focus on Smart Cities and Smart Villages through Start-ups and Smart Entrepreneurship.

SBM 2.0 focussed on ODF sustainability: Govt

Nearly 93.1% of rural Indian households have access to toilets and 96.5% of these toilets are in constant usage, according to the second edition of NARSS in 2018-19

SBM 2.0

- Sustaining investment on ODF
- Faecal sludge management dedicated programme, which will ensure that each district will have FSTP (faecal sludge treatment plant)
- Plastic waste management by creating material recovery facility and plastic treatment and management facility in each gram panchayat
- Solid and liquid waste management support to villages for safe disposal of solid and liquid waste
- Investing funds for behaviour change through IEC (Information, Education and Communication) -exercise, training masons to promote retrofitting of toilets and panchayat pradhans to sustain ODF status

Way ahead

- The government should make a paradigm shift from IEC to BCC – behaviour change communication approach
- While IEC collects information on the use of toilets, BCC talks about underlying factors of why they are not using the toilets and tries to address them through behavioural science

B2B: The NARSS is a third-party survey that was conducted by the Independent Verification Agency (IVA) under the World Bank support project.

‘Samagra Shiksha-Jal Suraksha’

The Department of School Education & Literacy, MHRD has launched the ‘Samagra Shiksha-Jal Suraksha’ drive to promote water conservation activities for School Students.

Five Major Objectives:

- To educate Students learn about conservation of water
- To sensitize Students about the impact of scarcity of water
- To empower Students to learn to protect the natural sources of water
- To help every Student to save at least one litre of water per day
- To encourage Students towards judicious use and minimum wastage of water at home and school level

Target

- | | | | | |
|---------------|---|----------|---|------------------------------|
| • One Student | – | One Day | – | To Save One Litre of Water |
| • One Student | – | One Year | – | To Save 365 Litres of Water |
| • One Student | – | 10 Years | – | To Save 3650 Litres of Water |

INDIAN ECONOMY

Stimulus Package to Reverse Economic Slowdown

Recently, many economic indicators have pointed to a sharp slowdown in demand, both in rural and urban India.

- For instance, the automobile sector is facing a prolonged slump in demand, leading to massive job losses.
- In this context, the government looks to reverse economic slowdown with a stimulus package.

Reasons for the Slowdown

- India's merchandise exports have contracted, signalling the impact of US-China trade war.
- Poor sentiment in the equity markets and in the banking sector have led to stalling the investment in India.
- With domestic economic activity remaining weak, while the global slowdown and trade tensions have intensified, there are further chances of intensification of this slowdown.
- In this scenario, the industry has demanded a stimulus package of Rs. 1 trillion to initiate an investment cycle amid slowing global and domestic slowdown.
- The government realized that the tight fiscal policy is proving to be counterproductive and that monetary policy alone is not enough to spur economic growth.
 - Therefore, it has laid down a set of measures including tax cuts and targeted sops, to reverse an economic downturn.

Proposed Measures

- The stimulus package will include Rs 100 trillion infrastructure investment over the next five years
- Goods and Services Tax (GST) relief to specific sectors, including the automobile sector, that could boost demand.
- Reduce Red tape on cross-border trade and improve ease of doing business.
- The government also held that, in an effort to boost exports, it is working on a new World Trade Organization-compliant duty reimbursement scheme.

Significance

- Earlier Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act constrained the government from providing a fiscal push in the Union budget.
- But the government is considering the use of escape clause (in the FRBM Act) for deviation in the fiscal deficit up to 50 basis points.
 - It may give the government leeway to spend an additional Rs. 1.15 trillion in the current fiscal.
- Escape Clause: The panel led by N.K. Singh to review the FRBM Act had suggested an escape clause, allowing deviations up to 0.5 percentage points of Gross Domestic Product, based on triggers including far-reaching structural reforms in the economy with unanticipated fiscal implications, acts of war and farm distress.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Mobile Application to Aid Farmers**

- Government to launch a new mobile application, “Uber for tractors”, which will help in hiring of expensive agricultural equipment.
- Customer Hiring Centres (CHCs) will be connected with the help of this app, just like the Uber connects an individual with cabs.
- There are now more than 38,000 custom hiring centres (CHCs) across the country, which rent out 2.5 lakh pieces of farm equipment every year.
- The app will show the CHCs which have the equipment available within 5, 20 and 50 km of location, with their rates.

Benefits

- Informed Decisions: Feedback from both the CHC and the farmers will allow customers to make informed decisions.
- Database: The app will also create an invaluable database for policy-makers, who can track the use and cost of equipment.
- Promotion of New Technology: The system would also help to track the usage of new technology that the government wants to promote, such as the Happy Seeder that aims to prevent stubble burning that causes air pollution, or solar dryers that can help farmers process and preserve their produce.

EDITORIALS**Rethinking water governance strategies**

India's severe 'water crisis' is in the news recently. India's cities are running out of water. Chennai witnessed the worst drinking water woes.

Facts

- Niti Aayog's report 'Composite Water Management Index: A tool for water management' stated that 21 major cities are expected to run out of groundwater as soon as 2020, affecting nearly 100 million people.
- The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has been reporting on the increasing number of over-exploited blocks across India, labeled as the 'dark' category blocks. The recent annual book of CGWB has reported 1,034 units, out of the 6,584 units it monitors, as over-exploited.
- CGWB's 2013 estimates say that the groundwater development in India is just about 62% of the utilizable groundwater reserves.
- A recent report by the Central Water Commission and ISRO asserted that India is not yet in "water scarcity condition", but in a "water-stressed condition", with reducing per capita water availability.

Way ahead

- Ensure adequate access to quality water, more so in urban areas where inequities over space and time are acute.
- With rapid urbanization, demand cannot be met by groundwater reserves alone. Groundwater meets just 10% of Delhi's drinking water needs. The rest is met by surface water sources transported from outside Delhi.
- Water resource departments in States are following conventional approaches to supply augmentation. They should reorient themselves and deploy demand management, conservation, and regulation strategies.
- Centre and states should work towards an institutional change by building federal governance of water resources.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**High IPS vacancies playing Havoc in Odisha; situation to worsen in 2020**

- With filling of a mere 5 vacancies at the IPS level in 2018 and a mere 3 in 2017, Odisha is the only State in the country where the vacancy level of IPS officers, especially at the cutting-edge level of SPs or DIGs, has been among the worst in the country. What looks scary is the situation is going to worsen by 2020, because, the present in-position IPS strength would shrink to below 100 by then from 109 now. The reason: Around 9 more retirements are due by 2020, informed a highly placed source in the State home department.
- The scenario has turned acute not because the direct IPS recruit size in Odisha over the years has fallen, but for non-filing of the promotion quota to IPS cadre from the State police services. The promotion-quota vacancies have grown over the years. The vacancies now are 57 vis-a-vis of 48 in 2010. And the reason: Non-availability of appropriate officers at the DSP level in Odisha for graduating to IPS cadre.

Why the situation has come to such a pass?

- The answer is not far to seek. An inspector-level official after rising to DSP level via promotion have to fulfill the condition of a minimum 8-yr long stint at DSP level in order to qualify to the IPS cadre. However, what was witnessed is by then he/she is well past the maximum age-limit of 54 years – the age bar to become eligible for promotion to IPS level.

What's the way out?

- Odisha Government could tide over the enormity by transferring its promotion quota to the Centre for making direct recruits, and when State would become capable to bring in its promotion-quota, it could re-align the cadre vacancies then, explained a senior official.

What is the fallout of the IPS vacancy on law and order machinery?

- State government has brought in 'ex-cadre' or SDR (State Deputation Reserve) postings to such cutting-edge level posts, which play vital role in crime volume control, direction and supervision in State.
- It is well known that an officer on deputation could bend to any extent when the powers-that-be wish so, observed a senior Home Department official. He informed that against the authorised strength of SDR totalling over 21, the in-position men stood at around 30 now. Moreover, when the norm is SDR men can hold the office for only 2-years only, some are still enjoying their postings beyond the prescribed time-period.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Instead of worrying about what you cannot control, shift your energy to what you can create.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. How could social influence and persuasion contribute to the success of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan? (UPSC Mains 2016- GS4)

Ans:

Through persuasion and social influence an audience is intentionally encouraged to adopt an idea, attitude, or course of action by symbolic means utilizing words, images, sounds, etc. This is because the thoughts, behavior and action of people are influenced by other people in their environment.

The role of persuasion and social influence in the success of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan (SBA) is particularly important. The SBA was launched to accelerate the efforts to achieve universal sanitation coverage and to put an end to open defecation. Ending open defecation while on one-hand requires construction of toilets at mega speed, on the other hand it also requires persuading the households to actually use them. Sanitation in India is a behavioral issue which would require a change in mindset of people to adopt safe practices. For this, people need to be educated about the hazards of open defecation.

Persuasive messages via television, radio, Internet or face-to-face communication featuring filmstars, sportspersons and other celebrities exhorting people to change their habits by explaining the damage of poor personal hygiene, littering and open defecation to health of all citizens can go a long way in causing a behavioral change.

The target of SBM to make India ODF by 2nd Oct 2019 has been partially fulfilled. Since its launch in 2014 so many iconic personalities have been tagged by the boot to reach the common people. Financial assistance creating awareness has been supplemented by social influence in a great way in the progress of the programme.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. India's first and the longest Ropeway project is to be constructed in which state?
 - (a) Gujarat
 - (b) West Bengal
 - (c) Maharastra
 - (d) Telengana
2. Consider the following statements about the Elephanta Caves.
 1. It is locally known as Gharapuri Caves
 2. It was declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1987.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Consider the following statements w.r.t Uranium.
 1. Singhbhum Thrust Belt is the first uranium deposit to be discovered in India .
 2. Olympic Dam and the Ranger mine in Canada are Uranium Reserves.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 - (a) **1 only**
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Which of the following lakes is the highest lake in the world?
 - (a) Lake Kaji
 - (b) **Lake Tilicho**
 - (c) Lake Wular
 - (d) Lake Ojos Del Salado
5. W.r.t the 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas', which of the following statements is/are incorrect?
 1. It aims to draw up District Development Plans in the country.
 2. It is an intensive and structured exercise for planning at district level through convergence between urban local governments and concerned departments of the State.
 3. The entire exercise is meant to identify the gaps at the Gram Panchayat level, make an assessment of where it stands, and accordingly plan the interventions.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) **1 and 2**
 - (c) 3 only
 - (d) 2 and 3
6. W.r.t the 'Customer Hiring Centres (CHCs) ', which of the following statements is/are correct?
 1. Customer Hiring Centres (CHCs) are basically a unit providing insurance services to marginal farmers.
 2. Ideally, the CHCs should be located within a radius of 5 to 7 kms of land holdings.
 3. CHCs aims to reduce the transport cost and time of transport of agricultural machinery.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 1 and 2
 - (c) 3 only
 - (d) **2 and 3**
7. W.r.t the 'National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj', which of the following statements is/are correct?
 1. Established in 1968, the Institute is located at Nagpur in Maharashtra.
 2. In addition to the main campus, this Institute has North-Eastern Regional Centre at Guwahati, Assam to meet the NE-regional needs.
 3. It is recognized internationally as one of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Centres of Excellence.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) 1 and 3
 - (d) **2 and 3**