

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman**

The President of India has awarded the selected scholars with the Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman for the year 2019.

- The Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman was instituted by the Government of India to honour young scholars, aged 30-45 years, in recognition of their significant contribution in the field of Persian, Arabic, Pali, Prakrit and Classical Indian languages.
- As of now, six languages i.e. Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Odia have been given the status of classical languages.
- The criteria evolved by the Government to determine declaration of a language as a Classical language is as under:
 - High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years.
 - A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers.
 - The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community.
 - The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

Kondapalli Toys

- Kondapalli toys, cultural icons of Andhra Pradesh, are one of the most sold handicrafts in India and abroad, across online, wholesale, and retail platforms.
- The 'Tella Poniki' wood gives the toys a unique character. No other wood can be a replacement to make these toys as Tella Poniki is malleable and can be easily chiseled into the desired shape.
- Kondapalli Toys have been granted the Geographical Indications (GI) tag.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**SUPRA Scheme**

- The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) has proposed a new scheme, Scientific and Useful Profound Research Advancement (SUPRA) with the objective of funding exploration of new scientific and engineering breakthroughs with global impact.
- The scheme will fund disruptive ideas that can lead to new areas of study, new scientific concepts, new products and technologies.
- The focus is not on incremental or short-term advances in understanding, but new science or truly disruptive technologies.
- The scheme is designed to attract high quality research proposals consisting of new hypotheses or challenge existing ones and provide 'out-of-box' solutions.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**WTO to rule on India sugar export subsidies**

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) has set up panels to rule on complaints by Australia, Brazil and Guatemala against India's export subsidies for sugar and sugarcane producers.
- The three countries have claimed that India provides trade-distorting production subsidies including soft loans and subsidies to maintain stocks of sugar and tax rebates.
- Australia has held India responsible for contributing to oversupply in the international sugar market. The production of sugar in India has increased from 22 million tonnes in 2016-17 to 34 million tonnes in 2017-18 thereby contributing to a surplus of 12 million tonnes.
- Brazil has charged India with intensifying various support programmes for the sugar sector including higher minimum prices for sugarcane. Brazil has said that mandating the mills to export 5 million tonnes of sugar has led to substantial pricing pressures on world market prices.

- However, India has disagreed with the claims made by the three countries. It said that its sugar-support programmes are aimed at assisting over 35 million vulnerable low-income resource-poor farmers to have a just and equitable share in economic development.
- Further, India has also maintained that its measures were consistent with global trade rules, and did not create any adverse effect in the global sugar market.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Saturation Campaign

Recently, banks have kickstarted a Kisan Credit Card (KCC) saturation campaign, for giving Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans to farmers who have not been given such loans.

- According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, currently there are 6.92 crore live KCCs, against 14.5 crore operational landholdings.
- The scheme comes with an ATM-enabled RuPay debit card with facilities for one-time documentation, built-in cost escalation in the limit, and any number of drawals within the limit.
- Besides ensuring saturation, banks will also be taking steps to link Aadhaar immediately as no interest subvention will be given if the Aadhaar numbers are not seeded to KCC accounts.
- Also, the government has taken several initiatives for KCC saturation which include adding farmers engaged in animal husbandry and fisheries, no processing fee of loan under KCC and raising limit of collateral free agriculture loan from ₹ 1 lakh to ₹ 1.6 lakh.

Kisan Credit Card

- The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme was introduced in 1998 for providing adequate and timely credit support from the banking system under a single window with flexible and simplified procedure to the farmers for their cultivation and other needs like purchase of agriculture inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. and draw cash for their production needs.
- The scheme was further extended for the investment credit requirement of farmers viz. allied and non-farm activities in the year 2004.
- KCC covers post-harvest expenses, produce marketing loan, consumption requirements of farmer household, working capital for maintenance of farm assets and activities allied to agriculture, investment credit requirement for agriculture and allied activities.
- The Kisan Credit Card Scheme is implemented by Commercial Banks, RRBs, Small Finance Banks and Cooperatives.

Agritech Startups

According to a recent NASSCOM report, yearly growth of agritech startups in India has been at a rate of 25%.

- India is home to more than 450 startups in the agriculture technology sector, of the global total of about 3,100.
- With Indian farmers facing post harvest losses amounting to Rs 93,000 crore, these agritech startups can address this issue with demand driven cold chains, warehouse monitoring solutions and market linkages that can significantly boost farmer income.
- Agritech startups such as Ninjacart and Crofarm are creating direct market linkages through digital platforms

Applications of Agritech Startups

- These could support evolving business areas such as farm to fork (Direct delivery of produce from farmers to markets).
- Innovations like image sensing for quality grading.
- Storage monitoring based on the Internet of Things.
- Digitisation of mandis, as well as farmer producer organisations.
- Solving farmers' credit issues (providing low cost digital loans using virtual credit cards to farmers).
- Increase crop productivity by using big data analytics.

- Artificial Intelligence and remote sensing to improve land management, crop cycle monitoring and harvest traceability.

Tax Administration

- All notices and orders of Income Tax Department issued on or after the 1st of October, 2019 shall carry a computer-generated Document Identification Number (DIN)
- It was found that majority of IT notices/orders have been issued manually, without maintaining a proper audit trail of such communication
- The initiative of DIN is intended to maintain proper audit trail of all such communication from IT department
- Under exceptional cases where manual communication is required to be issued, the reason for issue of manual communication without DIN has to be specified alongwith the date of obtaining written approval of the Chief Commissioner / Director General of Income-Tax.
- This is step taken by CBDT will bring greater transparency in the functioning of the tax-administration and improvement in service delivery

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Microplastics in Snow

The study conducted by scientists at Germany's Alfred Wegener Institute and Switzerland's Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research has found that microplastic particles can be transported tremendous distances through the atmosphere.

Course of microplastics

- Every year, several million tonnes of plastic litter course through rivers and out to the oceans, where they are gradually broken down into smaller fragments through the motion of waves and ultraviolet light of the sun.
- The smaller fragments less than five millimeters long are termed as microplastics.
- Winds and thermal currents carry microplastics into the atmosphere from the sea and land.
- Microplastics in the atmosphere are trapped by the clouds and the falling snow.
- Minute microplastic particles have been detected in the Arctic and the Alps. Samples from ice floes (sheet of floating ice) on the ocean between Greenland and Svalbard contained an average of 1,760 microplastic particles per litre.
- The team's hypothesis for airborne transportation builds on past research conducted on pollen, where experts confirmed that pollen from near the equator ends up in the Arctic.

DEFENCE

Chief of Defence Staff

The Prime Minister has announced the establishment of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) for the three services – the Indian Army, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force.

- The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) is a post that will act as the single-point advisor to the Government of India.
- It will synergise long term planning, procurement, training and logistics of the three Services, and ensure better coordination between them.
- The creation of a CDS to act as a single point military adviser to the Prime Minister on strategic issues was one of the key recommendations of the Kargil review committee on higher military reforms after the 1999 conflict.

Need for Chief of Defence Staff

- Incoherency: In general, the policy formulation is done by Defense Secretary, who is a bureaucrat, while its execution rests with Chiefs of armed forces. This makes defence policy incoherent.
- Modern Warfare: The emergence of modern warfare domains like Space, Cyber etc, requires a more integrated approach to defense strategy.
- A group of ministers that was formed in 2001 to explore necessary reforms required to improve India's national security had also favoured creating the post of Chief of Defence Staff.

- In 2012 Naresh Chandra task force recommended the appointment of a permanent chairman of chiefs of staff committee.
- The permanent chairman of chiefs of staff committee is the senior most of the three Chiefs.
- The CDS is also one of the 99 recommendations made by the Lt. General D.B. Shekatkar (retd.) committee (2016).

Significance

- The creation of the CDS will eventually lead to the formation of tri-service theatre commands intended to create vertical integration of the three forces.
- This is expected to save money by avoiding duplication between the Services, at a time of shrinking capital expenditure within the defence budget.
- It will help India in Defense diplomacy.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Only I can change my life. No one can do it for me.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Examine the need for the creation of the office of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff to provide “effective leadership at the top level” to the three wings of the armed forces, and to help improve coordination among them.

The CDS is a high military office that oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services, and offers seamless tri-service views and single-point advice to the Executive (in India’s case, to the Prime Minister) on long-term defence planning and management, including manpower, equipment and strategy, and above all, “joints manship” in operations.

Why had India not appointed a CDS until now?

- India has had a feeble equivalent known as the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC); but this is a toothless office, given the manner in which it is structured.
- The senior most among the three Service Chiefs is appointed to head the CoSC, an office that lapses with the incumbent’s retirement.
- The current Chairman CoSC is Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, who succeeded the former Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba on May 31.
- When ACM Dhanoa retires at the end of September 2019, he would have served as Chairman CoSC for a mere four months.
- In 2015, then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar had described the CoSC arrangement as “unsatisfactory”, and its Chairman as a “figurehead”.
- The post did not further tri-service integration, resulting in inefficiency and an expensive duplication of assets
- The CoSC system is a leftover from the colonial era, with only minor changes being carried out over the years. Apprehensions in the political class about a powerful military leader, along with inter-Services bickering, have long worked to disincentivise the upgrade of the post.

Background:

- The first proposal for a CDS came from the 2000 Kargil Review Committee (KRC), which called for a reorganisation of the “entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Headquarters”.
- The Group of Ministers Task Force that studied the KRC Report and recommendations proposed to the Cabinet Committee on Security that a CDS, who would be five-star officer, be created.
- In preparation for the post, the government created the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) in late 2002, which was to eventually serve as the CDS’s Secretariat. However, over the past 17 years, this has remained yet another nebulous department within the military establishment.

But what happened to the proposal?

- No consensus emerged among the Services, with the IAF especially opposed to such a move. The Congress, then in opposition, was against the idea of concentrating too much military power in the CDS's post.
- The Ministry of Defence (MoD) too, opposed it subtly for the same reasons, and because it could disrupt civil-military ties in the latter's favour.
- The smaller Air Force and Navy fear that the CDS would be from the Army, by far the largest Service. The IAF has long argued that unlike the United States and other western militaries, the Indian Services are not an expeditionary force, for which a CDS is a necessity.
- The appointment of a CDS would also lead to theatre commands, another aspect that the IAF opposes, fearing a diminution of its operational role.
- In 2011, more than a decade after the KRC Report, the UPA government, led by the Congress, which had opposed the CDS proposal when in opposition, set up the Naresh Chandra Committee on defence and security.
- The 14-member Committee, comprising retired Service Chiefs and other defence experts, suggested a watered-down version of the CDS proposal, in which the Chairman CoSC in the rank of a four-star officer would have a fixed tenure of two years.
- He would have significantly more authority and powers than the Chairman CoSC, and would be a CDS in all but name.

What is the case for having a CDS?

- Although the KRC did not directly recommend a CDS — that came from the GoM — it underlined the need for more coordination among the three Services, which was poor in the initial weeks of the Kargil conflict.
- The KRC Report pointed out that India is the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters is outside the apex governmental structure. It observed that Service Chiefs devote most of their time to their operational roles, “often resulting in negative results”. Long-term defence planning suffers as day-to-day priorities dominate.
- Also, the Prime Minister and Defence Minister do not have the benefit of the views and expertise of military commanders, in order to ensure that higher level defence management decisions are more consensual and broad based.
- The CDS is also seen as being vital to the creation of “theatre commands”, integrating tri-service assets and personnel like in the US military. India has 17 Service commands at different locations and duplicating assets.
- In 2016, China integrated its military and other police and paramilitaries into five theatres from the earlier seven area commands, each with its own inclusive headquarters, one of which has responsibility for the Indian border. In contrast, India's border with China is split between the Eastern, Western, and Northern Commands.

What are the arguments against?

- Theoretically, the appointment of a CDS is long overdue, but there appears to be no clear blueprint for the office to ensure its effectiveness. India's political establishment is seen as being largely ignorant of, or at best indifferent towards, security matters, and hence incapable of ensuring that a CDS works.
- Militaries by nature tend to resist transformation. In the US, the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act elevated the Chairman from first among equals to the “principal military advisor” to the President and the Secretary of Defence.
- In the Indian context, critics fear, the absence of foresight and understanding might end up making the CDS just another case of “jobs for the boys”.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQ

1. Consider the following statements:
 1. The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme was introduced in 2015 for providing adequate and timely credit support from the banking system to the farmers.
 2. The scheme also provides an ATM-enabled RuPay debit card.
 3. It is mandatory to link Aadhaar with KCC account to avail interest subvention under the scheme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

 - (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) 2 and 3 only**
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
2. The recently launched scheme SUPRA is related to which among the following:
 - (a) It is a scheme under which adolescent women are given vocational training under Skill India programme.
 - (b) It is a scheme under the Ministry of Women and Child Development for rehabilitation of destitute widows.
 - (c) It is a scheme initiated by ISRO through which it aims to constantly engage youngsters across India to capture their scientific temperament.
 - (d) It is a scheme by Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) with the objective of funding exploration of new scientific and engineering breakthroughs with global impact.**
3. With reference to 'Strategic Forces Command', consider the following statements:
 1. Strategic Forces Command is the only integrated theatre command in India.
 2. It was created in 2003 to look after the delivery and operational control of the country's nuclear assets.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only**
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. The term 'Tella Poniki' recently in the news, is a type of:
 - (a) Wood**
 - (b) Post-Harvest Festival
 - (c) Folk Dance
 - (d) None of the above
5. "Madrid System" is recently in news, which of the following related to Madrid System?
 - (a) Trade Mark**
 - (b) Geographical Indication
 - (c) Trade secrets
 - (d) Industrial Designs
6. Which of the following languages are listed in the Indian Classical Language?
 1. Kannada
 2. Malayalam
 3. Odia

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**
7. Recently in news the Kondapalli Toys belongs to which of the following south Indian states?
 - (a) Tamil Nadu
 - (b) Telengana
 - (c) Andhra Pradesh**
 - (d) Karnataka