

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Govt may bring in ordinance to ban manufacture and sale of e-cigarettes**

The Union cabinet is likely to approve an ordinance prohibiting the manufacture and sale of e-cigarettes.

About E-Cigarettes:

- E-cigarettes are also known as Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS).
- They are battery powered devices that work by heating a liquid into an aerosol that the user inhales and exhales.
- The e-cigarette liquid typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerin, flavorings, and other chemicals.

Concerns on E-Cigarettes:

- E-cigarettes contain nicotine which may lead to new tobacco addiction.
- E-cigarettes causes respiratory, cardiovascular and neurological disorders and adverse impact on foetal development and pregnancy.
- According to WHO report, nicotine itself is not a carcinogen. But it may function as a tumour promoter and seems to be involved in the biology of malignant disease as well as of neuro-degeneration.

Regulations on E-Cigarettes:

- As e-cigarettes contain nicotine and not tobacco, they do not fall within the ambit of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA).
- The COTPA act mandates stringent health warnings on the packaging and advertisements of tobacco products.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Indian Skill Development Service (ISDS)**

The first batch of the Indian Skill Development Services (ISDS) commenced their training program at the Administrative Training Institute (ATI), Mysuru.

About:

- Indian Skill Development Services (ISDS) is the newest central government services. The ISDS has 263 all India posts. The cadre comprises of 3 posts at Senior Administrative Grade, 28 posts at Junior Administrative Grade, 120 posts at Senior Time Scale and 112 posts at Junior Time Scale.
- This service has been specially created for the Training Directorate of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and is a Group 'A' service.
- This is the first batch which is joining the ISDS cadre from the Indian Engineering Service Examination conducted by UPSC.
- The induction of young talent as ISDS officers is one of the special initiatives taken by the MSDE to attract young and talented administrators towards institutionalizing the Skill Development environment in the country.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Hezbollah**

Lebanon's Hezbollah says it has shot down an Israeli unmanned aircraft outside the southern town of Ramyah as it was heading towards the town.

About:

- Hezbollah is Lebanon's most powerful Shia movement.
- Hezbollah has three ministers in government and is represented in the Lebanese parliament. It has a strongly-armed wing, with its forces fighting in Syria in support of President Bashar al-Assad's troops.
- Israel considers Hezbollah as the most potent military threat on its border. Hezbollah and Israel fought a month-long war in 2006. The border between the two countries, which remain technically in a state of war, has been mostly calm since.

- Hezbollah has been designated by the U.S. and Israel as a terrorist organisation. In 2013, EU foreign ministers banned Hezbollah's military wing but not its political work in Europe. As a result, sanctions can be imposed on its military leaders.

24th World Energy Congress

The 24th World Energy Congress commenced in Abu Dhabi under the patronage of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates.

What is World energy congress?

- With over 150 countries represented, it is the world's largest and most influential energy event covering all aspects of the energy agenda.
- Running since 1924, the triennial World Energy Congress enables dialogue amongst Ministers, CEOs, policy-makers and industry practitioners on critical developments in the energy sector.

24th World Energy Congress:

- The 24th World Energy Congress will take place in Abu Dhabi at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, United Arab Emirates from 9-12 September 2019.
- The theme of this World Energy Congress is Energy for Prosperity which also represents the ambitious and dynamic energy transition of the country.

7th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Ministerial Meeting

Recently, the 7th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Ministerial Meeting was held in Bangkok to review developments in the RCEP negotiations.

- The trade deal is being negotiated by the 10-members from ASEAN group with their six free trade pact partners namely Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand.
- Once implemented, it would result in one of the largest free trade bloc accounting for 45% of the world's population, and a combined GDP of about \$21.3 trillion and 40% of the world trade.
- About 25 rounds of talks have been concluded so far but the members are yet to finalise the number of goods on which customs duty will be eliminated.
- Issues related Service sector are also to be finalised as India is demanding greater flexibility to promote trade in services among RCEP Countries.

Motihari-Amalekhgunj petroleum pipeline

Indian Prime Minister and Nepal Prime Minister will inaugurate the Motihari Amlekhgunj petroleum pipeline.

About the pipeline:

- The Motihari-Amlekhgunj oil pipeline project was first proposed in 1996. However, the project finally started during Indian Prime Minister's visit to Nepal in 2014.
- The project is a 69-kilometre long petroleum pipeline which connects Motihari (Bihar) to Amlekhgunj (Nepal).
- The project has been constructed by India. This is the first transnational petroleum pipeline from India and first South Asian oil pipeline corridor.
- The pipeline will drastically reduce the cost of transporting fuel to landlocked Nepal from India.
- The Amlekhgunj fuel depot will have the capacity to store up to 16,000 kilolitres of petroleum products.
- The project will also ensure smooth, cost-effective and environmentally friendly supply of petroleum products to Nepal and will also help in tackling the oil storage problem in Nepal.

INDIAN ECONOMY

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) announced the rollout of Aadhaar enabled Payment Services (AePS) at the first anniversary of its business operations.

About:

- With AePS services any common person with a bank account linked to Aadhaar can perform basic banking services such as cash withdrawals and balance enquiry irrespective of the bank they hold their account with.

- This gives a strong boost to the Centre's efforts in expanding access to financial services for millions of unbanked and underbanked customers.
- With this launch, IPPB has become the single largest platform in the country for providing interoperable banking services to customers of any bank by leveraging the last mile unprecedented reach of the Postal network.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)

- India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has been established under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communication with 100% equity owned by Government of India.
- IPPB was launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 1, 2018.
- IPPB has achieved the milestone of 1 Crore customers.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Desertification

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the High Level Segment of the 14th Conference of Parties (COP14) of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

Key highlights of his speech:

- During his address, the Prime Minister announced that between now and 2030, India will raise target of restoring land with degraded status from 21 million hectares to 26 million by 2030.
- He also announced India's proposal to setup a global technical support institute for the member countries of the UNCCD for their capacity building and support regarding the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Program.
- Acknowledging the importance of the role of water, he called upon the leadership of UNCCD to conceive a "Global Water Action Agenda" which is central to the Land Degradation Neutrality strategy.
- PM said that in order to further develop a scientific approach and facilitate induction of technology to land degradation issues, we have decided to set up a centre for excellence in India at the Indian Council for Forest Research and Education.

Augmenting Nature By Green Affordable New-Habitat (ANGAN)

A three-day long international conference ANGAN (Augmenting Nature by Green Affordable New-habitat) focussed on Energy Efficiency in Building Sector began in New Delhi.

About:

- The Conference is being organised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power, Government of India in collaboration with GIZ under the Indo German Technical Cooperation.
- Experts and Policy Makers across 16 countries are participating in the event to discuss various technologies in the field of design and construction of energy efficient Commercial as well as Residential Buildings and suggest ways in implementing the same.
It is estimated that an investment of Rs. 2000 billion in Building energy efficiency activities would lead to a cumulative savings of 388 Billion units of electricity for the next ten years with payback of about 2 years.

National Conference on Crop Residue Management

Recently, National Conference on Crop Residue Management was held for the farmers from the states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh & Delhi.

- The conference was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in collaboration with Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in order to address concerns of farmers and State Governments.
- The straw burning incidents in 2018 have reduced by 15% and 41% as compared to that in 2017 and 2016 respectively.
- The conference has proposed to intensify In-Situ Management of Crop Residue to stop the straw burning.
- The multilingual Mobile App "Custom Hiring Centre (CHC) Farm Machinery" has also been launched for the farmers.

- Custom Hiring Centre (CHC) Farm Machinery Mobile App: It will connect the farmers with Custom Hiring Service Centres in their area.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

- It is an autonomous body responsible for coordinating agricultural education and research in India.
- It reports to the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- The Union Minister of Agriculture serves as its president.
- It is the largest network of agricultural research and education institutes in the world.

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

National Genomic Grid (Cancer)

Union Minister for Health said that the government has plans to set up a National Genomic Grid, so as to take cancer research to the next level and make treatment viable for people of different economic classes.

About:

- The National Genomic Grid for India-specific cancer research will collect samples from cancer patients to study genomic factors influencing cancer and identifying the right treatment modalities for the Indian population.
- The grid will have four parts, with the country divided into east, west, north and south.
- The grid to be formed will be in line with the National Cancer Tissue Biobank (NCTB) set up at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. The NCTB is functioning in close association with the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR).

DEFENCE

Integrated Battle Groups on Pakistan, China borders soon

Indian Army is planning to raise Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) along the borders with Pakistan and China that will help it carry out swift strikes in case of war.

About Integrated Battle groups:

- IBGs are brigade-sized, agile, self-sufficient combat formations which can swiftly launch strikes against adversary in case of hostilities.
- Each IBG would be tailor-made based on Threat, Terrain and Task and resources will be allotted based on the three Ts.
- They need to be light so they will be low on logistics and they will be able to mobilise within 12-48 hrs based on the location.
- The IBGs will also be defensive and offensive. While the offensive IBGs would quickly mobilise and make thrust into enemy territory for strikes,
- On the other hand, the defensive IBGs would hold ground at vulnerable points or where enemy action is expected. The composition of the IBGs would also depend on this.
- How is it different from existing formations?
- IBGs ensure better integration and self-sufficiency as compared to the existing formations, allowing it to strike harder and quicker across the border.
- A brigade during hostilities has to wait to be augmented by different types of units which increases the time to mobilise.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns Discuss the global efforts of combating desertification and land degradation.

Ans

As per United Nations Convention for Combating Desertification (UNCCD), Desertification is defined as land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors including climatic variations and human activities. Here “land” means the terrestrial bio-productive system and “land degradation” means reduction or loss of biological or economic productivity and complexity of rainfed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns, such as:

- Soil erosion caused by wind and/or water;
- Deterioration of the physical, chemical and biological or economic properties of soil; and
- Long term loss of natural vegetation.

Efforts for Combating Desertification

- Desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity were identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit which paved the way for the conceptualization and formulation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the only legally binding international agreement linking environment and development issues to the land agenda. The Convention’s 195 parties, including India, work together to improve the living conditions for people in drylands, maintain and restore land and soil productivity and mitigate the effects of drought.
- India is signatory to the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) and is committed to achieve the land degradation neutral status by 2030. In order to achieve these objectives, the Government of India is implementing large number of National Level Programmes and Schemes in the country. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal Ministry for the implementation of the UNCCD.
- The government of India has launched a flagship project on enhancing capacity on forest landscape restoration (FLR) and Bonn Challenge in India, through a pilot phase of 3.5 years implemented in the states of Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Karnataka. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in partnership with The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), through this flagship project aims to develop and adapt best practices and monitoring protocols for the Indian states and build capacity within the five pilot states on FLR and Bonn Challenge. This will be eventually scaled up across the country through subsequent phases of the project.
- The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world’s deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030. At the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 2015 in Paris, India also joined the voluntary Bonn Challenge pledge to bring into restoration 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by the year 2020 and additional 8 million hectares by 2030. India’s pledge is one of the largest in Asia.
- India will also host the fourteenth session of Conference of Parties (COP - 14) from 29th August - 14th September 2019. One of the primary functions of the COP is to review reports submitted by the Country Parties detailing how they are carrying out their commitments. India will take-over the COP presidency from China for two years until the next COP is hosted in 2021.
- Various other schemes also have been launched by the government of India such as: Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Soil Health Card Scheme, Soil Health Management Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojna (PKSY), Per Drop More Crop, etc. which are helping to reduce land degradation.

Way Forward

- More than two billion hectares of degraded land in various parts of the world can be rehabilitated. The techniques include integrated farming, agro-forestry and farmer-managed natural regeneration. Small community initiatives like closure of degraded lands for grazing, curtailing farming, growing fast-growing plants, raising tall trees that serve as a barrier against winds and sandstorms are very effective. Further sustainable management of soil, water and biodiversity are required for protecting the land from further degradation.
- As far as India is concerned, India is one of the countries affected by desertification and is facing new challenges, among which are recurrent droughts and dust and sandstorms. The country has tremendous potential to turn these challenges into opportunities through improved land use management.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQS

1. With reference to the 24th World Energy Congress, consider the following statements:
 1. World energy congress is the world's largest and most influential energy event covering all aspects of the energy agenda and 24th World Energy Congress will take place in Geneva.
 2. The theme of this World Energy Congress is Energy for Prosperity which also represents the ambitious and dynamic energy transition of the country.

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
2. With reference to the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB), consider the following statements:
 1. India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has recently announced the rollout of Aadhaar enabled Payment Services (AePS) at the first anniversary of its business operations.
 2. It has been established under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communication with 100% equity owned by Government of India.

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
3. With reference to the Indian Skill Development Services (ISDS), consider the following statements:
 1. It is the newest central government services.
 2. It has been specially created for the Training Directorate of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and is a Group 'B' service.

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. Which of the following organizations organized the international conference ANGAN in New Delhi?
 - (a) NITI Aayog
 - (b) The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)
 - (c) **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**
 - (d) Both (b) and (c)
5. With reference to 'Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)', which of the following statements is/are correct?
 1. It was set up by the Government of India in March 2002, under the provision of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.
 2. It is a statutory body under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
 3. It has launched the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) in 2007 to set energy efficiency standards for the design and construction of buildings.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3
(d) **1 and 3**
6. With reference to the 14th Conference of Parties (COP14) of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, consider the following statements:
 1. India will raise target of restoring land with degraded status from 21 million hectares to 26 million by 2030.
 2. India proposed to setup a global technical support institute for the member countries of the UNCCD.

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
7. With reference to the National Genomic Grid (cancer), consider the following statements:
 1. It will collect samples from cancer patients to study genomic factors influencing cancer and identifying the right treatment modalities for the Indian population.
 2. The grid to be formed will be in line with the National Cancer Tissue Biobank (NCTB) set up at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras.

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
8. With reference to 'Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)', consider the following statements:
 1. It is an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
 2. It is the largest network of agricultural research and education institutes in the world.
 3. The Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education serves as its president.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) **1 and 2**
(b) 2 only
(c) 3 only
(d) 1 and 3
9. Consider the following statements:
 1. RCEP is a proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between ten ASEAN member states and the European Union.
 2. Once implemented, it would result in one of the largest free trade bloc accounting for 45% of the world's population, and a combined GDP of about \$21.3 trillion and 40% of the world trade.

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