

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**500 Years Of Magellan's Voyage**

500 years ago, Ferdinand Magellan sailed from Spain to find a western passage to the Indies. He did not survive but three years later his ship Victoria completed the first circumnavigation of the globe.

About: Ferdinand Magellan (1480 – 1521) was a Portuguese explorer who organised the Spanish expedition to the East Indies from 1519 to 1522, resulting in the first circumnavigation of the Earth, completed by Juan Sebastián Elcano.

Journey:

- After a quarrel with the Portuguese king, Ferdinand Magellan enlisted the support of Spain's king Charles I for an expedition to reach the Moluccas by sailing westwards.
- The Spanish wanted a share in the valuable spice trade from the Moluccas, but the Portuguese controlled the eastward route around southern Africa.
- On September 20, 1519, Magellan set out with a fleet of five vessels. Magellan successfully crossed the Atlantic and eventually navigated through the strait at the southern point of South America which was later named after him (Strait of Magellan).
- The three remaining ships crossed the Pacific Ocean in a northwesterly arc and finally reached the Philippines in March 1521, the first Europeans ever to set foot there. Within weeks Magellan was killed after becoming involved in a Battle of Mactan between two rival local chieftains.
- The Victoria, the only remaining ship from the original fleet, eventually returned to Spain in September 1522 under the command of Juan Sebastian Elcano, having completed the first ever circumnavigation of the globe.

GEOGRAPHY**Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR)**

Telangana State Assembly passed a resolution against proposed Uranium mining in Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR), located in Nallamala forest area of the State.

About:

- The Assembly urged the Central Government to withdraw proposal of Uranium mining in Nallamala Forest in view of the possible threat to the habitation and biodiversity in and around Nallamala due to mining besides public fears of air and water pollution due to Uranium mining.
- It said that the proposed exploration may contaminate Krishna river on which Hyderabad depends for drinking water.
- It will also affect Chenchu tribals, who live in the Amrabad forests spread over Telangana's Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda district.
- On May 22, 2019, the Union Ministry of Environment had granted in-principle approval to the Department of Atomic Energy to survey and explore for uranium in 83 sq km of the Amrabad Tiger Reserve.

Karan Vandana - A New Hybrid Wheat Variety

- A new hybrid wheat variety Karan Vandana is soon to be launched across the country.
- It is also known as DBW-187.
- It is rich in protein and iron.
- It has high heat tolerance across the country.
- It is resistant to yellow rust and wheat blast which causes widespread losses.
- It will reduce unit costs for farmers as well as return higher yield than normal varieties.
- It can be cultivated only in areas under full irrigation support.
- It has been developed by the Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research (IIWBR) under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**J&K Public Safety Act (PSA)**

National Conference leader and former J&K chief minister Farooq Abdullah has been detained under the J&K Public Safety Act (PSA). Last month, former IAS officer Shah Faesal was stopped at New Delhi airport and sent back to Kashmir, where he has been detained under the Public Safety Act.

About:

Background: The Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA) received the assent of the J&K Governor in 1978. The Act was introduced by the government of Sheikh Abdullah as a tough law to prevent the smuggling of timber and keep the smugglers “out of circulation”.

Salient features:

- The law allowed the government to detain any person above the age of 16 without trial for a period of two years “in the case of persons acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State.”
- In August 2018, the Act was amended to allow individuals to be detained under the PSA outside the state as well.
- Detention orders under PSA can be issued by Divisional Commissioners or District Magistrates. The detaining authority need not disclose any facts about the detention “which it considers to be against the public interest to disclose”.
- It provides protection from prosecution or any other legal proceeding for any action taken “in good faith” under the Act.

Criticism: The J&K PSA is often referred to as a “draconian” law. right from the beginning, the law was misused widely, and was repeatedly employed against political opponents by consecutive governments until 1990. After the emergence of militancy, the J&K government frequently invoked the PSA to crack down on separatists.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Report Of The Internal Working Group To Review Agricultural Credit

The Internal Working Group (IWG) constituted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to Review Agricultural Credit submitted its report to the RBI Governor.

Key recommendations:

- The Indian Banks’ Association (IBA) should introduce a web portal on the lines of PSB Loans in 59 Minutes to allow quicker credit access for the agriculture sector. The Centre launched the portal in November 2018 to provide loans of up to Rs.1 crore to MSMEs in less than an hour.
- State governments having a highly restrictive legal framework should be encouraged to reform it on basis of Model Land Leasing Act proposed by NITI Aayog or the Land Licensed Cultivators’ Act, 2011 of Andhra Pradesh to improve formal lending to tenant farmers.
- The government should set up a federal institution, on the lines of goods and services tax (GST) Council to suggest and implement reforms in the field of agriculture.
- Banks should be allowed to give consumption loans to farmers upto a sanctioned limit of Rs.0.1 million under Priority Sector Lending (PSL) on certain conditions. However, such loans will not classify for PSL-Agri.
- GoI and state governments should evaluate the effectiveness of current subsidy policies with regard to agri inputs and credit so as to improve viability of agriculture in a sustainable manner. In view of the above stated, loan waivers should be avoided.
- At present there is no database of the Indian agriculture sector. Thus, GoI with the help of state governments should develop a centralised database for agriculture capturing details related to crops cultivated, cropping pattern, output, sown/irrigated area, health of soil, natural calamity.
- GoI in partnership with state governments should set up a credit guarantee fund for the agriculture sector on the lines of credit guarantee schemes implemented in the MSME sector to cover the default risk of the borrowers.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Impact of Global Food Industry on Human Health and Environment

A new global study by the Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU) – a global alliance of economists and scientists founded in 2017 – has quantified the damage that the modern food industry does to human health, development and the environment costs.

Global Findings:

- Name of report: “Growing Better: Ten Critical Transitions to Transform Food and Land Use.”
- The “hidden cost” i.e. the damage that the modern food industry does to human health, development and the environment costs to the world is \$12 trillion a year — equivalent to China’s GDP.
- Global over-dependence on a relatively small number of staple foods leaves populations vulnerable to crop failures, with climate change adding to the strain.
- The report proposes a series of solutions, from encouraging more diverse diets to improve health and reduce dependency on specific crops, to giving more support to the types of farming that can restore forests, a key tool in fighting climate change.

Findings on India:

- India has 4 per cent of global freshwater resources to support 19 per cent of the world’s population. Some 80 per cent of water in India goes to agriculture, primarily from groundwater sources, which is unsustainable.
- Existing government policies – EatRight Movement of the FSSAI in 2017, the National Food Security Act of 2013 and the Zero Budget Natural Farming programme in Andhra Pradesh – already address critical transitions that the new report recommends.

World Ozone Day

Every year, 16th September is observed as the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone layer.

- The theme for the year 2019 is ‘32 Years and Healing’.
 - It celebrates over three decades of remarkable international cooperation to protect the ozone layer and the climate under the Montreal Protocol.
 - It reminds that the world must keep up the momentum to ensure healthy people and a healthy planet.
- In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 16th September as the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, commemorating the date of the signing, in 1987, of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.
 - The Montreal Protocol has led to the phase-out of 99% of ozone-depleting chemicals in refrigerators, air-conditioners and many other products.
 - The latest Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion completed in 2018, shows that parts of the ozone layer has recovered at a rate of 1-3% per decade since 2000.
 - Ozone layer protection efforts have also contributed to the fight against climate change by averting an estimated 135 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions, from 1990 to 2010.

Vulture Conservation And Breeding Centres (VCBC)

Starting with just a few vultures, the total number of vultures in the Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centres (VCBCs) have increased to more than 700.

Background:

- The population of the vultures in the country declined sharply from 40 million in the 80s to a few thousand by 2009.
- The major reason behind the vulture population getting nearly wiped out was the drug Diclofenac, found in the carcass of cattle the vultures fed on. The drug, whose veterinary use was banned in 2008, was commonly administered to cattle to treat inflammation.

Vulture Conservation And Breeding Centres (VCBC):

- To study the cause of deaths of vultures, a Vulture Care Centre (VCC) was set up at Pinjore, Haryana in 2004. At present there are nine Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centres

(VCBC) in India, of which three are directly administered by Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

- The objective of the VCBCs is not only to look after the vultures and breed them in captivity, but also to release them into the wild.
- The total number of vultures in these VCBCs is now more than 700. The three endangered species of vultures bred in the VCBC are the White-backed, Long-billed and the Slender-billed vulture.

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

Yank

Biologists and biomedical engineers are proposing to define a new term, “yank”, for changes in force over time. Their ideas are published in the Journal of Experimental Biology.

About:

- ‘Yank’ is a proposed new term for changes in force over time, so that scientists can study muscle behaviour better.
- ‘Yank’ could be useful in understanding spasticity, a common muscle impairment in multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, stroke and cerebral palsy.
- The objective is to quantify something that our muscles and nerves can feel and respond to.

MISC

11th International Hrant Dink Award

Meghalaya-based rights activist Agnes Kharshiing received the 11th International Hrant Dink Award along with Turkish activist against male violence Nebahat Akkoç.

About:

- The International Hrant Dink Award commemorates the memory of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was killed in 2007.
- Since 2009, the Hrant Dink Award is presented annually by the Hrant Dink Foundation on Hrant Dink's birthday.
- The award is presented to individuals, organisations or groups that work for a world free from discrimination, racism and violence, and who take personal risks for achieving those ideals.

Agnes Kharshiing:

- Meghalaya-based rights activist Agnes Kharshiing, often referred to as the “woman who chases trucks ferrying illegally-mined coal”, was assaulted in November, 2018, by a coal mafia mob during one of her many “surveillance” trips to Meghalaya’s East Jaintia Hills.
- She was in coma for more than a week and was discharged from hospital after three months

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns How the use of Diclofenac Medicine affects the Vultures? Briefly discuss about the SAVE initiative for Vulture Conservation.

Ans

Nine species of vulture can be found living in India, but most are now in danger of extinction after a rapid and major population collapse in recent decades. The reason traced for their deterioration is the use of Diclofenac medicine. Veterinary diclofenac caused a decline in the populations of three species of South Asia's Gyps vulture: white-rumped, long-billed and slender-billed vultures. Oriental white-backed vultures declined by more than 99.9 per cent between 1992 and 2007, a loss of tens of millions. It is a common anti-inflammatory drug administered to livestock and is used to treat the symptoms of inflammation, fevers and/or pain associated with disease or wounds. It is lethal to vultures when they consume the carcasses of dead animals treated with it. It leads to renal failure in vultures damaging their excretory system. The government had banned **the** veterinary use of diclofenac in 2006. The ban restricts diclofenac production to human formulations in a single 3ml dose, according to a note from BirdLife International, a global partnership of independent organisations working together for nature and people across more than 120 countries worldwide. In India it partners with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). A replacement drug: Meloxicam is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) with analgesic and fever reducer effects was developed and proposed after tests on vultures in captivity. Meloxicam affects cattle the same way as diclofenac, but is harmless for vultures.

Effect of vulture extinction:

- Without vultures, hundreds of thousands of animal carcasses have gone uneaten which pose a serious risk to human health. Livestock carcasses provide a potential breeding ground for numerous infectious diseases, including anthrax, and encourage the proliferation of pest species, such as rats.
- The loss of vultures also results in an increase in the number of feral dogs around carcass dumps which has led to increase in rabies cases.
- Traditional sky burials of some Himalayan and Parsi communities cannot be carried out.

SAVE: Saving Asia's Vulture from Extinction, is a consortium of likeminded, regional and international organisations, created to oversee, coordinate conservation, campaigning and fundraising activities to help the plight of South Asia's vultures. SAVE has established captive breeding of vultures at centres in India, Nepal and Pakistan. SAVE is also pursuing mandatory safety testing for all current and future NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) in India, with a mechanism to immediately ban all but small vials of those found to be vulture-toxic.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQS

1. Who among the following voyages is said to be expediting
 - (a) Columbus
 - (b) Amerigo Vespucci
 - (c) **Juan Sebastián Elcano**
 - (d) Ferdinand Magellan
2. Amarabad Tiger Reserves is located in which states?
 - (a) Uttar Pradehs
 - (b) Chhatisgarh
 - (c) **Telengana**
 - (d) Andhra Pradesh
3. With reference to Karan Vandana, consider the following statements:
 1. It is a new hybrid variety of rice.
 2. It has been developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
 3. It will increase the unit costs for farmers but return higher yield than normal varieties.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 2 and 3
 - (c) **2 only**
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
4. With reference to the report of the Internal Working Group (IWG) to Review Agricultural Credit, consider the following statements:
 1. The government should set up a federal institution, on the lines of Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council to suggest and implement reforms in the field of agriculture.
 2. The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) should introduce a web portal on the lines of PSB Loans in 59 Minutes to allow quicker credit access for the agriculture sector.
 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
5. With reference to World Ozone Day, consider the following statements
 1. It is celebrated every year on 17 September
 2. The theme for the year 2019 is '32 Years and Healing'
 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
6. Which of the following vulture species are considered as Critically Endangered?
 1. Slender-billed Vulture
 2. White-rumped vulture
 3. Indian Vulture
 4. Griffon Vulture
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 - (a) 1 and 4
 - (b) 1 and 2
 - (c) **1, 2 and 3**
 - (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4