

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Handbook on Fisheries Statistics – 2018**

The Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying released the “Handbook on Fisheries Statistics - 2018”.

About:

- The Handbook on Fisheries Statistics - 2018 has been published by the Department of Fisheries of Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India.
- It is the 13th edition which presents useful statistical information for various aspects of Fisheries sector. The last (12th edition of) Handbook was published in 2014.

Key findings:

- India is currently world's second largest producers of fish. It is also world number two in aquaculture production as well as in inland capture fisheries.
- The total fish production of 12.59 million metric tonnes was registered during 2017-18 with a contribution of 8.90 million metric tonnes from inland sector and 3.69 million metric tonnes from marine sector.
- The average growth in fish production during 2017-18 stands at 10.14% when compared to 2016-17 (11.43 million metric tonnes).
- The percentage contribution of inland fish production in the total fish production of 29% during the year 1950-51 and has increased to 71% in the year 2017-18.
- Andhra Pradesh has recorded the highest production of inland fish (34.50 lakh tones) where as Gujarat is the leading state in Marine fish (7.01 Lakh tonnes) in the country.
- During 2017-18 the volume of fish and fish products exported was 13,77,243.70 tonnes worth Rs 45,106.90 crore.
- The Fisheries sector is major source of livelihood for over 1.60 Crore people along with double the number in down and upstream.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Keeladi Findings**

According to a report published by the Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department (TNAD), the cultural deposits unearthed during the excavations at site Keeladi located in the Sivaganga district could be dated to a period between the 6th century BC and the 1st century AD.

Key Findings

- The title of the report was ‘Keeladi-An Urban Settlement of Sangam Age on the Banks of River Vaigai.’
- Previously it was believed that the Keeladi artefacts belonged to the 3rd century BC.
 - But the carbon dating test confirmed the date of the Tamil-Brahmi script is dated to the year 580 BC.
- The results suggest that the second urbanization (the first being the Indus Valley Civilization) of Vaigai plains happened in Tamil Nadu during the 6th century BC.
 - The contemporary of which in the Gangetic plains was the Iron Age & the period of the rise of various Heterodox sects.
- Skeletal fragments of Cow/Ox & Buffalo, Sheep & Goat, Nilgai & Blackbuck, Wild boar, and Peacock suggest that the society in Keeladi had used animals predominantly for agricultural purposes.
- Pottery specimens from Keeladi confirmed that the water containers and cooking vessels were shaped out of locally available raw materials.
- The recovery of spindle whorls, pinpointed bone tip tools, hanging stones of the yarn, terracotta spheres, copper needle, and earthen vessels to hold liquid, outlines the various stages of weaving industry from spinning, yarning, looming, weaving and dyeing.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) has achieved a significant milestone by crossing one crore beneficiaries. Also, the total amount disbursed to the beneficiaries under the scheme has crossed Rs. 4,000 crores.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a maternity benefit programme being implemented in all districts of the country with effect from 1st January, 2017.
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme being executed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme: Cash benefits are provided to pregnant women in their bank account directly to meet enhanced nutritional needs and partially compensate for wage loss.

Target Beneficiaries:

- All Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM), excluding those who are in regular employment with the Central Government or the State Governments or PSUs or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force.
- All eligible Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers who have their pregnancy on or after 1st January 2017 for the first child in the family.

Benefits under the Scheme:

- Beneficiaries receive a cash benefit of Rs. 5,000 in three installments on fulfilling the following conditions:
- Early registration of pregnancy
- Ante-natal check-up
- Registration of the birth of the child and completion of first cycle of vaccination for the first living child of the family.
- The eligible beneficiaries also receive cash incentive under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY). Thus, on an average, a woman gets Rs. 6,000.

Distinctive Feature:

- Implementation of the scheme is closely monitored by the central and state governments through the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana - Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS).
- PMMVY-CAS is a web based software application that enables tracking the status of each beneficiary under the scheme, resulting in expedited, accountable and better grievance redressal.

Present Status:

- Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Rajasthan are the top five States/UT in the country in implementation of PMMVY.
- Odisha and Telangana are yet to start implementation of the scheme.

National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) Scheme

Recently, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has announced a new National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) to use technology for better learning outcomes in Higher Education.

- The scheme aims to use Artificial Intelligence to make learning more personalized and customized as per the requirements of the learner.
- MHRD aims to recognize the development of technologies in Adaptive Learning and bring them under a common platform so that learners can access it easily.
- It proposes to create a National Alliance with such technology developing EdTech Companies through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.
- MHRD would act as a facilitator to ensure that the Adaptive Learning Solutions are freely available to a large number of economically backward students.
- Under the scheme, a National NEAT platform would be created to provide one-stop access to Adaptive Learning Solutions.
- EdTech companies would be responsible for developing solutions and manage the registration of learners through the NEAT portal.
- NEAT is aimed at taking the concept of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS) platform a step ahead.
- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) would be the implementing agency for the NEAT programme.

- It would help to certify maximum students with highly marketable skills and would also improve the employability of students.

Right To Access Internet

The Kerala High Court held that the right to have access to the Internet is part of the fundamental right to education as well as the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution.

About:

- It made the observation while ordering the principal of Sree Narayanaguru College, Kozhikode, to re-admit a student who had been expelled from the college hostel for using her mobile phone beyond the restricted hours.

Arguments by Court:

- The Human Rights Council of the United Nations has found that the right of access to Internet is a fundamental freedom and a tool to ensure right to education.
- The Supreme Court in the S. Rengarajan and others v. P. Jagjivan Ram (1989) case said that “the fundamental freedom under Article 19(1)(a) can be reasonably restricted only for the purposes mentioned in Article 19(2) and the restriction must be justified on the anvil of necessity and not the quicksand of convenience or expediency.”
- Enforcement of discipline hostel authorities shall not be by blocking the ways and means of the students to acquire knowledge.
- College authorities as well as parents should be conscious of the fact that the students in a college hostel are adults capable of taking decisions as to how and when to study.
- Mobile phones, once a luxury, have now become become "part and parcel of the day to day life and even to a stage that it is unavoidable to survive with dignity and freedom", observed the Court.

Related Info : In 2016, the United Nations Human Rights Council released a non-binding resolution condemning intentional disruption of internet access by governments. The resolution reaffirmed that "the same rights people have offline must also be protected online".

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**India and Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union**

Recently, the 16th Session of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) between India and Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU) was held in New Delhi. India and BLEU reiterated the importance of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) towards the development of bilateral economic and trade relations through facilitating dialogue and enhancing cooperation on a wide range of issues of mutual interest.

- Joint Economic Commission between India and Belgium - Luxembourg Economic Union (India-BLEU) was established in 1997 and is the main vehicle for discussing economic and commercial issues.
- This biennial event is organized in the capital cities of the three countries alternatively.

Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU)

- Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU) was created by a treaty signed in 1921.
- Under the terms of the treaty, the economic frontier was lifted and the Belgian franc and Luxembourg franc were set at a fixed parity establishing a monetary union, which existed until the introduction of the euro.
- A new convention was signed in 2002, between the two nations.
- Although most of the aims of BLEU have largely been taken up by the Benelux Union (between Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands) and the European Union, it has remained more relevant in deciding exact measures than the other organizations.
- The Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union is the world's 13th largest export economy.

India-Belgium

- India is Belgium's second-largest export destination and fourth-largest trade partner outside the European Union with a significant contribution from the Indian diaspora.
- The leading exports from Belgium to India are in the sectors of gem and jewellery (rough diamonds), chemical and chemical products and machinery and mechanical products.
- The major exports from India to Belgium are in the sectors of gem and jewellery (finished products), base metals and articles and chemicals and chemical products.

India-Luxembourg

- Luxembourg is the 16th most important investor in India and among EU member states it ranks 4th among the combined FDI and FII investors in India.
- The sectors that attracted maximum investments from Luxembourg include trading, computer software & hardware, services sector, agricultural machinery, and chemicals.
- India and Luxembourg have had longstanding cooperation in the steel sector.

INDIAN ECONOMYLoan Mela

- The Finance Ministry in a bid to give impetus to the slowing economy recently announced to organize the loan melas in the 400 districts of the country.
- The reason behind such an initiative was to increase the liquidity in the market.
 - Banks despite having the liquidity were not following a standard monetary policy transmission measure.
 - This move will now compel the banks to give funds to the Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFCs) (which are the principal channel for providing loans to small businesses in the country) and from there it will pass on to the end customers, through public meetings or popularly called the 'Shamiana meetings'.
 - The banks and the NBFCs will partner with each other to disburse the loans to the customers.
- Public Sector Banks will focus on giving loans to the 'RAM' category, i.e., Retail customers including homebuyers, Agriculture and farmers, and Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- To resolve the MSME stress and recast their debt, the banks will no longer classify the MSME-stressed loan as a Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) until March 31, 2020.

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

Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) delivered the second Scorpene submarine 'KHANDERI' to the Indian Navy at an event held in Mumbai. It will be commissioned into the Indian Navy on September 28 at the Naval Dockyard by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

About:

- The submarine 'KHANDERI' is named after the wide snouted Saw fish, a deadly sea predator of the great Indian Ocean.
- The first Submarine Khanderi was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1968 and decommissioned in 1989 after more than 20 years of service to the nation.

Scorpene class submarines

- Six Scorpene class submarines are being built under Project 75. They can undertake various types of missions i.e Anti-Surface warfare, Anti-Submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine laying, area surveillance etc.
- The submarines are designed by French naval defence and energy group DCNS and manufactured by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL), Mumbai under a 2005 contract worth \$3.75 billion.

Status of submarines:

- The first submarine named INS KALVARI was commissioned into the Indian Navy last September.
- The constructions of third Scorpene KARANJ, was started in 2018, and is currently undergoing the rigorous phase of sea trials.
- The fourth Scorpene, VELA was recently launched in May 2019, and is being prepared for sea trials.
- The remaining two submarines, VAGIR and VAGSHEER, are in various stages of outfitting. The last of the submarines will be delivered by 2022

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns What is a Non-Performing Asset (NPA)? Discuss the cause and effect of the NPAs in Indian Economy.

Ans

The loans given by the bank is considered as its assets. So if the principle or the interest or both the components of a loan is not being serviced to the lender (bank), then it would be considered as a Non-Performing Asset (NPA). Any asset which stops giving returns to its investors for a specified period of time is known as Non-Performing Asset (NPA). Generally, that specified period of time is 90 days in most of the countries and across the various lending institutions. However, it is not a thumb rule and it may vary with the terms and conditions agreed upon by the financial institution and the borrower.

Causes of NPAs

- Diversification of funds to unrelated business/fraud.
- Lapses due to diligence.
- Business losses due to changes in business/regulatory environment.
- Lack of morale, particularly after government schemes which had written off loans.
- Global, regional or national financial crisis which results in erosion of margins and profits of companies, therefore, stressing their balance sheet which finally results into non-servicing of interest and loan payments. (For example, the 2008 global financial crisis).
- The general slowdown of entire economy for example after 2011 there was a slowdown in the Indian economy which resulted in the faster growth of NPAs.
- The slowdown in a specific industrial segment, therefore, companies in that area bear the heat and some may become NPAs.
- Unplanned expansion of corporate houses during the boom period and loan taken at low rates later being serviced at high rates, therefore, resulting in NPAs.
- Due to mal-administration by the corporates, for example, willful defaulters.
- Due to misgovernance and policy paralysis which hampers the timeline and speed of projects, therefore, loans become NPAs. For example the Infrastructure Sector.
- Severe competition in any particular market segment. For example the Telecom sector in India.
- Delay in land acquisition due to social, political, cultural and environmental reasons.
- A bad lending practice which is a non-transparent way of giving loans.
- Due to natural reasons such as floods, droughts, disease outbreak, earthquakes, tsunami etc.
- Cheap import due to dumping leads to business loss of domestic companies. For example the Steel sector in India.

Impact of NPAs

- Lenders suffer a lowering of profit margins.
- Stress in banking sector causes less money available to fund other projects, therefore, negative impact on the larger national economy.
- Higher interest rates by the banks to maintain the profit margin.
- Redirecting funds from the good projects to the bad ones.
- As investments got stuck, it may result in it may result in unemployment.
- In the case of public sector banks, the bad health of banks means a bad return for a shareholder which means that the government of India gets less money as a dividend. Therefore it may impact easy deployment of money for social and infrastructure development and results in social and political cost.
- Investors do not get rightful returns.
- Balance sheet syndrome of Indian characteristics that is both the banks and the corporate sector have stressed balance sheet and causes halting of the investment-led development process.
- NPAs related cases add more pressure to already pending cases with the judiciary.

Conclusion

- The need of the hour to tackle NPAs is some urgent remedial measures. This should include: Technology and data analytics to identify the early warning signals, Mechanism to identify the hidden NPAs, Development of internal skills for credit assessment and forensic audits to understand the intent of the borrower.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQS

1. Which among the following are Scorpene class stealth submarines being built under the Project 75?

1. INS Karanj
2. INS Vikrant
3. INS Khanderi
4. INS Vela

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 1 and 3
- (c) 2, 3 and 4
- (d) 1, 3 and 4**

2. According to the "Handbook on Fisheries Statistics - 2018" which of the following states has recorded the highest production of inland fish?

- (a) Andhra Pradesh**
- (b) Kerala
- (c) Gujarat
- (d) Tamil Nadu

3. With reference to the National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT), consider the following statements:

1. The objective of scheme is to use Artificial Intelligence to make learning more personalised and customised as per the requirements of the learner.
2. UGC would be the implementing agency for NEAT programme.

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. Keeladi excavation site, recently seen in news, is located in which of the following states?

- (a) Tamil Nadu**
- (b) Kerala
- (c) Andhra Pradesh
- (d) Odisha

5. Which of the following rights has been declared as part of Article 21?

1. Right to access internet
2. Right to shelter

3. Right to reputation

4. Right to freedom from noise pollution

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 4**
- (b) 1, 2 and 4
- (c) 2, 3 and 4
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

6. Which of the following countries borders the North Sea:

1. Denmark
2. Norway
3. Netherlands
4. Belgium

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 3
- (b) 2 and 4
- (c) 2, 3 and 4
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4**

7. With reference to the 'Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana', consider the following statements:

1. Under this scheme, the beneficiaries receive a cash incentive of Rs. 5,000 in three instalments.
2. It is a central sector scheme that is fully funded by the Central government.

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. Consider the following statements:

1. Benelux Union is the Union that comprises of Belgium and Luxembourg.
2. Luxembourg is a land-locked 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