

**GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.****Sewa Service Trains**

Indian Railways launched a new set of Sewa Service trains that are aimed at providing last-mile connectivity from smaller towns to important cities.

**About:**

- The Sewa Service Trains are based on Hub and Spoke model.
- These trains are aimed at facilitating passengers to reach the hubs of major stations and also provide rail connectivity between smaller towns and important cities. They also ensure congestion-free roads as well as faster ease of movement for the public.
- Minister of Railways Piyush Goyal Flagged off the following 9 Sewa Service Trains:
  - Vadnagar – Mahesana DEMU (6 days a week) – Gujarat
  - Asarva – Himmatnagar DEMU (6 days a week)- Gujarat
  - Karur – Salem DEMU (6 days a week)- Tamil Nadu
  - Coimbatore – Pollachi Passenger (6 days a week)- Tamil Nadu
  - Coimbatore – Palani Passenger (Daily)- Tamil Nadu
  - Yesvantpur – Tumkur DEMU (6 days a week) – Karnataka
  - Murkongselek – Dibrugarh Passenger (Daily) – Assam
  - Bhubaneswar – Nayagarh Express (Daily) – Assam
  - Delhi – Shamli Passenger (Daily)

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

Kurdish fighters in northern Syria have served as a crucial U.S. ally in the fight against the Islamic State. But U.S. troops stepped aside last week as Turkey launched an offensive against the U.S.-backed Kurdish forces. Kurdish forces have described the U.S. departure as “a stab in the back.”

**About:**

- The Kurds are members of a large, predominantly Muslim ethnic group.
- They live in the highlands of southern and eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, the northeastern Syria, northwestern Iran, and parts of south Armenia, and are a minority in each of these countries.
- They have their own cultural and linguistic traditions, and most speak one of two major dialects of the Kurdish language.
- There are an estimated 25 million to 35 million of them.
- After World War I, Western powers promised Kurds their own homeland in the agreement known as the Treaty of Sèvres. But a later agreement instead divided them among Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran.
- Today, there are about 30 million Kurds living across the region, with about half of them in Turkey. Iraq is the only country in the region to have established an autonomous Kurdish region, known as Iraqi Kurdistan. Its parliament was founded in 1992.
- Over the decades, the Kurds made repeated attempts at establishing a de facto Kurdistan with defined national borders — and in the process attracted massive Turkish repression, including bans on the Kurdish language, names, songs, and dress.

**India-Netherlands**

Recently, the King and Queen of the Kingdom of Netherlands visited India to give an impetus to the bilateral ties shared by the two nations.

**Key Highlights**

- Economic partnership between India & Netherlands is a key pillar of the bilateral ties.
- The Netherlands is India's 4th largest trading partner in the European Union. And is also one of the leading investor nation in India.
- The Dutch companies (in India) have a global name in the fields of agriculture, water management, port development, waste management, and urban planning.
- Historical Relations: Indo-Dutch relations can be traced back to more than 400 years when the first Dutch EIC got established in India (in around 17th century AD).

- The official relations between the two nations were established in the year 1947 which, since then, have been cordial and friendly.
- The two countries also share common ideals of democracy, pluralism and the rule of law.
- Cultural Relations: The Netherlands currently is home to the largest Indian community on the European mainland. The growing Indian student and professional community in the Netherlands is making the cultural knot stronger and the technological partnership deeper.

#### Significance of Netherlands to India:

- Netherlands' has supported India's membership to the different Export Control Regimes and India's claim to a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.
- India and the Netherlands share common concerns with regard to contemporary challenges that include climate action, cyber-security, and terrorism.
- Smart Cities, green energy, start-ups, smart solutions, and new-age products are bringing the two nations closer. India is keen to share and learn from the Netherlands on the river rejuvenation.
- LOTUS: During the recent visit, a joint launch of the second phase of the Local Treatment of Urban Sewage Streams for the Healthy Reuse (LOTUS-HR) program was done by the Union Minister for Science & Technology for the treatment of sewage water.
- The project was initiated in July 2017 and aims to manifest a novel holistic waste-water management approach that will produce clean water, which could henceforth be reused for various purposes.
- The LOTUS-HR project is jointly supported by the Department of Biotechnology and the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research /STW.

#### WETLAB:

- It is a design challenge that is jointly supported by the Department of Biotechnology-Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (DBT-BIRAC) and Netherlands Enterprise Agency.
- It provides a unique learning and networking platform for young professionals and students to think differently for innovative ideas to solve India's urban water challenges and contribute to cleaning up of India's rivers.

### INDIAN ECONOMY

#### Authorized World Skills India Training Centers (Awsite)

Union Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), announced the launch of 14 Authorized World Skills India Training Centers (AWSITC) across 9 cities in India, for the Media and Entertainment sector.

#### About:

- The new institutes are being set up for advanced skill training of candidates in the media and entertainment sector, not just to compete in the WorldSkills and IndiaSkills competitions but also to further develop the skilling eco-system for training candidates for the international market.
- The state of the art AWSITCs will be set up in partnership with the MESC (Media & Entertainment Skill Council).
- The training programs will be designed as per the NSFQ level, which will be industry linked.
- Cities include Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Indore, Mumbai, Pune, Shillong and Trivandrum.

#### L2pro India

Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) launched the website and mobile application L2Pro India [Learn to Protect, Secure and Maximize Your Innovation] on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs).

#### About:

- The modules of this e-learning platform will aid and enable youth, innovators, entrepreneurs and small and medium industries (SMEs) in understanding IPRs for their ownership and protection.
- The L2Pro India IP e-learning platform will have 11 modules for three different levels: Basic, Intermediate and Advanced.

- The website and app has been developed by Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM)-DPIIT in collaboration with Qualcomm and National Law University (NLU), Delhi.
- The L2Pro has been successfully implemented in Germany, United Kingdom, Italy and France, benefiting immensely from close collaboration with respective IP organizations and public research institutions.

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

#### **Microbial Fuel Cells**

At the London Zoo, a fern has started taking its own selfies. The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) achieved this feat by installing microbial fuel cells in Pete, a maidenhair fern, with the ultimate aim of using plants to power camera traps and sensors in the wild.

#### **About:**

- Microbial fuel cells are devices that use bacteria as the catalysts to oxidise organic and inorganic matter and generate current. Electrons produced by the bacteria are transferred to the negative terminal and flow to the positive terminal.
- Plants naturally deposit biomatter as they grow, which in turn feeds the natural bacteria present in the soil, creating energy that can be harnessed by fuel cells and used to power a wide range of vital conservation tools remotely, including sensors, monitoring platforms and camera traps.
- Among conventional power sources, batteries must be replaced while solar panels rely on a source of sunlight. On the other hand, plants can survive in the shade, naturally moving into position to maximise the potential of absorbing sunlight.

#### **Bluetongue (Bt) Virus**

The Department of Animal Husbandry released two diagnostic kits developed by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) - Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), namely the “Bluetongue: sandwich ELISA (sELISA)” and the “Japanese Encephalitis IgM ELISA” kit for the control of Swine and Detection of Antigen.

#### **About:**

- The Bluetongue (BT) virus is an insect-transmitted viral disease of domestic and wild ruminants that includes the camelid species.
- The disease is widespread among the sheep, goats, cattle, buffaloes and camels in the country.
- With the help of the Kit “Bluetongue: Sandwich ELISA for detection of Antigen”, the Bluetongue Virus can be controlled with the vaccination of susceptible animals, vector control and quarantine of infected animals with the good management practices.
- Apart from the vaccination, the early diagnosis and isolation of the infected animals are one of the commonly suggested preventive methods for controlling the spreading of the disease.

#### **Phosphorescence**

The Delhi-based National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL) has synthesised a novel security ink that emits intense red colour when exposed to 254 nm wavelength UV and emits green colour soon after the UV source is turned off.

#### **About:**

- The emission of red is due to fluorescence while green is due to phosphorescence phenomenon.
- Both red and green can be clearly seen with the naked eye under ambient conditions. The red colour is emitted at 611 nm wavelength while the green is emitted at 532 nm.
- The ink has the potential to be used as a security feature on currency notes and passports.
- This is the first report of an ink that contains two pigments that emit different colours at very different wavelengths when exposed to UV light of a particular wavelength. The results were published in the Journal of Materials Chemistry C.

#### **Phosphorescence**

- Phosphorescence is a type of photoluminescence related to fluorescence. Unlike fluorescence, a phosphorescent material does not immediately re-emit the radiation it absorbs.

- The slower time scales of the re-emission are associated with "forbidden" energy state transitions in quantum mechanics. As these transitions occur very slowly in certain materials, absorbed radiation is re-emitted at a lower intensity for up to several hours after the original excitation.
- Everyday examples of phosphorescent materials are the glow-in-the-dark toys that glow after being charged with a bright light such as in any normal reading or room light. Typically, the glow slowly fades out, sometimes within a few minutes or up to a few hours in a dark room.

#### PRELIMS SPECIFIC FACTS- INDICES, DAYS, AWARDS ETC.

##### Booker Prize

The Testaments by Margaret Atwood and Girl, Woman, Other by Bernardine Evaristo have jointly won this year's Booker prize.

##### About:

- Background: The Man Booker Prize was established in 1969.
- Objective: to promote the finest in fiction by rewarding the best novel of the year written in English.

##### Eligibility:

- The Man Booker Prize awards any novel originally written in English and published in the UK and Ireland in the year of the prize, regardless of the nationality of their author.
- The novel must be an original work in English (not a translation)
- It must be published by a registered UK or Irish imprint; self-published novels are not eligible.
- Prize Money: The winner receives £50,000 as well as the £2,500 awarded to each of the shortlisted authors. In this case, thanks to the award being shared, the prize money would be split between the two winners.

##### Organizations involved:

- Man Group: Man Group is an active investment management firm founded in 1783. It has sponsored the Man Booker Prize since 2002
- The Booker Prize Foundation: It is a registered charity established in 2002. Since then it has been responsible for the award of the Man Booker Prize for Fiction, and for the Man Booker International Prize since its inauguration in 2005.

##### 2019 Booker prize winners:

- The Testaments by Margaret Atwood and Girl, Woman, Other by Bernardine Evaristo have jointly won this year's Booker prize.
- Atwood has won the award for the second time – the first time she won was for her 2000 book, The Blind Assassin – and she is now only the fourth writer to have won this prize twice. At 79, she is also the oldest writer to win it.
- Evaristo is the first black woman to have won this prize. She is also the first black British author.

##### Sharing of Booker Prize

- Although the rules do not allow for the award to be either split or withheld, the jury was unanimous after several rounds that this year's award must be shared.
- The prize has been shared in the past in 1974 and in 1992. However, since then the rules were tweaked to ensure there are no joint winners. That rule was eventually ignored by the Booker prize jury this year.

#### QUOTE OF THE DAY

**What you plant now, you will harvest later.**

## **DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Foreign companies dragging India to international arbitration not only leads to financial loss but also damages the reputation of the country as an investment destination. Discuss.**

**Ans**

India has largest number of international arbitration cases pending against it filed by more than 20 companies such as Deutsche Telekom of Germany, Vodafone etc. India has signed Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) with different countries, MNCs utilise the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provision in BITs to sue countries for real or perceived wrongs.

Reasons for increasing International arbitration:

- Judicial delays: Large number of vacancies put an enormous strain on the judiciary which is one of important causes for the growing pendency of cases. Inadequate infrastructure and lack of technological innovation makes the entire process of justice delivery inefficient. Alternative and speedier forms of dispute resolution like mediation and arbitration are yet to become viable options in India.
- Bilateral investment treaties (BITs): India had inked BITs with 83 countries on the basis of old model text of 1993. The government decided to revise the treaties to prevent arbitration by foreign companies. The government introduced a new Model BIT in 2015 to guide future investment agreements.

Impact of disputes International arbitration

- Hurts Ease of Doing Business: Foreign companies have been dragging Indian government to international arbitration courts for not enforcing contracts. For MNC's focus on disputes and arbitration process as well as loss of revenue reduces ease of doing business.
- Future Investment: High rate international arbitration also scares away potential investors thus reduces the attractiveness of India as investment destination.
- Financial loss: India faces financial loss due to prolonged litigation e.g. legal charges for arguing case.

Step taken by government

- Local judicial remedies to be exhausted before seeking international arbitration: Government has conveyed to 47 countries to nullify the existing bilateral investment agreements and ink fresh treaties that will make it mandatory for foreign investors to exhaust local judicial remedies before seeking arbitration. Thus MNC's have to approach domestic courts in first instance and cannot approach arbitration directly.
- Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018: The Lok Sabha has passed Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to help India become hub for domestic and global arbitration for settling commercial disputes by amending Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

Conclusion

- For economic growth and attracting foreign direct investment India has to tackle this issue proactively. Foreign companies dragging India to international arbitration not only leads to financial loss but also damages the reputation of the country as an investment destination.
- There is also need for a transformational change to make litigation ecosystem effective, India's ranking on Ease of Doing Business can register a dramatic improvement in the near future if enforceability of contracts is enhanced.

**DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs**

1. With reference to the L2Pro India, consider the following statements:
  1. It was launched by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
  2. It will aid and enable youth, innovators, entrepreneurs and small and medium industries (SMEs) in understanding IPRs for their ownership and protection.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 Sewa Service trains, consider the following statements:
  1. They are based on Hub and Spoke model.
  2. These trains are aimed at facilitating passengers to reach the hubs of major stations and also provide rail connectivity between smaller towns and important cities.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 Man Booker Prize, consider the following statements:
  1. Margaret Atwood and Bernardine Evaristo have jointly won this year's Booker prize.
  2. The Man Booker Prize awards any novel written in any languages and published in the UK and Ireland in the year of the prize, regardless of the nationality of their author.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. With reference to the Bluetongue (BT) virus, consider the following statements:
  1. It is an insect-transmitted viral disease of domestic and wild ruminants that includes the camelid species.
  2. There is no vaccination currently available for the disease.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. Authorized World Skills India Training Centers (AWSITC), recently seen in news, is launched by:
  - (a) NITI Aayog
  - (b) **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**
  - (c) Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
  - (d) Ministry of Labour and Employment
6. With reference to the Microbial fuel cells, consider the following statements:
  1. They are devices that use bacteria as the catalysts to oxidise organic and inorganic matter and generate current.
  2. It can make plants to power camera traps and sensors in the wild.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 phosphorescence phenomenon, consider the following statements:
  1. The emission of red light is due to phosphorescence phenomenon.
  2. A phosphorescent material immediately re-emit the radiation it absorbs.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**