

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Two Child Norm**

Assam Cabinet has decided that no government jobs will be given to persons having more than two children after January 1, 2021 as per the small family norm.

About:

- The move comes two months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged the issue of “population explosion” in his Independence Day speech. In 2013, Assam recorded a Total Fertility Rate of 2.3 (source: SRS) against a target for replacement level fertility rate of 2.1.
- In 2017, the Assam Assembly had passed the 'Population and Women Empowerment Policy of Assam' that specified that candidates with two children only would be eligible for government employment and the existing government staff were to strictly follow the two children family norm.
- Rajasthan, MP and Maharashtra already have a two-child norm in place for government jobs.

Two child norm for panchayat elections:

- Assam is also among the states that have a similar norm in place for panchayat elections.
- Last year, Assam had passed the Assam Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 2018, according to which those contesting panchayat polls cannot have more than two children.
- Other states with similar norms for local body polls include Uttarakhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Peritoneal Dialysis

The Union Health Ministry has released guidelines for establishing peritoneal dialysis services under the Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Program (PMNDP).

About:

- Peritoneal dialysis is a treatment for kidney failure that uses the lining of your abdomen, or belly, to filter your blood inside your body. Health care providers call this lining the peritoneum.
- Peritoneal dialysis is a process to remove excess fluid, correct electrolyte problems and remove toxins using the lining of the abdomen, or peritoneum, in patients suffering from renal failure.
- This process does away with the substantial costs of infrastructure, maintenance and staffing, reduces the demand on the healthcare system and offers patient autonomy.

Recent Guidelines:

- The Ministry has requested all States to include proposals for establishing peritoneal dialysis under their respective programme implementation plans.
- The guidelines also envisage providing training to community health workers to provide support to persons for peritoneal dialysis at home or in primary healthcare settings.
- This move will instantly benefit the 2 lakh Indians who develop end-stage kidney failure every year in India.
- The Health Ministry had announced the National Dialysis Programme in 2016 and the first phase of the programme envisaged setting up of haemodialysis centres in all districts.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Non Aligned Movement (NAM)**

Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu will represent India at the 19th Non Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Baku, Azerbaijan on October 25 and 26, marking the second time in a row that PM Modi will give the summit a miss.

About:

- In 2016 as well, India was represented by then Vice-President at the NAM summit in Venezuela.
- Since it was inaugurated in 1961, the Indian Prime Minister has always attended the NAM summit, except in 1979, when Chaudhury Charan Singh was the caretaker PM and hence missed it, and in 2016.
- Modi's absence indicates a decisive move away from past practice at the 60-year-old organisation that India was a founding member.

Bandung Principles:

- The theme for the XVIII NAM Summit is "Upholding the Bandung Principles to ensure concerted and adequate response to the challenges of contemporary world".
- The Ten Principles of Bandung, a political statement encapsulating the need to promote world peace and cooperation were formulated at the Asian-African Conference in 1955.
- The theme is significant as it relates to the forthcoming 65th anniversary of Bandung Principles in 2020 and the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Movement in 2021.
- India is one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which was established in 1961 with 29 members. It has since grown to 120 members to become one of the largest groupings of nation-states.

INDIAN ECONOMYMerger Of BSNL And MTNL

Union Cabinet has approved the revival plan of BSNL and MTNL and in-principle merger of the two.

The following was approved by the Union cabinet:

- Administrative allotment of spectrum for 4G services to BSNL and MTNL. This will be funded by the Government of India by capital infusion in these PSUs at a value of over Rs 20,000 Crore,
- BSNL and MTNL will also raise long-term bonds of Rs 15,000 Cr for which sovereign guarantee will be provided by the Government of India (GoI). With this, BSNL and MTNL will restructure their existing debt.
- BSNL and MTNL will also offer Voluntary Retirement to their employees, aged 50 years and above through attractive Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS), the cost of which will be borne by the Government of India through budgetary support.
- BSNL and MTNL will monetise their assets so as to raise resources for retiring debt, servicing of bonds, network upgradation, expansion and meeting the operational fund requirements.
- In-principle merger of BSNL and MTNL. An immediate merger will not be feasible, given that MTNL is a listed entity. Till the time the process is completed, MTNL will work as a subsidiary of BSNL.

Comment: With these steps, BSNL and MTNL are expected to turn EBITDA (Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization) positive in the next two years. As on August 31, private operators held 89.78% market share of the wireless subscribers whereas BSNL and MTNL, the two PSU access service providers, had a market share of only 10.22%, according to latest TRAI data.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUESEcological Flow Notification

Union Government has advanced the deadline for implementation of ecological flow notification for Ganga – which came into effect in October 2018 – from October 2021 to December 2019.

Norms for minimum environmental flow (e-flow) for Ganga:

- The e-flows are the acceptable flow regimes that are required to maintain a river in the desired environmental state.
- The e-flow notification specifies that the upper stretches of the Ganga — from its origins in the glaciers and until Haridwar — would have to maintain:
- 20% of the monthly average flow of the preceding 10-days between November and March, which is the dry season;
- 25% of the average during the ‘lean season’ of October, April and May; and
- 30% of monthly average during the monsoon months of June-September.
- Any dam or structure meant for diversion of river flows for the purpose of irrigation, hydro-power and domestic or industrial use will now have to maintain the minimum flow. However, mini and micro projects, which do not alter the flow significantly are exempted.
- The Central Water Commission (CWC) is the designated authority for supervision, monitoring, regulation of flows. Power projects will be assessed by the CWC quarterly for compliance after December 2019.
- The central government through National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) may direct release of additional water in the river Ganga to meet special demand as and when required.

Smallest Ozone Hole in Decades

During September and October months of 2019, the ozone hole over the Antarctic has been the smallest observed since 1982.

- The presence of abnormal weather patterns in the atmosphere over Antarctica is responsible for shrinkage of the ozone hole.
- Due to the warmer temperatures over Antarctica in 2019, fewer polar stratospheric clouds formed and they couldn't persist longer, which limited the ozone-depletion process.
- Thus, shrinkage of the ozone hole is not a sign of a fast track recovery of atmospheric ozone but the result of the temporary warming of Antarctica.

Ozone

- Ozone (composed of three atoms of oxygen) occurs both in the Earth's upper atmosphere (stratosphere) and at ground level (troposphere). It can be good or bad, depending on where it is found.
- Good Ozone: Ozone occurs naturally in the Earth's upper atmosphere (Stratosphere) where it forms a protective layer that shields us from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays.
- Ozone-depleting gases like chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), HCFCs, halons, destroy this protective shield and causes the hole in the ozone.
- India had adopted the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol (aims to phase-down hydrofluorocarbons).
- Bad Ozone: In the Earth's lower atmosphere (troposphere) near ground level, ozone is formed when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, industrial boilers, refineries, chemical plants, and other sources react chemically in the presence of sunlight.
- Surface level Ozone is a harmful air pollutant.

SAFAR

The System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR) is a national initiative introduced by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) to measure the air quality of a metropolitan city, by measuring the overall pollution level and the location-specific air quality of the city.

- The system is indigenously developed by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and is operationalized by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).
 - It has a giant true color LED display that gives out real-time air quality index on a 24x7 basis with color-coding (along with 72 hours advance forecast).

- The ultimate objective of the project is to increase awareness among the general public regarding the air quality in their city so that appropriate mitigation measures and systematic action can be taken up.
 - It organizes awareness drive by educating the public (prompting self-mitigation), and
 - It also helps the policy-makers to develop mitigation strategies keeping in mind the nation's economic development.
- SAFAR is an integral part of India's first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi.
 - It monitors all weather parameters like temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind speed, and wind direction, UV radiation, and solar radiation.
 - Pollutants monitored: PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, Carbon Monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x), Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂), Benzene, Toluene, Xylene, and Mercury.
- The World Meteorological Organization has recognized SAFAR as a prototype activity on the basis of the high-quality control and standards maintained in its implementation.
- SAFAR system would benefit cost savings to several other sectors like agriculture, aviation, infrastructure, disaster management, tourism, etc. which directly or indirectly gets affected by air quality and weather.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT

Odisha Integrated Irrigation Project For Climate Resilient Agriculture

The Government of India, Government of Odisha and the World Bank signed a US\$165 million loan agreement for the Odisha Integrated Irrigation Project for Climate Resilient Agriculture.

About:

- The Project will be implemented in rural areas vulnerable to droughts and largely dependent on rainfed agriculture. It will benefit about 125,000 smallholder farmer households from 15 districts of Odisha.
- The project will support smallholder farmers strengthen the resilience of their production systems as well as diversify and improve the marketing of their produce, for increased income.
- The \$165 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a 6-year grace period, and a maturity of 24 years.
- It is a project under the National Action Plan on Climate Change of the Government of India.

Need of project:

- Since 2009, the frequency of droughts in the state has increased from 1 in 5 years to 1 in 2 years.
- About 70 percent of total cultivated area is prone to droughts compared to 40 percent in the 1970s.
- Agriculture is also a major source of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in Odisha, responsible for about 25 percent of the GHG emissions in the state.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another"

— Mahatma Gandhi

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q. What is Ozone Layer Depletion? Evaluate the efforts being made to protect the Ozone Layer?

Ozone (O₃) is a protective layer in the atmosphere of the Earth. It is found in the lower portion of stratosphere. The Ozone Layer acts as a shield to protect the earth against harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Ozone is regarded harmful at ground level but stratospheric ozone plays a vital role in the protection of all living beings on Earth.

Ozone Layer Depletion:

- The ozone layer depletion was first identified to be a potential problem in the early 1970s. It is the gradual thinning of Earth's ozone layer in the upper atmosphere caused by the release of ozone depleting substances.
- Ozone layer depletion causes increased UV radiation levels at the Earth's surface, which is damaging to human health. UV radiation also affects terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, altering growth, food chains and biochemical cycles.

Efforts to protect the Ozone Layer Depletion:

- In 1985, countries adopted the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer.
- According to this Convention, the parties were to promote cooperation on the effects of human activities on the ozone layer and to adopt legislative or administrative measures against activities likely to have adverse effects on the ozone layer.
- The Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances in 1987 is regarded as the greatest effort and environmental success of United Nations towards protecting the Ozone Layer.
- The objective of Montreal Protocol was to cut down the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances, in order to reduce their presence in the atmosphere and thus protect the Earth's ozone layer.
- The Montreal Protocol was amended by the Kigali Agreement. It came into force from 1st January 2019. This is a legally binding agreement between the signatory parties with non-compliance measures. It has divided the signatory parties into three groups-
- The first group consists of rich and developed economies like USA, UK and EU countries who will start to phase down HFCs by 2019 and reduce it to 15% of 2012 levels by 2036.
- The second group consists of emerging economies like China, Brazil as well as some African countries that will start phase down by 2024 and reduce it to 20% of 2021 levels by 2045.
- The third group consists of developing economies and some of the hottest climatic countries like India, Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia who will start phasing down HFCs by 2028 and reduce it to 15% of 2024-2026 levels till 2047.
- The Kigali Agreement also provides for a multilateral fund for HFC reduction.

Conclusion: The recent detection of the 'rogue' production of CFC-11, one of the most powerful ozone depleting gases is a reminder that we should be vigilant. The actions taken through the Vienna Convention, the Montreal Protocol, and the successive amendments to the protocol were planet-saving steps. But it is also important to be watchful and not undo the good that has been done to the ozone layer.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQS

1. 'SAFAR' monitors which of the following pollutants:
 1. Mercury
 2. PM10
 3. Benzene
 4. Lead
 5. PM2.5Select the correct answer using codes given below:
 - (a) 1, 3 and 4 only
 - (b) 2 and 5 only
 - (c) **1, 2, 3 and 5 only**
 - (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
2. With reference to the ecological flow notification, consider the following statements:
 1. All dam or structure meant for diversion of river flows for the purpose of irrigation, hydro-power and domestic or industrial use will now have to maintain the minimum flow.
 2. The Central Water Commission (CWC) is the designated authority for supervision, monitoring, regulation of flows.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. Which one of the following states has decided that no government jobs will be given to persons having more than two children after January 1, 2021 as per the small family norm?
 - (a) Kerala
 - (b) Tamil Nadu
 - (c) Bihar
 - (d) **Assam**
4. Bandung Principles, recently seen in news, is related to:
 - (a) **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**
 - (b) BRICS
 - (c) G20
 - (d) Paris Agreement, UNFCCC
5. With reference to the Peritoneal dialysis, consider the following statements:
 1. It is a treatment for kidney failure that uses the lining of your abdomen, or belly, to filter your blood inside your body.
 2. It reduces the demand on the healthcare system and offers patient autonomy.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