

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Women Help Desks in Police Stations**

Ministry of Home Affairs has sanctioned Women Help Desks in Police Stations across the country.

About:

- Ministry of Home Affairs has sanctioned a sum Rs. 100 crores from Nirbhaya Fund for setting up/strengthening of Women Help Desks in Police Stations.
- This scheme would be implemented by the States and Union Territories.
- Women Help Desks would focus on making the Police Stations more women friendly and approachable, as they would be the first and single point of contact for any woman walking into a police station.
- Essentially, lady police officers would be deployed at these help desks. These help desks would have enlisted panel of experts like lawyers, psychologists and NGOs to facilitate legal aid, counseling, shelter, rehabilitation and training etc.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Removal of Anglo-Indians Reservation in Legislative Bodies**

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the removal of reservation for Anglo-Indians in legislative bodies.

- Anglo-Indians were provided two nominated seats in the Lok Sabha and one nominated seat in the State Legislative Assemblies to ensure adequate representation of the community in elected legislative bodies.
- Anglo-Indians constitute a religious, social, as well as a linguistic minority. Being numerically an extremely small community, and being interspersed all over India, the Anglo-Indians were provided reservations in legislative bodies.
- The reservation for the Anglo-Indian community was extended till the year 2020 through the 95th Amendment, 2009. Originally, this provision was to operate till 1960.

Constitutional Provisions

- Article 366: It defines Anglo-Indian as a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only.
- Article 331: It states that the President can nominate two members of the Anglo-Indian community to the Lok Sabha if the community is not adequately represented.
- Article 333: It states that the Governor of a State may if he is of the opinion that the Anglo Indian community needs representation in the Legislative Assembly of the State and is not adequately represented therein, nominate one member of that community to the Assembly.
- Article 334(b): The reservation of the Anglo Indian community in the Legislative bodies was extended for 40 years in 1949 through the insertion of this article.
- National Commission for SCs (Article 338) : It investigates all matters relating to the Constitutional and other legal safeguards for the Anglo-Indian community and report to the President upon their working

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Exercise Indra 2019**

Exercise INDRA 2019 will be conducted in India from 10 — 19 December 2019 simultaneously at Babina (near Jhansi), Pune, and Goa.

About:

- Exercise INDRA 2019 a joint, tri services exercise between India and Russia.
- The INDRA series of exercise began in 2003 and the First joint Tri Services Exercise was conducted in 2017.
- Company sized mechanised contingents, fighter and transport aircraft as well as ships of respective Army, Air Force and Navy will participate in this exercise of ten days duration.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Fifth Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy Statement, 2019-20**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its fifth bi-monthly Monetary Policy has kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.15 per cent.

About:

- The six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) headed by Governor Shaktikanta Das unanimously voted for a status quo policy.
- The reverse credit policy has also maintained the reverse repo rate at 4.90 per cent and the marginal standing facility rate and Bank Rate at 5.40 per cent.
- The real GDP growth for 2019-20 has been revised downwards from 6.1 per cent in the October policy to 5.0 per cent.

Comment:

- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the decisions are in consonance with the objective of achieving the medium-term target for consumer price index inflation of 4 per cent while supporting growth.
- The surprise move was prompted by a spike in headline inflation above the 4% medium-term target in October, while growth fell to a six-year low of 4.5% in the September quarter.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) constituted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) determines the policy interest rate required to achieve the inflation target.
- The committee comprises six members - three officials of the RBI and three external members nominated by the Government of India. The Governor of RBI is the chairperson ex officio of the committee.

Investor Education And Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA)

Investor Education & Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) signed a MOU with Bank of Baroda for Investor Awareness.

About:

- In 2016, Government of India established Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) under the provisions of section 125 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- The Authority is entrusted with the responsibility of administration of the Investor Education Protection Fund (IEPF), make refunds of shares, unclaimed dividends, matured deposits/debentures etc. to investors and to promote awareness among investors.
- IEPF has been set-up under Section 205C of the Companies Act, 1956 by way of the Companies (Amendment) Act, 1999.

Fugitive Economic Offender

A special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court declared jeweller Nirav Modi as a fugitive economic offender (FEO). Nirav Modi is the second person to be declared a fugitive under the FEO act after Vijay Mallya.

- About: Fugitive Economic Offenders Act (FEOA) became a law on July 31, 2018.
- Objectives:
 - To deter economic offenders from avoiding the process of Indian law by remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.
 - To ensure that fugitive economic offenders return to India to face the action in accordance with law.
- Defining Fugitive economic offender (FEO): FEO is defined as an individual who has committed offences involving an amount of 100 crore rupees or more and has ran away from India to avoid criminal prosecution.
- Special Court: A special court will be established under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 to declare a person as a Fugitive Economic Offender.
- Attachment of property: Special courts can direct the Central government to seize assets of fugitive economic offender including those that are proceeds of the crime.
- Appeal: Appeals against the orders of the special court will lie before the High Court.

Related Info: Nirav Modi was arrested in London in March this year and is presently at the Wandsworth Prison fighting extradition to India on charges of fraud and money laundering in the nearly \$2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB).

Forex Reserves

India's Foreign Exchange (Forex) reserves have crossed the \$450-billion mark for the first time ever on the back of strong investment inflows which enabled the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to buy dollars from the market.

- India's forex reserves were at \$451.7 billion on 3rd December 2019, an increase of \$38.8 billion over end-March 2019.

- The rise in forex reserves will give the central bank the leeway to act against any sharp depreciation of the rupee.
- At \$451.7 billion, the country's import cover is now over 11 months.
- India's forex reserves fell to \$274.8 billion in September of 2013, prompting the Centre and RBI to unleash measures to attract inflows. It has been a steady rise for the reserves since then, with \$175 billion added in the last six years.

Foreign Exchange Reserves

- Foreign exchange reserves are assets held on reserve by a central bank in foreign currencies, which can include bonds, treasury bills and other government securities.
 - It needs to be noted that most foreign exchange reserves are held in U.S. dollars.
- These assets serve many purposes but are most significantly held to ensure that the central bank has backup funds if the national currency rapidly devalues or becomes altogether insolvent.
- India's Forex Reserve include:
 - Foreign Currency Assets (such as dollar)
 - Gold
 - Special Drawing Rights

Reserve Position in the International Monetary Fund

- A reserve tranche position implies a portion of the required quota of currency each member country must provide to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that can be utilized for its own purposes.
- The reserve tranche is basically an emergency account that IMF members can access at any time without agreeing to conditions or paying a service fee.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Sarai 14 Mld Sewage Treatment Plant

India's first Hybrid Annuity (HAM) project in sewerage sector, the 14MLD Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) at Sarai in Haridwar, was inaugurated by Chief Minister of Uttarakhand.

About:

- The Sarai 14 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant is the first STP to be completed under the Hybrid Annuity (HAM) Based Public Private Partnership Model, involving a cost of Rs. 41.40 crores
- This Plant is based on advanced aerobic biological process, Sequential Batch Reactor (SBR) process, capable of removing the nutrients during treatment and is a 100% eco-friendly project.
- The vision of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is long term and hence the capability being created would fully take care of the requirements up to 2035.

Hybrid Annuity (HAM):

- In financial terminology hybrid annuity means that the government makes payment in a fixed amount for a considerable period and then in a variable amount in the remaining period.
- It is a mix of the EPC (engineering, procurement and construction) and BOT (build, operate, transfer) models.
- Advantage of HAM is that it gives enough liquidity to the developer and the financial risk is shared by the government. Government's policy is that the HAM will be used in stalled projects where other models are not applicable.

Aerial And Dart Seeding

The Delhi High Court asked forest authorities to consider the possibility of dart seeding as a possible method for increasing the forest cover in Delhi.

Aerial seeding:

- Procedure: is a well-established concept, but this is generally achieved not with darts but by spraying seeds through an aircraft or a drone.
- Application: Aerial seeding can be used not only to plant various crops but also to spread grasses to large areas of the land after wildfires.
- Benefits: Aerial seeding is adopted because it is quicker and more effective than planting manually. It also allows access to areas where the terrain is rocky or at high elevation.

Dart seeding:

- Procedure: Dart seeding is used with the same broad objective as aerial seeding: a plantation in inaccessible areas. The process involves throwing darts containing seeds onto open ground.

- Benefits: In aerial seeding, many seeds fail to germinate. If dart plantation is done from a low-flying helicopter, seeds have a relatively better chance of survival as they reach deeper into the ground.

Related Info: Plantation with both aerial and dart plantations is carried out close to the onset of monsoon as watering the seeds is often challenging in inaccessible areas.

PRELIMS SPECIFIC FACTS- INDICES, DAYS, EVENTS, AWARDS ETC

National Florence Nightingale Awards

The President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, presented the National Florence Nightingale Awards to nursing personnel on the occasion of International Nurses Day.

About:

- Lini PN, the 30-year-old nurse from Kerala who died of the deadly Nipah virus that she contracted while treating a patient last year during the Nipah outbreak, was posthumously awarded National Florence Nightingale Award-2019.
- Apart from Lini, 35 other nurses were also awarded this year in two slots of 18 awardees each.
- National Florence Nightingale awards were instituted in the year 1973 by the Indian government as a mark of recognition for the meritorious services rendered by nurses.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT

No KALIA Assistance For Rabi Crop 2019

The decision of State government to merge its flagship scheme Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) with the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) reportedly due to financial constraints has dealt a heavy blow to the small and marginal farmers in Odisha.

About:

- Reportedly under PM-Kisan scheme, the central government is providing annually Rs 6,000 in three equal installments to about 14 crore farmers while Odisha government under KALIA had assured that the beneficiary farmers will be provided Rs 10,000 each per annum for two crops (Rs 5,000 for Kharif and Rs 5,000 for Rabi crop).
- However, the existing plan of KALIA scheme has been changed and as per new guidelines instead of Rs 10,000 under the scheme, the State government will give Rs 4,000 to farmers from 2020-21 while the remaining Rs 6,000 will be given to farmers under Centre's PM-KISAN, sources added.
- This apparently reduces the annual assistance of farmers in Odisha by as much as Rs 6000 (from Rs 16000 to Rs 10000). Further, the government made it clear that as all the eligible farmers shall get assistance from PM-KISAN from 2019-20, no assistance for Rabi'2019 will be given under KALIA scheme to these farmers.
- While there is no provision for the big/large farmers under KALIA scheme, they are eligible to get assistance of Rs 6000 from PM-KISAN scheme annually. On the other hand, the actual cultivators (share croppers) who are landless, if any, will continue to get Rs 10000 assistance from KALIA scheme annually, since they are not considered under PM-KISAN.
- Moreover, the government notification said that KALIA scheme will be extended till PM-KISAN continues.

Three Odisha Airports To Be Included Under UDAN-4 Scheme

In a bid to improve flight connectivity in Odisha, the central government has decided to include three more airports under the fourth phase of Regional Connectivity Scheme-UDAN. The airports to be included under UDAN-4 are Rourkela (Sundergarh), Utkela (Kalahandi) and Jeypore (Koraput).

- A decision regarding the same was taken today during a high-level meeting between Union Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola and Odisha Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy.
- Earlier this year, commercial flight service was initiated from Veer Surendra Sai Airport at Jharsuguda to six cities of the country under the third phase of UDAN scheme.
- Sources said, a total amount of over Rs 160 crore was sanctioned for development of airports at Jharsuguda, Jeypore, Utkela and Rourkela, taking the cumulative allocation to over Rs. 1,200 crore for development of airports and air connectivity in Odisha.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Write short notes on the direct and indirect instruments that are used for implementing Monetary Policy.

Ans:

Monetary policy refers to the use of monetary instruments under the control of the central bank to regulate magnitudes such as interest rates, money supply and availability of credit with a view to achieving the ultimate objective of economic policy. There are several direct and indirect instruments that are used for implementing monetary policy.

- **Repo Rate:** The (fixed) interest rate at which the Reserve Bank provides overnight liquidity to banks against the collateral of government and other approved securities under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF).
- **Reverse Repo Rate:** The (fixed) interest rate at which the Reserve Bank absorbs liquidity, on an overnight basis, from banks against the collateral of eligible government securities under the LAF.
- **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF):** The LAF consists of overnight as well as term repo auctions. Progressively, the Reserve Bank has increased the proportion of liquidity injected under fine-tuning variable rate repo auctions of a range of tenors. The aim of term repo is to help develop the inter-bank term money market, which in turn can set market-based benchmarks for pricing of loans and deposits, and hence improve the transmission of monetary policy. The Reserve Bank also conducts variable interest rate reverse repo auctions, as necessitated under the market conditions.
- **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF):** A facility under which scheduled commercial banks can borrow an additional amount of overnight money from the Reserve Bank by dipping into their Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) portfolio up to a limit at a penal rate of interest. This provides a safety valve against unanticipated liquidity shocks to the banking system.
- **Corridor:** The MSF rate and reverse repo rate determine the corridor for the daily movement in the weighted average call money rate.
- **Bank Rate:** It is the rate at which the Reserve Bank is ready to buy or rediscount bills of exchange or other commercial papers. The Bank Rate is published under Section 49 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. This rate has been aligned to the MSF rate and, therefore, changes automatically as and when the MSF rate changes alongside policy repo rate changes.
- **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR):** The average daily balance that a bank is required to maintain with the Reserve Bank as a share of such percent of its Net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) that the Reserve Bank may notify from time to time in the Gazette of India.
- **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR):** The share of NDTL that a bank is required to maintain in safe and liquid assets, such as unencumbered government securities, cash and gold. Changes in SLR often influence the availability of resources in the banking system for lending to the private sector.
- **Open Market Operations (OMOs):** These include both, outright purchase and sale of government securities, for injection and absorption of durable liquidity, respectively.
- **Market Stabilisation Scheme (MSS):** This instrument for monetary management was introduced in 2004. Surplus liquidity of a more enduring nature arising from large capital inflows is absorbed through the sale of short-dated government securities and treasury bills. The cash so mobilised is held in a separate government account with the Reserve Bank.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. India's first Hybrid Annuity (HAM) project in sewerage sector, the 14MLD Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) is located in which of the following places?
(a) **Haridwar**
(b) Nagpur
(c) Hyderabad
(d) Cuttack
2. With reference to the Fugitive economic offender (FEO), consider the following statements:
 1. It is defined as an individual who has committed offences involving an amount of 100 crore rupees or more and has ran away from India to avoid criminal prosecution.
 2. A special court will be established under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 to declare a person as a Fugitive Economic Offender.

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 Aerial seeding, consider the following statements:
 1. It can be used not only to plant various crops but also to spread grasses to large areas of the land after wildfires.
 2. Plantation with both aerial and dart plantations is carried out close to the onset of monsoon as watering the seeds is often challenging in inaccessible areas.

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 fifth bi-monthly Monetary Policy statement, 2019-20, consider the following statements:
 1. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its fifth bi-monthly Monetary Policy has kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.15 per cent.
 2. The Monetary Policy committee comprises eight members - four officials of the RBI and four external members nominated by the 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
5. With reference to the Investor Education & Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA), consider the following statements:
 1. Government of India established Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) under the provisions of SEBI Act 1992.
 2. The Authority is entrusted with the responsibility of administration of the Investor Education Protection Fund (IEPF), make refunds of shares, unclaimed dividends, matured deposits/debentures etc. to investors and to promote awareness among investors.

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. National Florence Nightingale awards were instituted in the year 1973 by the Indian government as a mark of recognition for the meritorious services rendered by:

(a) Doctors
(b) **Nurses**
(c) Lawyers
(d) Engineers
7. Exercise INDRA 2019 a joint, tri services exercise between India and:

(a) **Russia**
(b) U.S.A
(c) France
(d) Germany
8. With reference to the Women Help Desks in Police Stations, consider the following statements:
 1. This scheme would be implemented by the Central Ministry of Home Affairs.
 2. Women Help Desks would focus on making the Police Stations more women friendly and approachable, as they would be the first and single point of contact for any woman walking into a police station.

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