

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Substance Abuse**

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment informed Parliament about the substance abuse trends in the country. The data was determined by a National Survey conducted in 2018 to collect state-wise data on the Extent and Pattern of Substance Use.

Age Group 10-17 years:

- The country has 30 lakh individuals in the age group 10-17 years who consume alcohol, with a prevalence of 1.3 %.
- In the same age group, 20 lakh individuals use cannabis, a prevalence of 0.9 %, while 40 lakh users (1.8 %) use opioids. Sedatives and inhalant users number 20 lakh (0.58 %) and 30 lakh (1.17 %) respectively.
- Additionally, there are over 4 lakh Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS) users (0.18 %), followed by 2 lakh cocaine users (0.06 %) and 2 lakh users of hallucinogens (0.07 %).

Age Group 18-75 years:

- For individuals in the age-group 18-75 years, alcohol users number 15.1 crore (17.10 %).
- There are 2.9 crore cannabis users (3.30 %), 1.9 crore opioid users (2.1 %), 1.1 crore users of sedatives (1.21 %), 60 lakh users of inhalants (0.58 %), 20 lakh users each of ATS (0.18 %) and hallucinogens (0.13 %), and 10 lakh cocaine users (0.11 %).

Social Security Agreements (SSAS)

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing the Agreement on Social Security between the India and Brazil.

About:

- India has been entering into bilateral Social Security Agreements (SSAs) with other countries in order to protect the interests of Indian professionals / skilled workers working abroad for short durations and enhance the competitiveness of Indian companies.
- SSAs broadly provide the following benefits:
 - Avoiding making of double social security contributions by the workers (detachment);
 - Easy remittance of benefits (Exportability);
 - Aggregating the contribution periods (in two countries) to prevent loss of benefits (Totalization).
 - Disability insurance benefits to the Indian nationals working abroad.
- As on date, India has signed SSAs with 18 countries.

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC**IBM GRAF**

International technology company IBM plans to make IBM GRAF available in India so as to improve the accuracy of forecasts.

About:

- IBM Global High-Resolution Atmospheric Forecasting System (IBM GRAF) is a high-precision, rapidly updating global weather model that updates hourly and at a 3km resolution to provide a clearer picture of weather activity around the globe.
- IBM GRAF can generate forecasts at a resolution of 3 kilometres. This is a significantly higher resolution than the 12-kilometre models used by the India Meteorological Department to generate forecasts.
- For its forecasts, IBM relies on a global network of sensors — automatic weather station, data bouys and barometric pressure data from cellphones of users who've downloaded the application.

- Weather forecasts will be available to individuals for free download and can be used by farmers.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**V.S. Sirpurkar Commission**

The Supreme Court has set up an inquiry commission led by its former judge, Justice V.S. Sirpurkar, to probe the circumstances of the police 'encounter' killing of four persons accused in the gang-rape and murder of a veterinarian in Hyderabad.

About:

- The four accused were taken to the scene of the crime around 60 km from Hyderabad in the early hours of December 6 for a re-construction of crime scene. The Telangana government stuck to its version that the accused men surprised their police escort there, grabbed their guns and tried to kill the policemen to escape custody.
- The commission will sit in Hyderabad and will complete investigation in 6 months
- The apex court has, meanwhile, stayed the proceedings in the Telangana High Court and the NHRC into the incident.

Chartered Designs of India (CDI); Design Education Quality Mark (DEQM)

The India Design Council (IDC) has launched two new Initiatives to promote Design Education and Standards namely the Chartered Designs of India (CDI) and the Design Education Quality Mark (DEQM).

About:

- These two initiatives of IDC and National Institute of design, Ahmedabad will help to address the 5 challenges of scale, quality of design, quality of education for design, raising the priority for design in industry and design for public purpose.
- The DEQM will benchmark design education programmes on predetermined standards and will accord Design Education Quality Mark to institutions that meet the provisions of the published standard.
- CDI is envisaged as an institution that will establish and uphold the professional standards of design practice in India.

India Design Council (IDC):

India Design Council (IDC) is an autonomous body of the Government of India established under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

It is a national strategic body for multi-disciplinary design and is involved in promotion of design to make India a design enabled country. It is mandated to implement the National Design Policy (NDP) adopted in 2007.

Samagra Shiksha

Ministry of Human Resource Development is implementing the Scheme of Vocationalisation of School Education.

About

Under the scheme, a vocational subject is offered for Classes IX to XII along with the general education to provide necessary employability and vocational skills for a variety of occupations.

The above scheme is being implemented under the umbrella of 'Samagra Shiksha – an integrated scheme for school education'.

Key Provisions:

- Samagra Shiksha is an integrated scheme for school education extending from pre-school to class XII to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.

- It subsumes the three Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
 - The scheme treats school education holistically as a continuum from Pre-school to Class 12.
- The main emphasis of the Scheme is on improving the quality of school education by focussing on the two T's – Teacher and Technology.

Atal Bhujal Yojana

The Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) is a centrally sponsored scheme worth Rs.6,000 crore for sustainable management of groundwater with community participation.

About:

- It envisages people's participation through the formation of 'Water User Associations', water budgeting, preparation & implementation of Gram-panchayat-wise water security plans, etc.
- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti (earlier known as Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation).
- The scheme is being funded by the Government of India and the World Bank on 50:50 basis.
- The identified over-exploited and water-stressed areas for the implementation of the scheme are Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
- The States have been selected according to the degree of groundwater exploitation and degradation, established legal and regulatory instruments, institutional readiness, and experience in implementing initiatives related to groundwater management.

INDIAN ECONOMY

International Financial Services Centres (IFSC) Authority Bill, 2019

The Lok Sabha passed the International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019.

About:

- An International Financial Services Centres (IFSC) provides jurisdiction for carrying out international financial services domestically.
- Gujarat International Finance Tech-City (GIFT City) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat is the only functional IFSC in India as of now. There is no limit on the number of IFSCs that can be set up. Other states can also seek nod for similar centres.
- The Bill will apply to all IFSCs set up under the Special Economic Zones Act, 2005.
- The Bill sets up the International Financial Services Centres Authority. It will consist of nine members, appointed by the central government. Members will have a term of three years, subject to reappointment.
- The bill seeks to establish a unified Authority to develop and regulate the financial services market in the IFSC's in India. Currently, multiple agencies are entrusted with regulating the specific market including the RBI, SEBI, IRDA and PFRDA.
- Fourteen Central Acts would be amended including seven relating to the RBI, three each relating to the SEBI and the IRDA and one on the PFRDA.
- The proposed authority will be subjected to the scrutiny of the CAG and the CVC. The Central agencies like the CBI, the ED and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act-PMLA will have jurisdiction over the proposed authority.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Licypriya Kangujam

At the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP-25 being held at Madrid, Spain, the eight-year-old environmental activist Licypriya Kangujam – known as Indian 'Greta' – urged global leaders to take immediate action to save the planet.

About:

- Licypriya Kangujam (born 2011) is a child environmental activist from Manipur.
- In October 2019, Kangujam started the "Great October March 2019" at India Gate, New Delhi with nearly thousands of her supporters to enact the climate law in India.
- Licypriya has come out with a symbolic device called SUKIFU (Survival Kit for the Future) to curb the air pollution. SUKIFU, a wearable plant is almost a zero budget kit designed from trash to provide fresh air into our body when the pollution rate is high.

Honours received in 2019:

- "India Peace Prize" from International Youth committee at the World Youth Summit.
- "World Children Peace Prize" from Global Peace Index - Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).
- "Rising Star" by Earth Day Network Headquarter based in Washington DC, USA.

River Pollution

Central Water Commission (CWC) has published a report on river pollution by Heavy metals. The study was conducted from May 2014 to April 2018 and spanned 67 rivers in 20 river basins.

About:

- Samples taken from 65% of the water quality stations spanning India's major rivers showed contamination by one or more heavy metals, exceeding safe limits set by the Bureau of Indian Standards.
- Iron emerged as the most common contaminant with 156 of the sampled sites registering levels of the metal above safe limits. The other major contaminants found in the samples were lead, nickel, chromium, cadmium and copper. None of the sites registered arsenic levels above the safe limit.
- The main sources of heavy metal pollution are mining, milling, plating and surface finishing industries that discharge a variety of toxic metals into the environment.

Impact:

- The presence of metals in drinking water is to some extent unavoidable and certain metals, in trace amounts, required for good health.
- However, when present above safe limits, they are associated with a range of slowly progressing physical, muscular, and neurological degenerative processes that mimic Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Isro's Rocket Launchpad**

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has begun preparatory works for setting up a third rocket launchpad in the small coastal hamlet of Kulasekharapattinam in the Thuthukudi district of Tamil Nadu.

About:

- At present, the ISRO has two launch pads at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.
- The demand for additional launch pads has arisen as a result of the increase in the number of satellite launches from India, both for domestic and international customers. ISRO says that it had launched as many as 17 missions in 2018 alone.
- Recently, Union Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office informed Rajya Sabha that the government had a proposal to set up a rocket launching pad near Kulasekarapattinam in Tamil Nadu.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**Odisha Tourism To Launch Marine Drive Eco-Retreat**

As part of efforts to boost the global appeal of its key destinations, Odisha Tourism is all set to launch a marine drive eco-retreat offering a unique blend of premium glamorous camping, luxury and heritage and nature, an official said.

- The marine drive eco retreat has been envisioned as eastern India's first 'Glamping' festival a unique experience of glamorous camping set up at the pristine Ramachandi Beach near the grand Konark Sun Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Scheduled from Saturday to January 31, 2020, the eco-retreat promises to be a unique experience of glamorous camping in 50 luxury cottages, delectable cuisine, beach spa, adventure and water sports activities, nature trails and wholesome day itineraries, cultural evenings, and a lot more, he said.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: What do you understand by Eco-tourism? What can be some possible measures to promote it in India?

The concept of developing tourism with due consideration of the environment is called Eco-tourism. Eco-tourism means the environment should not be disturbed when we develop the tourism industry, neither by wastes nor by preparing tourist place and not by disturbance to the components of environment by the tourists. It could be promoted in India by several measures.

Which are as follows:

- We should combat the environmental problems at tourist places by controlling the country's rate of development.
- A section should be reserved for maintaining natural environment at the places of tourism.
- Tourism comprises complete system of nature which includes the man and his activities, wild life, mountains and valleys, rivers, forests, social and cultural system etc. So, the whole system requires an environmental and ecological preservation and should be promoted.
- By providing better conserved and promoted natural environment, we can attract more tourists. India has very rich and diverse places to tour and will have better chances to promote eco-tourism.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. With reference to the IBM Global High-Resolution Atmospheric Forecasting System (IBM GRAF), consider the following statements:

1. It is a high-precision, rapidly updating global weather model that updates hourly.
2. It can only generate forecasts at a resolution of 12-kilometres.

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. Justice V.S. Sirpurkar Commission, recently seen in news, is related to:

- (a) Probe the circumstances of the police 'encounter' killing of four persons accused in the gang-rape and murder of a veterinarian in Hyderabad.
- (b) Look into Relationship and power balance between the Centre and States
- (c) Look into GST revenue shortfall faced by states

- (d) None of the above
3. With reference to the National Survey conducted in 2018 on substance abuse trends in the country, consider the following statements:
1. In the age group 10-17 years, 20 lakh individuals use cannabis, a prevalence of 0.9 per cent.
 2. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated and is implementing a National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) for 2018-25.

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 Central Water Commission's (CWC) recent report on river pollution by Heavy metals, consider the following statements:
1. Iron emerged as the most common contaminant with 156 of the sampled sites registering levels of the metal above safe limits.
 2. None of the sites registered arsenic levels above the safe limit.
- 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. Recently, the Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing the Agreement on Social Security between the India and which of the following country?
- (a) Brazil**
(b) China
(c) Mali
(d) Iran
6. ISRO had decided to open a new launchpad station at which of the following states ?
- (a) Andhra Pradesh
(b) Telengana
(c) Tamila Nadu
(d) Odisha