

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Lok Sabha Strength**

Former President Pranab Mukherjee said that the number of seats in Lok Sabha should be increased to 1,000 from the present 543, and advocated a corresponding increase in the number of MPs in Rajya Sabha and state legislatures.

About:

- Article 81 of the Constitution defines the composition of the House of the People or Lok Sabha. It states that the House shall not consist of more than 550 elected members of whom not more than 20 will represent Union Territories.
- At present, the strength of the Lok Sabha is 543, of which 530 have been allocated to the states, and the rest to the Union Territories.
- The strength of Lok Sabha hasn't always been 543 seats. Originally, Article 81 provided that the Lok Sabha shall not have more than 500 members. The first House constituted in 1952 had 497 members.
- The last time the strength of the Lok Sabha was revised was in 1977, which was based on the 1971 census that put the population at 55 crore.
- Arguments for change: Every MP currently represents an average 16-18 lakh Indians — too large a number to be kept in touch with in a meaningful way. Thus number of Lok Sabha seats should be rationalised on the basis of population. The population since then has more than doubled.

Important Info :

- Under Article 331, the President could nominate up to two Anglo-Indians if he/she felt the community was inadequately represented in the House.
- However, The Constitution (126th Amendment) Bill passed by Parliament last week, while extending the reservation for SC/STs, did away with the provision for nomination of Anglo Indians to Lok Sabha and some state Assemblies. This has brought the strength of Lok Sabha down to 543 now.

Three Capitals for Andhra Pradesh

The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh recently hinted that the State could have three Capitals for decentralised development, on the lines of the ones in the Republic of South Africa.

Key Points

- The state can have three capitals — legislative, executive and judicial.
- Visakhapatnam, which has infrastructure, can be considered for being the executive capital without much investment.
- Amaravati can be retained as the legislative capital.
- Kurnool can be considered as the judicial capital.
- The decision will be taken after discussing the details, logistic and reports by reputed consultancy firms.

Republic of South Africa has three capitals:

- Pretoria, the administrative capital
- Cape Town, the legislative capital
- Bloemfontein, the judicial capital
- The Constitutional Court is located in Johannesburg.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**National Broadband Mission (NBM)**

The Union Minister for Communications launched the National Broadband Mission.

Some of the objectives of the Mission are:

- Broadband access to all villages by 2022.

- Laying of incremental 30 lakhs route km of Optical Fiber Cable and increase in tower density from 0.42 to 1.0 tower per thousand of population by 2024.
- Develop innovative implementation models for Right of Way (RoW) and to work with States/UTs for having consistent policies pertaining to expansion of digital infrastructure including for RoW approvals required for laying of OFC.
- Develop a Broadband Readiness Index (BRI) to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure and conducive policy ecosystem within a State/UT.
- Creation of a digital fiber map of the Digital Communications network and infrastructure, including Optical Fiber Cables and Towers, across the country.
- Investment from stakeholders of USD 100 billion (Rs 7 Lakh Crore) including Rs 70,000 crore from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

Religion And Living Arrangements Around The World

Pew Research Center analysis released a new report titled “Religion and Living Arrangements Around the World.” The report analyses how Household living arrangements – how many people share a dwelling and how these people are related – varies by religion.

Key findings of the report:

- Worldwide, Muslims live in the biggest households. The average Muslim lives in a home of 6.4 people, followed by Hindus (5.7), Christians (4.5), Buddhists (3.9), the religiously unaffiliated – also known as “nones” (3.7) – and Jews (3.7).
- Extended-family households – where relatives such as aunts, parents and grandparents live together – are the most common living arrangement around the world. This arrangement accounts for 38% of all people, including a majority of Hindus (55%).
- Worldwide, Jews are the most likely to live alone (10%), while Muslims and Hindus are the least likely to do so (1% for each).
- Christians are the most likely to live in single-parent households. Buddhists are the least likely to live in two-parent families.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, 11% of all people live in polygamous households, including a quarter of Muslims. Outside of sub-Saharan Africa, the country having the highest share of people in polygamous households is Afghanistan (5%).
- Women, regardless of their religious affiliation, are more likely than men to be single parents.

Global Refugee Forum (GRF)

The first Global Refugee Forum (GRF), a two-day gathering of United Nations member states, began in Geneva, Switzerland, on December 17.

About:

- The Forum is jointly hosted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, and the government of Switzerland.
- The GRF will be held every four years at the Ministerial level.
- It aims to debate and discuss the response of the world’s countries to the global refugee situation. The first GRF has been organised around six areas of focus: burden- and responsibility-sharing, education, jobs and livelihoods, energy and infrastructure, solutions, and protection capacity.
- Background: According to the UNHCR, the first GRF is being held “at the end of a tumultuous decade in which the number of refugees has risen to over 25 million people worldwide”.

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

Bone Ossification

In Mumbai, investigators said they might apply for a bone ossification test to determine whether the prime accused in the murder of Vakola guitarist Bennett Rebello (55) is a minor or not.

About:

- Bone ossification, or osteogenesis, is the process of bone formation.
- This process begins between the sixth and seventh weeks of embryonic development and continues until about age twenty-five; although this varies slightly based on the individual.
- There are two types of bone ossification, intramembranous and endochondral.
- Intramembranous ossification directly converts the mesenchymal tissue to bone and forms the flat bones of the skull, clavicle, and most of the cranial bones.
- Endochondral ossification begins with mesenchymal tissue transforming into a cartilage intermediate, which is later replaced by bone and forms the remainder of the axial skeleton and the long bones.
- In 2016, the Bombay high court ruled that a bone ossification test is by itself not conclusive proof of age.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY

M.M. Naravane

Government has decided to appoint Lt Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane, as the next Chief of the Army Staff after the retirement of General Bipin Rawat on December 31, 2019.

About:

- Lt Gen Naravane will take over as Chief of the Army Staff in the substantive rank of General with effect from the afternoon of December 31, 2019.
- The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) is the professional head, commander, and the highest-ranking military officer of the Indian Army.
- The position is always held by a full general.
- Appointments to the office are made by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).
- The COAS reaches superannuation upon three years in the office or at the age of 62, whichever is earlier.

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

Global Gender Gap Report 2020

The annual Global Gender Gap Index for 2020 has been published by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Key findings:

- Iceland, Norway, and Finland occupy the top three spots in the Report.
- Yemen is ranked the worst (153rd), while Iraq is 152nd and Pakistan 151st.
- India is ranked 112th among 153 countries. India has moved down the ladder from its 108th position last year to rank below countries like China (106th), Sri Lanka (102nd), Nepal (101st), Brazil (92nd), Indonesia (85th) and Bangladesh (50th).
- India is among countries with very low women representation on company boards (13.8 per cent), while it was even worse in China (9.7 per cent).
- Globally, the average (population-weighted) distance completed to gender parity is at 68.6%, which is an improvement since last edition.
- The largest gender disparity is in political empowerment. Only 25% of the seats in parliaments around the world are occupied by women, and only 21% of the ministers are women.
- The overall global gender gap will close in 99.5 years, on average, across the 107 countries covered continuously since the first edition of the Report.

Methodology: The Report benchmarks countries on their progress towards gender parity in four dimensions: (1) Economic Participation and Opportunity, (2) Educational Attainment, (3) Health and Survival and (4) Political Empowerment.

International Migrants Day

International Migrants Day 2019 is being celebrated on December 18 with the theme #WeTogether.

About:

- The United Nations (UN) International Migrants Day is annually held on December 18 to recognize the efforts, contributions, and rights of migrants worldwide.
- It is celebrated through the UN-related agency International Organization for Migration (UN Migration).
- This date was chosen because it was on 18 December 1990 that the UN adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Related Info : In 2019, the number of migrants globally reached an estimated 272 million, 51 million more than in 2010.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**Odisha Seeks More International Air Connectivity**

Odisha Govt has requested Union Civil Aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri for more international air connectivity to the state. The govt also sought early air connectivity to Jeypore and Rourkela airstrips under the RCS-UDAN scheme.

- The state government will provide necessary support for not only developing infrastructure for aviation but also consider incentives in the shape of Viability Gap Funding (VGF) for the airline operations.
- Odisha has made tremendous stride in the last few years in terms of a steady growth of aviation traffic. Bhubaneswar and now Jharsuguda has been added to the aviation map of the country.
- While domestic flight connectivity has seen a noticeable improvement, there is still scope to increase international connectivity.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Shifting of priority from land productivity to irrigation water productivity has its own set of challenges which need to be addressed in time. Discuss.

Ans:

Agriculture remains the predominant occupation in terms of number of people employed in India and it is also critical for the country's food security. In such case, given that almost 89% of groundwater extracted in India is used for irrigation (according to the Asian Water Development Outlook, 2016), there is a need to shift priority from land productivity to irrigation water productivity (IWP) because:

- There is a major concern whether the present practice of ground water use can be sustained as the depth of ground water level continues to drop.
- The cropping pattern in India is highly skewed towards crops that are water intensive such as paddy and sugarcane which consume more than 60% of irrigation water available in the country, reducing water availability for other crops.
- The incentive structures like minimum support price; heavily subsidised electricity, water and fertilizers; etc. have played a significant role in the misalignment of crop patterns in the country.
- States such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, which have high land productivity, tend to have very low irrigation water productivity, reflecting inefficient use of water and the need to re-calibrate cropping pattern.

Irrigation water productivity (IWP), defined as the yield produced per unit of irrigation water use, has become an important criteria which takes into account both agricultural production and water

use efficiency. Increasing the value of IWP would not only alleviate the pressure of limited water resources but also ensure the food security.

IWP can be increased by adopting improved methods of irrigation and irrigation technologies such as micro-irrigation system; organic and natural farming techniques including Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF); economizing the use of fertilizers and pesticides; and adopting appropriate technology for small farmholders.

However, a few challenges are associated with shifting of priority from land productivity to IWP such as

- Fragmentation of agricultural land holdings: The declining size of landholdings impacts farm incomes and farm income is closely associated with the capability of the farmer to adopt expensive micro-irrigation systems.
- Credit availability: Lack of access to timely credit or finance has severe impact on the installation and implementation of advanced irrigation technologies and efficient agricultural practices.
- Expensive micro-irrigation: High cost of installment and poor component repairs for micro-sprinklers and inadequate technical support in the event of the sophisticated system becoming obsolete make micro-irrigation expensive.
- Knowledge gap: Lack of knowledge with farmers regarding the benefits of IWP.

Way Forward

- In order to address these challenges, a combination of measures which suit the local agro-economic context needs to be applied to improve IWP which will lead to sustainable water use in agriculture.
- Therefore, devising policies such as “Per Drop More Crop” to incentivise farmers to adopt efficient ways of water use should become a national priority to avert the looming water crisis. In addition to these measures, a combination of resource efficient methods; dynamic cropping patterns; climate change responsive farming; and intensive use of technology should form the backbone of farming in India.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. With reference to the International Migrants Day 2019, consider the following statements:
 1. It is annually held on December 18 to recognize the efforts, contributions, and rights of migrants worldwide.
 2. It is celebrated through the UN-related agency International Organization for Migration (UN Migration).

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 Bone ossification, or osteogenesis, consider the following statements:

1. This process begins between the sixth and seventh weeks of embryonic development and continues until about age 55.
2. Intramembranous ossification directly converts the mesenchymal tissue to bone and forms the flat bones of the skull, clavicle, and most of the cranial bones.

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. Government has recently decided to appoint who among the following as the next Chief of the Army Staff on December 31, 2019?
 - (a) **Manoj Mukund Naravane**
 - (b) Dalbir Singh Suhag
 - (c) Bikram Singh
 - (d) Vijay Kumar Singh
4. With reference to the National Broadband Mission, consider the following statements:
 1. One of the objectives of the Mission are Broadband access to all villages by 2020.
 2. It aims to develop a Broadband Readiness Index (BRI) to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure and conducive policy ecosystem within a State/UT.

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. The first Global Refugee Forum (GRF), a two-day gathering of United Nations member states, began in:
 - (a) New York
 - (b) Beijing
 - (c) Rome
 - (d) **Geneva**
6. With reference to the Lok Sabha, consider the following statements:
 1. Article 81 of the Constitution defines the composition of the House of the People or Lok Sabha.
 2. The last time the strength of the Lok Sabha was revised was in 1999, which was based on the 1991 census

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 annual Global Gender Gap Index for 2020, consider the following statements:
 1. It has been published by the UNESCO.
 2. India is ranked 112th among 153 countries.

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