

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**Year End Review -2019 Of Ministry Of Petroleum & Natural Gas**

Following initiatives were taken by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to address the priorities like Energy Access, Energy Efficiency, Energy Sustainability and Energy Security.

About:

- The Government launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) in 2016, with an initial target of 5 crore. It was further revised to providing 8 crore connections to an adult woman of poor households by March, 2020, which has already been achieved on 7th September, 2019.
- In 2014, The Government has introduced well targeted system of subsidy delivery to LPG consumers through PAHAL. As on 13th December 2019, 25.84 crore LPG consumers have joined the PAHAL Scheme.
- The Government notified 'Reforms in Exploration and Licensing Policy, for enhancing domestic exploration and production of oil and gas' on 28th February 2019. The salient features of Policy Reforms are as under:
 - Shifting of focus from 'revenue' to 'production maximisation'.
 - No Revenue Sharing with Government in Category- II & III sedimentary basins.
 - Boost to exploration activities by assigning greater weightage to exploration work programme.
- The National Data Repository (NDR) was established in 2017 by the Government to upkeep the vast amount of data for use in future exploration and development. Total data uploaded in NDR till 30 November, 2019 is 2.30 million line kilometres of 2D Seismic Data, 0.78 million square kilometres of 3D Seismic data and 17588 exploratory wells.
- The 13th Edition of India's flagship hydrocarbon Conference, PETROTECH-2019 was organised in February 2019 in New Delhi. This biennial International Conference presents the Indian hydrocarbon sector prevailing global oil and gas dynamics.
- India co hosted AMER8 (Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable 8) in Abu Dhabi in September 2019. India will host AMER9 in Indian in 2021.

Year End Review -2019 Ministry Of Minority Affairs

In the year 2019, Ministry of Minority Affairs focussed on educational empowerment of Minorities, especially Muslim girls, and job-oriented skill development of youths belonging to Minority communities.

Educational Empowerment:

- In the year 2019 Ministry of Minority Affairs provided "Begum Hazrat Mahal Girls Scholarships" to 3 lakh economically backward girls belonging to the six notified Minority communities.
- Under the programme to connect Madrasas with formal education, more than 750 teachers including large number of women teachers, from Madrasas from various states have been trained by the Ministry of Minority Affairs this year.

Skill Development/Employment Opportunities:

- More than 1.25 lakh youths belonging to Minority communities were provided job-oriented skill development training through "Gharib Nawaz Employment Scheme", "Seekho aur Kamao", "Nai Manzil", "Ustad", "Nai Raushni" in 2019.
- The Ministry of Minority Affairs has decided to organise 100 "Hunar Haat" in the next five years across the country to provide market and employment and employment opportunities to master artisans, craftsmen and traditional culinary experts.
- Under "Pradhanmantri Jan Vikas Karykram" (PMJVK) of the Ministry of Minority Affairs, 104 Common Service Centres have been approved across the country. These centres will work as a single-window assistance centre to provide information regarding Central Government and State Governments schemes.

Haj:

- India has become the first country in the entire world which has made the entire Haj 2020 process 100 per cent digital. Online application, E-Visa, Haj mobile app, "E-MASIHA" health facility have been provided to Indian Muslims going for Haj.

Waqf:

- 100 per cent digitisation of Waqf properties across the country has been completed.
- A programme has been launched for 100 per cent Geo tagging and digitalisation of Waqf properties across the country to ensure these properties can be utilised for welfare of the society.
- A total of 8 Mutawalis were awarded under “Qaumi Waqf Board Taraqqiati Scheme” for better management of Waqf properties in their respective state Waqf boards.

EChO Network

EChO Network is a collaborative effort of the Government of India, industry and academia.

Key Points

- EChO Network is a national program to provide a template for cross-disciplinary leadership related to ecology and environment.
- EChO Network would develop a national network to catalyse a new generation of Indians who can synthesize interdisciplinary concepts and tackle real-world problems in medicine, agriculture, ecology, and technology.
- It has a specific focus on increasing research, knowledge, and awareness of Indian ecology and the environment.
- The network aims to identify gaps in knowledge regarding the environment and then train postdoctoral leaders in research and outreach on these topics, incorporating current public and private efforts.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

US Military 'Space Force'

US President Donald Trump officially launched US military 'Space Force' at an army base near Washington.

About:

- President Trump has signed the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act and with it directed the establishment of the U.S. Space Force (USSF) as the sixth branch of the armed forces.
- The new branch will be stood up over the next 18 months. The Space Force would comprise around 16,000 Air Force and civilian personnel.
- It is not intended to put troops into orbit, but will protect US assets - such as the hundreds of satellites used for communication and surveillance.
- On the occasion, Mr Trump described space as the world's newest war-fighting domain. It comes as US military chiefs see China and Russia making advancements in the military final frontier.

Cambridge Five

Russia honoured two members of the British “Cambridge Five” spy ring that passed information to the Soviet Union during World War II.

About:

- The Cambridge Five was a KGB group of British spies who passed information to the Soviet Union during World War II and the early stages of the Cold War.
- The KGB, translated in English as Committee for State Security, was the main security agency for the Soviet Union from 1954 until its break-up in 1991.
- The group comprised Donald Maclean (1913-83), Guy Burgess (1911-63), Harold ‘Kim’ Philby (1912-88), Anthony Blunt (1907-83) and John Cairncross (1913 – 1995). None was ever prosecuted for spying.
- All of the five were convinced that the Marxism–Leninism of Soviet Communism was the best available political system, and especially the best defence against the rise of fascism.

Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP)

Afghanistan has become the first country to formally recognize Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP).

About:

- The Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) is an officially recognized book of standards as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules 1945 thereunder.

- The IP specifies the standards of drugs manufactured and marketed in India in terms of their identity, purity and strength.
- In order to ensure the quality of medicinal products, the legal and scientific standards are provided by Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) in the form of Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP).

Jus Cogens

The Congress claimed that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act not only “violates” provisions of the Constitution but also falls afoul of an international convention to which India is a signatory.

About:

- India was a signatory to the international convention on torture that talks about “providing shelter to people who face torture in another country”.
- India is bound by the principle of jus cogens that ensures human rights to those who are tortured and persecuted.

Peremptory Norm?

- A peremptory norm is also called jus cogens or ius cogens, Latin for "compelling law".
- It is a fundamental principle of international law that is accepted by the international community of states as a norm from which no derogation is permitted.
- It is generally accepted that jus cogens bans genocide, maritime piracy, slavery, wars of aggression and territorial aggrandizement, torture and refoulement.

Indo – US 2+2 Dialogue

India and the US have recently concluded second 2+2 ministerial dialogue in Washington. Several landmark agreements in both defence and Civilian sectors were signed.

Key Points

Industrial Security Annex (ISA)

- ISA to the General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) will provide a framework for exchange and protection of classified military information between the U.S. and Indian defence industries.
- Currently, under GSOMIA, such information is exchanged between the Government authorities of the two countries but not between private parties.
- This will further promote “Make in India” in the defence sector.
- In accordance with the budget announcement (2018-19), the government has already decided to set up two Defence Industrial Corridors in the country, one in Uttar Pradesh and another in Tamil Nadu.

Peacekeeping for Indo-Pacific

- Cooperation in capacity-building of UN peacekeepers from Indo-Pacific countries, based on demands from the countries concerned.
- Counter-terrorism efforts were also discussed including dangers of cross border terrorism.

Tiger Triumph Exercise

- To hold the India-U.S. joint tri-services ‘Tiger Triumph’ on an annual basis.
- The first edition was held in November 2019 as a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise.

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)

- The CDRI was launched at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, USA in September 2019. It is headquartered in New Delhi, India.
- The US is now part of it.

Water Resource Management

- Memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Ministry of Jal Shakti and the U.S. Geological Survey to promote technical cooperation in water resources management and water technology.

Space Situational Awareness (SSA)

- Cooperation for exchange of information including space debris and space traffic management.
- It ensures navigational safety of our space assets.

Young Innovators Internship Programme (YIIP)

- Create internship opportunities in key areas of science and economy.
- New opportunities for young entrepreneurs.

Parliamentary Exchange and Judicial cooperation

- Reciprocal visits by Parliamentarians from both countries.
- The U.S. Federal Judicial Center and India's National Judicial Academy in Bhopal to cooperate in the area of counter-terrorism jurisprudence to new areas of criminal jurisprudence including money laundering, drug trafficking etc.

'2+2' Dialogue

- It is a format of dialogue where the defense and foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country. 2+2 Ministerial is the highest-level institutional mechanism between the two countries.
- India holds such talks with Australia, at the foreign secretary and defense secretary level but with Japan and the US at the ministerial level.
- With the US this was the second 2+2 meeting (Washington), first was held in New Delhi in September 2018.
- US holds such ministerial dialogues with Australia and Japan also.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Insurance Sector**

The annual report of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for 2018-19 was released recently.

Key highlights of report:

- The insurance density of the life insurance sector in 2018 was \$55, unchanged from the life insurance density of the previous year.
- Life insurance penetration for 2018 was 2.74%, slightly lower than the 2.76% of 2017. Life insurance penetration increased from 2.15% in 2001 to 4.60% in 2009, and has thereafter showed a generally decreasing trend.
- The insurance density of the non-life insurance sector has risen from \$2.4 in 2001 to \$18 in 2017 and to \$19 in 2018. The non-life insurance penetration has risen from 0.56% in 2001 to 0.97% in 2018, shows the report.

Terminologies:

- Insurance density is measured as the ratio of premium (in US dollars) to the total population.
- Insurance penetration is measured as the ratio of premium (in US\$) to GDP (in US\$).
- Insurance density and insurance penetration indicate the level of development of the insurance sector.

Agricultural And Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

To promote exports from agriculture produce rich regions of India, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is sending the first trial shipment of vegetables by sea route from Varanasi to Dubai.

About:

- Parent agency: APEDA is an organization under Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India.
- Mandate: It is responsible for promoting exports of Agriculture and Processed Food Products from India.
- Background: It was established under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in 1985.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.

Digital Communications Commission (DCC)

The Digital Communications Commission (DCC) approved the recommendation of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to auction over 8,300 MHz of spectrum, including airwaves to be used for offering 5G services, with a reserve price of ₹ 5.22 lakh crore.

About:

- The Government of India, vide Resolution dated 22nd October, 2018, has re-designated the 'Telecom Commission' as the 'Digital Communications Commission'.
- The DCC consists of a Chairman, four full time members and four part time members. The Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Telecommunications is the ex-officio Chairman of the DCC.

The DCC is responsible for:

- Formulating the policy of Department of Telecommunications for approval of the Government;
- Preparing the budget for the Department of Telecommunications for each financial year and getting it approved by the Government; &
- Implementation of Government's policy in all matters concerning telecommunication.

Operation Twist

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to conduct simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities under Open Market Operations (OMO) for ₹ 10,000 crores each on December 23, 2019.

About:

- It is the first time the RBI will conduct a special open market operation (OMO) of this kind, similar to the 'Operation Twist' carried out in the United States near the start of the decade.
- The RBI said it will buy 100 billion rupees' (\$1.4 billion) worth of the current benchmark 10-year bond while selling four bonds maturing in 2020 for an equivalent amount.
- RBI has decided to conduct the special OMO after reviewing the liquidity & market situation and assessing financial conditions. Bond yields have been rising since the RBI unexpectedly left its key repo rate unchanged earlier this month.
- Analysts believe this 'Operation Twist' is aimed at bringing longer term yields lower.

Related Info:

Operation Twist was a move taken by U.S. Federal Reserve in 2011-12 to make long-term borrowing cheaper.

Silver Line Project

The Ministry of Railways has granted in-principle approval for the 'Silver Line' project.

About:

- The 'Silver Line' project is a proposal of the Kerala government that aims to connect major districts and towns with semi high-speed trains that will run on their own tracks.
- it involves laying the third and fourth railway lines from Kasaragod in the north to Kochuveli (Thiruvananthapuram) in the south for the movement of semi high-speed trains.
- The project aims to cut the travel time between the two corners from 12 hours to less than four hours. The project is scheduled to be commissioned by 2024.
- The Kerala Rail Development Corporation (K-Rail), a joint venture between the Ministry of Railways and the Kerala government will execute the project.

National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) reinstated Cyrus Pallonji Mistry to the position of Executive Chairman of Tata Sons and Director of the Tata Group of companies for the remainder of his tenure.

About:

- Cyrus Mistry was sacked both as Executive Chairman and Director of Tata Sons in 2016.
- The NCLAT held Mistry's sacking and the subsequent appointment of N Chandrasekaran to the top post at Tata Sons illegal, prejudicial, and oppressive.
- It set aside a July 2017 order by the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), which had upheld Mistry's removal from his positions at Tata Sons and other Group companies.

National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT):

- The NCLAT was constituted under Section 410 of The Companies Act, 2013 to hear appeals against the orders of the National Company Law Tribunals (NCLTs).
- It is also the appellate tribunal for orders passed by the NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016, and for orders passed by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) under Sections 202 and 211 of the IBC.

ISSUES RELATED TO INTERNAL SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Section 144 Crpc

State governments have issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code Of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973 to deal with demonstrations by protesters against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

About:

- Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) of 1973 generally prohibits public gathering.
- It authorises the Executive Magistrate of any state or territory to issue an order to prohibit the assembly of four or more people in an area.
- According to the law, every member of such 'unlawful assembly' can be booked for engaging in rioting. The maximum punishment for such act is three years.
- Moreover, obstructing police from breaking up an unlawful assembly is a punishable offence as well.
- Section 144 also restricts carrying any sort of weapon in that area where it has been imposed and people can be detained for violating it.
- Section 144 is imposed in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger of some event that has the potential to cause trouble or damage to human life or property.
- No order under Section 144 shall remain in force for more than two months but the state government can extend the validity for two months and maximum up to six months. It can be withdrawn at any point of time if situation becomes normal.
- Background: Section 144 was used for the first time in 1861 by the British Raj, and thereafter became an important tool to stop all nationalist protests during the Freedom Struggle. However, the use of the section in Independent India remains controversial as very little has changed.

Section 144 vs Curfew:

- Section 144 is generally prohibitory in nature. It restricts from public gathering, but doesn't bar it all together.
- A curfew, on the other hand, orders people to stay indoors for a specific period of time. So, the authorities can impose curfew for certain period of time (However, the authorities can also extend the curfew if the need be).
- One also needs a prior approval from the local police for moving out during curfew.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Forest Dieback

In an editorial published in the journal Science Advances on Friday, researchers have said the Amazon – the world's largest tropical rainforest – is teetering on the edge of functional destruction.

About:

- When the Amazon rainforest reaches its tipping point, which is to say when the level of deforestation has led to there not being enough water for recycling and as result, moisture to induce rainfall, the rainforests will be unable to sustain themselves.
- This will lead to a situation when the trees, and in turn, the forest will start to “dieback”.
- In other words, some trees and eventually the forests will reach the physiological limits of dryness probably induced by droughts and heat stress. Because of this dehydration, the affected trees will begin to die from the tip of their leaves or roots backwards.

Related Info:

- Forest dieback refers to the phenomenon of a stand of trees losing health and dying without an obvious cause.
- This condition is also known as forest decline, forest damage, canopy level dieback, and stand level dieback (also Waldsterben and Waldschäden, German loan words).

European Green Deal

The European Union has announced European Green Deal which contains additional measures it would take to counter climate change.

About:

- Two major decisions are at the heart of the European Green Deal.
- Achieving climate neutrality: The EU has promised to bring a law, binding on all member countries, to ensure it becomes “climate neutral” by 2050. Climate neutrality is achieved when a country’s emissions are balanced by absorptions and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.
- Increase in its 2030 emission reduction target: In its climate action plan declared under the Paris Agreement, the EU has committed to making a 50 per cent reduction in its emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels and work towards 55 per cent.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY

Artech Seminar

The fifth edition of Army Technology Seminar (ARTECH) is being organised by Indian Army on ‘Technologies for Non Contact Warfare’ which will be organised on 23 December 2019 at Delhi Cantonment.

About:

- ARTECH Seminar was launched in 2016 as part of overall vision of ‘Make in India’.
- It is conducted every year as part of events leading to Army Day celebrations.
- The seminar is the flagship event of Indian Army which sets the agenda for focus areas of harvesting indigenous capabilities in the Defence sector.
- ARTECH platform provides an opportunity to practitioners of military operations, policy makers in Ministry of Defence, industry and academia to put forth their contemporary Defence related capabilities.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: Globalisation has changed the role of State. Critically evaluate its impact in the context of developing countries.

Ans:

Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. Being multi-dimensional and global in nature, this process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world.

Globalization, both as an ideology and process, has become the dominant political, economic and cultural force in the 21st century and impacted the role of state in a significant manner.

Change in Political role

- Globalization has changed the role of the state politically because of strengthened interstate relationships and dependence on one another. States were created to be sovereign but now, due to globalization, often give their sovereignty away to ‘pooling’ in conventions, contracting, coercion and imposition. This has led to increasingly similar jurisdictions across states and to power being seen as an economic rather than political progress because states now make political progression and regression together, causing states to become more developmental.

Change in Economic role

- Globalized economic changes have a substantial effect on the state's role. The global economy has been created by online banking, stock markets and, largely, global franchises. The state no longer controls currency because of intangible assets and importation as well as online and electronic banking and a shared currency between many states, like in much of Europe.
- International organizations like WTO have a dominant role in influencing countries to adopt certain market initiatives.

Social dimension

- Social globalisation has created greater social awareness of human rights violations, child labour abuses and corruption. These challenges, in turn, affect public administration and the role of government. The major change in the configuration of the public-private spheres in favour of globalising the corporate sector has changed the leading role of government in the allocation of resources, the distribution of wealth, the stabilisation of the economy and economic growth.

Advantages

- By economic integration, it helps the government of developing countries to deal with major problems by increasing their economic growth, solving the poverty problems etc.
- The model of state and its functioning also evolves as a result of the free flow of political ideas.
- The government takes policy initiatives in the field of health, education and technology which are the direct result of globalization.
- Recent verdicts on the rights of the LGBTQ community in India are the perfect example of the changing role of the state in providing rights to its citizens.

Disadvantages

- Matters related to India's subsidy regime at WTO shows too much interference by the dominant powers at the world stage.
- Globalization facilitates the spread of new diseases in developing nations by travellers between countries, and states in developing countries have to rely on developed countries due to lack of capabilities of tackling these problems.
- Decrease in skilled labor in the developing countries because of easy mobility of skilled manpower to other countries having higher opportunities.
- Globalisation has led to economic inequality in developing countries.

Conclusion

- In this way, globalization has changed the role of the state in many ways: politically through interdependence and independence of states, socially through the problems and threats of terrorism and deadly diseases, technologically through the media and internet and economically through the change from national to global economies. Globalization is often seen to have lowered the importance of the state, but in the end, the states that will remain the most successful in the face of globalization is those who adapt to the changes their role makes.