

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Bhakta Ramadasu**

A 11-foot imposing bronze statue of Bhakta Ramadasu, the renowned saint composer of the 17th century, was unveiled at his birthplace, Nelakondapalli in Telangana's Khammam district, on the occasion of his 387th birth anniversary.

About:

- Kancharla Gopanna (1620 – 1680), popularly known as Bhakta Ramadasu or Bhadrachala Ramadasu was a 17th-century Indian devotee of Lord Rama and a composer of Carnatic music.
- He is a famous Vaggeyakara (classical composer) from the Telugu classical era.
- His devotional lyrics to Rama are famous in South Indian classical music as Ramadaasu Keertanalu.
- He also wrote Dasarathi Shatakamu, a collection of nearly 108 poems dedicated to the son of Dasaratha (Lord Rama).

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC**Presolar Grains**

Scientists have discovered the oldest solid material ever found on the Earth, in the form of stardust trapped inside a meteorite that crashed into Australia 50 years ago and predates the formation of our solar system.

About:

- This stardust provides evidence for a 'baby boom' of new stars that formed 7 billion years ago, contrary to the theory that star formation happens at a steady, constant rate. The materials the researchers examined are called presolar grains.
- Presolar grains are interstellar solid matter in the form of tiny solid grains that originated at a time before the Sun was formed. Presolar stardust grains formed within outflowing and cooling gases from earlier presolar stars.
- These bits of stardust became trapped in meteorites where they remained unchanged for billions of years, making them capsules of the cosmic time before the solar system.
- However, presolar grains are very tiny and rare, found only in about five per cent of meteorites that have fallen to the Earth. Since presolar grains are formed when a star dies, they can tell us about the history of stars.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Star Campaigners**

The Election Commission of India (ECI) removed BJP leaders Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Sahib Singh from the party's list of star campaigners.

About:

- A recognised political party can have 40 star campaigners and an unrecognised (but registered) political party can have 20.
- The list of star campaigners has to be communicated to the Chief Electoral Officer and Election Commission within a week from the date of notification of an election.
- The expenditure incurred on campaigning by such notified star campaigners is exempt from being added to the election expenditure of a candidate. However, this only applies when a star campaigner limits herself to a general campaign for the political party she represents.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**SIS-DP Project**

Union Minister of State for Department of Space inaugurated the 'National Workshop on Space based Information Support for Decentralised Planning (SISDP)-update.' He also launched the Bhuvan Panchayat V 3.0 web portal in Bengaluru.

About:

- ISRO had launched 'SISDP' project to assist gram panchayats at grassroots level with basic planning inputs derived from satellite data for preparing developmental plans, its implementation and monitoring of activities.
- National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), located in Hyderabad, is the lead centre to execute the project. NRSC is one of the centres of ISRO.
- SISDP phase-I project was successfully concluded in 2016-17. Based on the experience of SISDP phase-I, 'SISDP-Update' has been initiated.
- The geodatabase, products and services prepared under this project are expected to be disseminated through Bhuvan geoportal, an easy to use Geo portal developed for database visualization, data analytics etc. for the benefit of Gram Panchayat members and other stake holders.

Missing Person Search; Generate Vehicle Noc

National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) launched two Police related Citizen centric services on Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS) platform.

About:

- The two citizen services namely 'Missing Person Search' and 'Generate Vehicle NOC' will now be available online to Citizens.
- The Citizens can search for their missing kins against the national database of recovered unidentified found person/unidentified dead bodies from their homes.
- 'Generate Vehicle NOC' allows citizens to ascertain the status of a vehicle before its second hand purchase, as to whether it is suspicious or clean from Police records.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Stew Convention**

The Union Cabinet has approved the Model MoU with foreign countries for recognition of seafarers' competency certificates, pursuant to STCW Convention, 1978.

About:

- International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978 sets minimum qualification standards for masters, officers and watch personnel on seagoing merchant ships and large yachts.
- The Convention did not deal with manning levels: IMO provisions in this area are covered by the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974.
- STCW was adopted in 1978 by conference at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London, and entered into force in 1984. The Convention was significantly amended in 1995.
- One especially important feature of the Convention is that it applies to ships of non-party States when visiting ports of States which are Parties to the Convention.

Trump's Middle East Plan

President Donald Trump's Middle East plan, Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People, was recently released.

About:

- Both Israel and the Palestinians make non-negotiable claims over Jerusalem. The plan says Jerusalem will not be divided, and it will remain "the sovereign capital of the State of Israel".
- The capital of Palestine can occupy far-flung eastern neighbourhoods lying beyond "the existing security barrier", which can be renamed Al Quds, the Arabic name for Jerusalem.
- Israel does not have to dismantle any of its illegal settlements in the West Bank.
- To the Palestinians, the deal offers the possibility of a US-recognised quasi sovereign state that will not, however, have a standing army; they will also have to give up violent resistance to Israel, and ensure the disbandment of Hamas, which governs Gaza.
- Observers have said that the deal, which was drawn up without any meaningful Palestinian participation, is loaded in Israel's favour.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**Air India Disinvestment**

The newly constituted Air India Specific Alternative Mechanism (AISAM) has approved the release of the Preliminary Information Memorandum (PIM) for inviting Expression of Interest (EOI) from the Interested Bidders (IBs) for Strategic Disinvestment of Air India.

About:

- The Union government invited bids for a 100% stake sale of Air India (AI) and transfer of management control along with its complete share in two subsidiaries — low-cost international carrier Air India Express and ground-handling arm AISATS.
- The government has also offered to hive off liabilities worth nearly Rs. 40,000 crore.
- On the table is a 100% stake in AI, 100% stake in AI Express Limited (AIXL) and all of the government's 50% stake in AISATS, which is a joint venture with the Singapore-based ground handling company SATS Limited.
- The buyer will get a total of 146 aircraft, 56% of which are owned by the airline group, while the remaining are on lease. Any private or public limited company, a corporate body and a fund with a net value of ₹ 3,500 crore will be eligible to bid.
- The last date for submitting interest to the transaction adviser is March 17 and the outcome of this round will be known by March 31.

Related Info:

- The newly constituted Air India Specific Alternative Mechanism (AISAM) is headed by Union Home Minister and comprises Union Ministers of Commerce & Industry, Finance & Corporate Affairs and Civil Aviation, as members.
- This is the second attempt in two years by the government at privatising the national carrier. On May 31, 2018, when the deadline for bids closed, not even a single private player had shown interest.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

HCFC-141b

India has successfully achieved the complete phase out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b.

About:

- Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b is a chemical used by foam manufacturing enterprises and is one of the most potent ozone depleting chemical after Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).
- HCFC-141 b is used mainly as a blowing agent in the production of rigid polyurethane (PU) foams.
- The Ministry of Environment has brought out a Gazette notification through which import of HCFC-141b is prohibited from 1st January, 2020 under Ozone Depleting Substances (Regulation and Control) Amendment Rules, 2019 issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The complete phase out of HCFC 141 b from the country in foam sector is among the first at this scale in Article 5 parties (developing countries) under the Montreal Protocol.

Ramsar Sites

Ramsar has declared 10 more wetland sites from India as sites of international importance for the conservation of global biological diversity.

About:

- Maharashtra gets its first Ramsar site (Nandur Madhameshwar), Punjab added 3 more (Keshopur-Miani, Beas Conservation Reserve, Nangal) and UP has added 6 more (Nawabganj, Parvati Agra, Saman, Samaspur, Sandi and SarsaiNawar).
- With this, the numbers of Ramsar sites in India are now 37 and the surface area covered by these sites is now 1,067,939 hectares.

Related Info:

- The Ramsar Convention was signed in 1971 to maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity.
- Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines of the convention.

African Cheetah

The Supreme Court allowed the Centre to introduce the African cheetah to suitable habitat in India.

About:

- The apex Court's decision followed a petition filed by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) seeking permission for the introduction of the African cheetah from Namibia as rare Indian cheetah is almost extinct in the country.
- The Court also set up a three-member committee, comprising former Director Wildlife of India Ranjit Singh, Director General of Wildlife of India Dhananjay Mohan and Deputy Inspector General, Wildlife, Ministry of Environment to guide the NTCA in taking a decision on the issue.

Cheetah

- Family: It is a large cat of the subfamily Felinae
- Scientific name: *Acinonyx jubatus*.
- The 4 subspecies are: Southeast African cheetah, Asiatic cheetah, Northeast African cheetah and Northwest African cheetah.
- Distribution: it is found in North, Southern and East Africa, and a few localities in Iran.
- Habitat: It inhabits a variety of mostly arid habitats like dry forests, scrub forests, and savannahs.
- Conversation Status: The cheetah has been
 - classified as endangered by the IUCN; and
 - listed under Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).
- Speed: The cheetah is the fastest land animal.

Polycrack

Indian Railways has commissioned country's first governmental Waste to Energy Plant, having capacity of 500 Kg waste per day, in Mancheswar Carriage Repair Workshop at Bhubaneswar in East Coast Railway.

About:

- This Waste to Energy Plant, a patented technology called POLYCRACK, is first-of-its-kind in Indian Railways and fourth in India.
- It is world's first patented heterogeneous catalytic process which converts multiple feed stocks into hydrocarbon liquid fuels, gas, carbon and water.
- Using Polycrack Plant, all types of waste including plastic and e-waste can be converted to Light Diesel Oil which is used to light furnaces. It can be fed with all types of Plastic.
- Polycrack has the following advantages over the conventional approach of treating solid waste:
- Pre-segregation of waste is not required to reform the waste. Waste as collected can be directly fed into Polycrack.
- It is an enclosed unit hence the working environment is dust free.
- All constituents are converted into valuable energy thereby making it Zero Discharge Process.

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

Spitzer Space Telescope

On January 30, 2020, NASA's Spitzer Mission, which studied the universe in infrared light for more than 16 years, will come to an end since it is low on fuel and has been drifting away from Earth for a few years now.

About:

- The Spitzer Space Telescope (SST) is an infrared space telescope. It was launched in 2003 and is planned to be retired on 30 January 2020.
- This telescope by NASA is named in honor of astronomer Lyman Spitzer, who had promoted the concept of space telescopes in the 1940s.
- It is one of the elements of NASA's Great Observatories that include the Hubble Space Telescope and the Chandra X-Ray. Using different infrared wavelengths, Spitzer was able to see and reveal features of the universe including objects that were too cold to emit visible light.
- Spitzer could also see through large amounts of gas using infrared wavelengths to find objects that may otherwise have been invisible to human beings. These included exoplanets, brown dwarfs and cold matter found in the space between stars.

DEFENCE AND INTERNAL SECURITY SECURITY

Operation Vanilla

Indian Navy has launched 'Operation Vanilla' to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief at Madagascar.

About:

- The Operation Vanilla has been launched to provide assistance to the affected population of Madagascar post devastation caused by Cyclone Diane.
- The Indian Navy Ship is geared to set up medical camp and provide food, water and other necessary relief material.

Data On Police Organizations

Union Home Minister Amit Shah released the Data on Police Organizations (DoPO) as on 1.1.2019" in India.

About: The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has been publishing the "Data on Police Organizations (DoPO)" annually since 1986. The salient features of the "DoPO as on 1.01.2019" are as under:

- Total Sanctioned Police Force (Civil + DAR+ Spl. Armed): 25,95,435
- Total Actual Police Force (Civil + DAR+ Spl. Armed): 20,67,270
- Vacancy: 5,28,165
- Strength of Women Police Force (Civil + DAR+ Spl. Armed)/ Percentage: 1,85,696/8.98%
- Percentage increase of Women Police over previous year: 9.52%
- Strength of Women Police in CAPFs/ Percentage: 29,532/ 2.95%
- Population Per Police person (PPP) - Sanctioned: 503.40
- Population Per Police person (PPP) - Actual: 632.02
- Police Population Ratio (Per Lakh) (PPR) - Sanctioned: 198.65
- Police Population Ratio (Per Lakh) (PPR) - Actual: 158.22
- Number of Police Districts: 777
- Number of Police Commissionerates: 63

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. India is currently facing the issue of rising tsunami of e-waste. In this light discuss the challenges being posed by increasing e-waste and also suggest the suitable measures to tackle these challenges.

Ans:

Electronic waste/ e-waste is a term used for electronic products that have become unwanted, obsolete and have reached the end of their useful life. India generates near about 2 million metric tonne of e-waste annually and it

would reach 5.2 mmt per annum by 2020. The main sources of e-waste in India are the government, public and private sectors, which account for almost 70% of total e-waste generation.

The rising e-waste pose multitude challenges in various forms such as:

- E-waste also impact human health as dismantling and shredding of it releases dust, toxins, dioxins
- There is huge gap between present recycling and collection facilities. According to ASSOCHAM study only 5% of the e-waste is formally recycled.
- Cross-border flow of waste equipment into India is another major issue. For ex- uncontrolled asbestos imports from Canada, used batteries from European nations
- Further, as per ASSOCHAM report (2014), about 5 lakh child labourers are engaged in e-waste activities and that too without adequate protection and safeguards.
- Unscientific method of recycling and lack of proper safety gear in handling e-waste leads to occupational health hazards.
- Finally, e-waste rules are blatantly violated and the informal sector remains unregulated.

To resolve the above issues, there is a need to adopt multiprong approach in following form:

- There is a need to strengthen the domestic legal framework to address the issue of unregulated imports of e-waste.
- Further, steps must be taken to formalize the informal sector by using strategy of incentivization.
- Governments must also encourage research for development of better environmentally sustainable e-waste recycling techniques.
- There is also a need of an effective take-back program for e-waste handling and collection.

Thus, in light of the above there is a need for creating a mass awareness programme to encourage consumers to reuse/ recycle electronic products. For ex- 'Take-back' and 'Planet ke Rakwale' campaign by Nokia.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. Indian Navy has launched 'Operation Vanilla' to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief at:
 - (a) Iran
 - (b) Iraq
 - (c) Sudan
 - (d) **Madagascar**
2. The two citizen services namely 'Missing Person Search' and 'Generate Vehicle NOC', recently seen in news, was launched by:
 - (a) **National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB)**
 - (b) NITI Aayog
 - (c) Bureau of Police Research & Development
 - (d) None of the above
3. Which of the following has been publishing the "Data on Police Organizations (DoPO)" annually since 1986?
 - (a) National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB)
 - (b) NITI Aayog
 - (c) **Bureau of Police Research & Development**
 - (d) None of the above
4. Who among the following wrote Ramadasu Keertanalu?
 - (a) **Bhakta Ramadasu**
 - (b) Nannaya Bhattaraka
 - (c) Viswanatha Satyanarayana
 - (d) Bammara Pothana
5. With reference to the Polycrack, consider the following statements:

1. Indian Railways has commissioned country's first governmental Waste to Energy Plant, in Mancheswar Carriage Repair Workshop at Bhubaneswar in East Coast Railway.
2. It is world's first patented heterogeneous catalytic process which converts multiple feed stocks into hydrocarbon liquid fuels, gas, carbon and water.

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. With reference to the star campaigners, consider the following statements:
 1. A recognised political party can have only 20 star campaigners in an election.
 2. The list of star campaigners has to be communicated to the Chief Electoral Officer and Election Commission within a week from the date of notification of an election.

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. Al Quds is the Arabic name for which of the following places?
 - (a) **Jerusalem**

- (b) Mosul
(c) Ankara
(d) Cairo
8. With reference to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, consider the following statements:
1. It sets minimum qualification standards for masters, officers and watch personnel on seagoing merchant ships and large yachts.
 2. The Union Cabinet has approved the Model MoU with foreign countries for recognition of seafarers' competency certificates, pursuant to STCW Convention, 1978.
- 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
9. Spitzer Space Telescope (SST), which was in news recently, is launched by which of the following organisations?
- (a) SpaceX
(b) **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)**
(c) European Space Agency
(d) China National Space Administration (CNSA)
10. With reference to the Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b, consider the following statements:
1. India has successfully achieved the complete phase out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b.
 2. It is a chemical used by foam manufacturing enterprises and is one of the most potent ozone depleting chemical after Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).
- 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
11. With reference to the Accidental Death and Suicides in India 2018 report by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), consider the following statements:
1. The majority of the suicides were reported in Goa.
 2. The incidents registered under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes related Acts were increased in 2018.

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
12. With reference to the Air India, consider the following statements:
1. The Union government has recently invited bids for a 100% stake sale of Air India (AI).
 2. The newly constituted Air India Specific Alternative Mechanism (AISAM) is headed by Union Minister for Commerce & Industry.
- 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
13. What is presolar grains, recently seen in news?
- (a) **Interstellar solid matter in the form of tiny solid grains that originated at a time before the Sun was formed.**
(b) World's most mysterious manuscript ever discovered.
(c) Ancient walled complex located in Machu Picchu
(d) None of the above
14. Nandur Madhameshwar was recently included in Ramsar sites of international importance for the conservation of global biological diversity. It is located in:
- (a) **Maharashtra**
(b) Madhya Pradesh
(c) Gujarat
(d) Punjab
15. With reference to the cheetah, consider the following statements:
1. Currently, it is found only in North, Southern and East Africa.
 2. It classified as endangered by the IUCN.

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