

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Bodo Language**

Bodo language is one of the key thrust areas in the Bodo Accord which was signed recently.

About:

- Estimated to have 1.5 million speakers (Census 2011), Bodo is listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
- It is spoken in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and West Bengal.
- While Bodo is officially written in the Devanagiri script, the language has a history of having been written in at least three different scripts — until in 1974, the Government recognised Devanagiri as its official script. In the first decade of the 20th century, Bodos started writing in the Assamese/Bangla script. Then they also used Roman Script.
- In the pre-13th century era, it was called Deodhai.

Promises in the accord regarding Bodo language:

- It was only in 2003, under the then Bodo Accord, that the language was listed in the Eighth Schedule. And it was the first tribal language to be included in the Eight Schedule.
- In Assam, it has enjoyed the status of official associate language in undivided Goalpara district since 1986.
- Now the 2020 Accord makes Bodo the associate official language throughout Assam.
- The new Accord also promises to establish a separate directorate for Bodo medium schools, provincialise schools and colleges in the BTAD (Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District) and establish a Cultural Complex-cum-Centre of Excellence in Kokrajhar for protection and promotion of the language.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Commonwealth**

The Maldives re-joined the Commonwealth, more than three years after the Indian Ocean island nation quit amid mounting criticism of its human rights. In 2016, the Maldives pulled out of the Commonwealth. Maldives has been formally reinstated into the Commonwealth as its 54th member state.

About Commonwealth of Nations:

- The Commonwealth of Nations, at one time known as British Commonwealth, is an organisation of fifty three states that were principally below the colonial rule of British Government. They came into existence with the proclamation of sovereignty of the state from the colonial rule of British Empire and were later given self-governance.
- It proclaims that the Commonwealth nations are “free and equal.” The insignia of this Commonwealth Association is Queen Elizabeth II who is considered the Supreme of the Commonwealth nations.
- The member states of the commonwealth are not legally liable or bound to each other. They are rather united by language, history, culture, likeness of the democracy, human rights and the rule of law.
- Their values are listed down within the Commonwealth Charter and the hands of harmony towards the member states are extended by the Commonwealth Games held every four years.
- Former British mandates that did not become members of the Commonwealth are Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, British Palestine, Sudan, British Somaliland, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

Key facts:

- Former name — British Commonwealth.
- Composition: intergovernmental organisation of 53 member states that are mostly former territories of the British Empire.
- It operates by intergovernmental consensus of the member states.
- Established in 1949 by the London Declaration.
- Structure: Head of the Commonwealth — Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of the Commonwealth. The position is symbolic.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**Green India Mission**

A sum of Rs 343.08 crore has been released under the Green India Mission (GIM) for undertaking afforestation activities over an area of 126,916.32 hectare (ha) in 13 states, according to the Economic Survey 2019-20.

About Green India Mission:

- GIM is one of the eight missions launched under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
- GIM, launched in February 2014, is aimed at protecting, restoring and enhancing India's diminishing forest cover and responding to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.

Objectives of the Mission:

- To protect, restore and enhance India's falling forest cover.
- To respond to climate change through a combination of adaptation as well as mitigation measures.
- To increased forest-based livelihood incomes.
- To enhance annual Carbon sequestration by 50 to 60 million tonnes in the year 2020.

Goals:

- Improvement in quality of forest cover and ecosystem services of forests /non-forests, including moderately dense, open forests, degraded grassland and wetlands (5 m ha).
- Eco-restoration/afforestation of scrub, shifting cultivation areas, cold deserts, mangroves, ravines and abandoned mining areas (1.8 m ha).
- Improvement in forest and tree cover in urban/peri-urban lands (0.20 m ha)
- Improvement in forest and tree cover on marginal agricultural lands/fallows and other non-forest lands under agroforestry /social forestry (3 m ha)
- Management of public forest/ non-forests areas (taken up under the Mission) by the community institutions
- Adoption of improved fuelwood-use efficiency and alternative energy devices by project-area households.
- Diversification of forest-based livelihoods of about 3 million households living in and around forests.

World Wetlands Day 2019

World Wetlands Day is celebrated on February 2 each year to mark the Day the Convention on Wetlands was adopted in the Iranian City of Ramsar in 1971. India is a party to the Convention since 1982 and committed to the Ramsar approach of wise use of wetlands. The theme for 2020 is 'Wetlands and Biodiversity'.

Status of wetlands in India:

- The bad news is that India's cities have lost 25 ha of wetland for every one sq. km's increase of built-up area in the last four decades.
- The good news is that 10 more wetland sites around India have been added to the Ramsar Convention, rendering them sites of 'national importance'.

Wetlands in India:

- The country has over 757,000 wetlands with a total wetland area of 15.3 million ha, accounting for nearly 4.7% of the total geographical area of the country.
- India has 37 Ramsar sites now, covering an area of 1.07 million ha. The latest additions include Maharashtra's first Ramsar site, the Nandur Madhmeshwar bird sanctuary; three more from Punjab (in Keshopur-Miani, Beas Conservation Reserve and Nangal); and six more from Uttar Pradesh (in Nawabganj, Parvati Agra, Saman, Samaspur, Sandi and Sarsai Nawar).

Significance of wetlands:

- Wetlands provide a wide range of important ecosystem services, such as food, water, groundwater recharge, water purification, flood moderation, erosion control, microclimate regulation, landscape aesthetics and, of course, livelihood opportunities. They are in fact a major source of water and the principal place from which India's cities receive their freshwater.

Threats:

- Increasing urbanisation has significantly reduced the amount of area under wetlands.
- According to an assessment undertaken by Wetlands International South Asia (WISA), between 1970 and 2014, cities have rapidly degraded wetlands, to the tune of 25 ha per sq. km of built-up area.
- The biggest offenders were the metropolitans of New Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai and Hyderabad, which treat wastelands as their private dumping grounds.

Tyler Prize for the environment:

The Tyler Prize 2020 has been awarded to two pioneers who quantified the economic value of our natural environment. Of two, one is from India- Pavan Sukhdev.

About the Prize:

- Established in 1973 by the late John and Alice Tyler.
- This global environmental prize recognizes individuals who have contributed in an outstanding manner to the scientific knowledge and public leadership to preserve and enhance the environment of the world.
- Recipients encompass the spectrum of environmental concerns, including environmental policy, health, air and water pollution, ecosystem disruption and loss of biodiversity, and energy resources.

New mascot for National Games: flame-throated bulbul:

The flame-throated bulbul, also called the Rubigula, was chosen as the mascot of the 36th National Games to be held in Goa because it is the State bird.

Key facts:

- Endemic to southern peninsular India.
- IUCN status:Least Concern.
- Listed in Schedule – IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Quantum computing gets funds**

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Union Budget for 2020-21, presented on February 1, 2020, proposed Rs 8,000 crore over five years for National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications.

Quantum Technologies:

- Quantum technologies comprise quantum computing, quantum communication, quantum optics, quantum information processing, quantum internet and quantum artificial intelligence.
- The interest and excitement about quantum computer is because of its power to dabble with complex calculations involved in fields like cyber-security which digital computers now deal with.
- Quantum communications can enhance (cyber) security, provide unique fingerprints and also increase available bandwidth for internet networks.

What is a quantum computer?

- Quantum computers work by harnessing the properties of quantum mechanics.
- Quantum computers use logical units called quantum bits, or qubits for short, that can be put into a quantum state where they can simultaneously represent both 0 and 1.

Difference between classical and quantum computers?

- Classical computers process information in a binary format, called bits, which can represent either a 0 or 1.
- While the bits in a classical computer all operate independently from one another, in a quantum computer, the status of one qubit effects the status of all the other qubits in the system, so they can all work together to achieve a solution.

How the result is obtained?

- While a conventional computer outputs the same answer to a problem every time you run a calculation, the outputs of a quantum computer are probabilistic. That means it does not always produce the same answer. So to use a quantum computer, you have to run a calculation through the system thousands or even millions of times, and the array of outputs converge around the answer that is most likely to be correct.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**Qns: What are five things to watch out for in the Union Budget 2020?****Ans:**

As mentioned in the Article 112 of the Indian Constitution, the Union Government lays a statement of its estimated receipts and expenditure for that year, From April 1 to March 31, before both the Houses of Parliament.

Finance Minister has an unenviable task ahead as she rises to present the Union Budget for the financial year 2020-21 (FY21). That's because the Indian economy has been decelerating fast, the government cut the GDP growth rate for 2018-19 from 6.8% to 6.1%. The growth rate in the current year is already expected to be at a six-year low.

Nominal GDP growth:

- This is the most important number in a Budget and it forms the base of all other variables.
- In the last full Budget that was presented in July 2019, the government expected nominal GDP to grow by 12% in 2019-20. As it turns out, the actual number is likely to be 7.5% or even lower.
- This dip completely alters the likely real GDP for 2019-20; real GDP is derived after subtracting the annual inflation (roughly 4% for the year) from nominal GDP.

Fiscal and Revenue Deficit

- Given that there are no engines of growth left in the economy, many have argued that the government must not sit back under pressure from the fiscal hawks, and should instead spend more to boost the overall demand and rekindle the animal spirits in the economy.
- However, a crucial thing, if the government decides to relax or postpone fiscal responsibility norms, would be if the government refocuses on revenue deficit as well.
- In 2018, the government had dropped targeting revenue deficit. This had meant that India increasingly borrowed money to finance its everyday consumption at the cost of funding capital expenditure.
- Typically, Rs 100 spent on capital expenditure by the government results in Rs 250 being added to the overall economy.
- If the government spends on revenue such as salaries the overall impact on the economy is less than Rs 100.
- So, the crucial thing is not whether the fiscal deficit target is flouted or not, the crucial thing is what is the revenue deficit and whether the government intends to reduce it to 0% in the next few years.

An income tax cut:

- There are two reasons why the government may want to cut the personal income tax rates or at least rejig its slabs.
- For one, the corporate income tax rates or the corporate tax rates have been cut sharply last year. It makes sense to offer that relief to the taxpayers in the economy.
- Two, people have been hoping for an income tax cut for long, and it may be one way to allay the concerns of the middle class in India.

Disinvestment Targets:

- The Prime Minister has been reiterating that the country cannot go forward without people looking at “wealth creators” with respect.
- The Economic Survey has already outlined the policies that need to be tweaked.
- A good way for the government to get out of the way of businesses in the country, and raise significant resources of its own in the process, is by divesting its stake in many public sector enterprises.

Conclusion:

- Union Budget also empowers the government to carry out its constitutional duties such as providing social justice and equality for all.
- Resource allocation in the best interest of the society and the country and allocating resources optimally for public welfare.
- Union Budget need to take steps to control inflation, deflation and economic fluctuations thus ensuring economic stability in the country. The Union Budget of any country is crucial as it has widespread implications on that country's economic stability and general life as such.