

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Guru Ravidas**

Ravidas Jayanti, the birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas, was celebrated across the country.

About:

- He was a Dalit-poet saint from the Bhakti movement era in northern India who probably lived during the 14th to 16th. He belonged to a leather-working Chamar community, whose profession involved processing dead animals and their skins.
- The 41 hymns of Guru Ravidas have been included in the Guru Granth Sahib.
- The famous saint poetess, Mirabai was a disciple of Guru Ravidas.

Key teachings:

- Everybody is equal in all respects, irrespective of caste, color or a belief in any form of God; Emphasised on universal brotherhood and tolerance.
- God created man and not man created God;
- He abandoned saguna (with attributes, image) forms of supreme beings, and focussed on the nirguna (without attributes, abstract) form of supreme beings.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**MANDAMUS**

The Supreme Court has ruled that no mandamus can be issued by the court directing state governments to provide reservations.

About:

- Mandamus literally means 'we command'. When issued to a person or body, the writ of mandamus demands some activity on their part.
- It orders the person or body to perform a public or quasi-public duty, which they have refused to perform, and where no other adequate legal remedy exists to enforce the performance of that duty.

Exceptions:

- Under Article 361, mandamus cannot be granted against the President or Governor of a State, "for the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of his office or for any act done or purporting to be done by him in the exercise and performance of those powers and duties".
- The writ also cannot be issued against a private individual or body, except where the State is in collusion with the private party for contravening a provision of the Constitution or a statute.
- The writ cannot be issued unless the legal duty is of public nature, and to whose performance the applicant of the writ has a legal right. The remedy is of a discretionary nature — a court can refuse to grant it when an alternative remedy exists.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Indian Diaspora**

There are over 1.36 crore Indian nationals living abroad, according to data tabled by the Ministry of External Affairs in Lok Sabha.

About:

- The highest number of Indians abroad are living in the United Arab Emirates, where the 34,20,000 Indians comprise about one-fourth of all Indians abroad.
- The UAE is followed by Saudi Arabia (25,94,947), the US (12,80,000), Kuwait (10,29,861), Oman (7,79,351), Qatar (7,56,062), Nepal (5,00,000), UK (3,51,000), Singapore (3,50,000) and Bahrain (3,23,292).
- During 2018-2019, \$76.4 billion was received as remittances from Indians abroad. During 2019-2020 (April-September), \$41.9 billion was received.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**Taxation Of NRIS**

Central Board of Direct Taxes issued clarification on the new provision in Finance Bill 2020.

About:

- Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has said that The Finance Bill, 2020 has proposed that an Indian citizen shall be deemed to be resident in India if he or she is not liable to be taxed in any country or jurisdiction.
- It said that the new provision in Finance Bill, 2020 is not intended to include in tax net those Indian citizens who are bonafide workers in other countries. This is an anti-abuse provision since it is noticed that some Indian citizens shift their stay in low or no tax jurisdiction countries to avoid payment of tax in India.
- CBDT noted that the interpretation by some section of the media that Indians who are bonafide workers in other countries, including in the Middle East, and who are not liable to tax in these countries, will be taxed in India on the income that they have earned there is incorrect.

- It stated that in case of an Indian citizen who becomes deemed resident of India under this proposed provision, income earned outside India, shall not be taxed in India unless it is derived from an Indian business or profession.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

PANGOLINS

Scientists investigating the animal origins of the novel coronavirus said pangolins could be responsible for the spread of the virus to humans in China.

About:

- Pangolins or scaly anteaters are mammals of the order Pholidota.
- The eight species: There are a total of eight pangolin species across Africa and Asia.
- Asian species: Sunda Pangolin, Philippine Pangolin, Chinese Pangolin and 'Indian Pangolin'.
- African species: Long-tailed Pangolin, Tree Pangolin, Giant Pangolin and the Ground Pangolin.

Characteristics:

- They have large, protective keratin scales covering their skin, and they are the only known mammals with this feature.
- They roll into a ball when threatened which can make them easy pickings for poachers.
- Their diet consists of mainly ants and termites which they capture using their long tongues (A pangolin's tongue is longer than its body).
- Pangolins have no teeth; they chew with gravel and and keratinous spines inside the stomach.
- Threat: According to the latest report released by TRAFFIC in March 2018, Pangolin is the most trafficked mammal in the world. Though hunted for its meat across the northeastern States and in central India, it is in huge demand for its scales in China.
- IUCN status: The Chinese Pangolin was officially categorised as critically endangered in 2014, but it is believed to be extinct today. The Indian Pangolin, marked endangered that year, is now critically endangered and disappearing fast.
- World Pangolin Day: The third Saturday of February is observed as the World Pangolin Day.

Thwaites Glacier

A new study has pinned the cause of the melting of Thwaites Glacier to the presence of warm water at a vital point beneath the glacier.

About:

- Thwaites Glacier is an Antarctic glacier flowing into Pine Island Bay, part of the Amundsen Sea.
- It is unusually broad and fast glacier with its surface speeds exceeding 2 km/yr near its grounding line.
- The grounding line is the place below a glacier at which the ice transitions between resting fully on bedrock and floating on the ocean as an ice shelf.
- The location of the line is a pointer to the rate of retreat of a glacier.
- Along with Pine Island Glacier, Thwaites Glacier has been described as part of the "weak underbelly" of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. It is predicted that it will gradually melt, leading to an irreversible collapse over the next 200 to 1000 years.
- Significance: Because of its size (1.9 lakh square km), it contains enough water to raise the world sea level by more than half a metre.

Recent study:

- A 2019 study had discovered a fast-growing cavity in the glacier sized roughly two-thirds the area of Manhattan. Then last week, the New York University study reported warm water at just two degrees above freezing point at Thwaites's "grounding zone" or "grounding line".
- When glaciers melt and lose weight, they float off the land where they used to be situated.
- When this happens, the grounding line retreats. That exposes more of a glacier's underside to seawater, increasing the likelihood it will melt faster.
- This results in the glacier speeding up, stretching out, and thinning, causing the grounding line to retreat ever further

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

Li-Ion Batteries

The Union Science Ministry informed Lok Sabha about the imports of Li-ion batteries which are vital for powering a range of devices from cellphones to electric vehicles.

About:

- India has quadrupled its imports of lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries and more than tripled its import bill on the product from 2016-2018.
- 175 million such batteries were imported in 2016, 313 million in 2017, 712 million in 2018 and 450 million from January 1, 2019, till November 30 of that year.
- The cost of these imports rose from \$383 million in 2016 \$929 million (₹ 6,500 crore) in 2019.

- Indian manufacturers source Li-ion batteries from China, Japan and South Korea and the country is among the largest importers in the world.

Related Info:

- In June 2018, the Central Electro Chemical Research Institute (CECRI) in Tamil Nadu's Karaikudi, under the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), and RAASI Solar Power Pvt. Ltd. signed a MoU for transfer of technology for India's first lithium-ion (Li-ion) battery project.
- To promote indigenous development of such batteries, the Union Cabinet in 2019 approved a programme, called a National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage, under the NITI Aayog to "drive clean, connected, shared, sustainable and holistic mobility initiatives."

Fermentophone

Fermentation, the chemical breakdown of a substance by microorganisms such as bacteria or yeasts, results in some of the foods and beverages, including cheese, chocolate and wine. Now, research has shown it can result in music, too.

About:

- Joshua Rosenstock of the Worcester Polytechnic Institute has shown that the chemical processes of fermentation can be used to create spontaneous tunes.
- He has built multiple art exhibits called Fermentophone – Edible musical instrument made of fermented fruits – to showcase how fermentation can make music.
- First, different fruits and veggies are placed in glass jars and fermented. As the fermentation kicks off, the yeast — or bacteria — present in the food chows down on the foods' sugars, which results in the release of carbon dioxide bubbles. The release of these bubbles creates a tiny sound, which is picked up by underwater microphones.
- A computer processes the sounds and, with the help of algorithms plugged in, electronic music is created. Rosenstock said that you can eat these fermented foods, too.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: In recent years there has been number of farmer protest around India demanding increase in Minimum support price (MSP). In this light discuss the effectiveness of MSP and need for replacing it with Price deficiency payment system.

Answer:

MSP is the base price set by the Government and whenever the market prices fall below the announced MSPs, procurement agencies step in to procure the crop at the support price. In India, the MSP are recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Cost and Prices (CACP) for 23 crops based on A2+FL formula i.e. actual cost paid plus imputed value of the family labour.

However, the use of MSP as a method of agricultural pricing is criticized on various grounds such as:

- NITI Aayog evaluation report (2016) on MSP noted that 79% farmers are not satisfied with MSP regime due to reasons such as delay in payments, distance to the procurement centers, delayed announcement of MSP rates
- Farmers have also claimed that the prices in wholesale markets are often lower than the MSP. In such a scenario, whatever MSP the government declares might not matter much.
- Further, only 6% of farmers are able to sell their produce at MSP. Moreover, the MSP operation is limited only to few states.
- Lastly, the procurement is limited to few crops such as rice and wheat leading to cropping pattern distortion.

Various PDPS schemes of states:

- Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana (BBY) by MP: It applies to eight kharif crops such as soybean, til, maize, urad, tur
- Rythu Bandhu scheme of Telangana: To relieve farmers from taking loans from moneylenders the scheme provides farmers Rs 4,000 per acre for the kharif and rabi seasons.

This system will address the issue of price crash after the bumper harvest. Therefore, the states such as Madhya Pradesh and Telangana have moved to price deficiency payment system (PDPS). Under it the government simply pays the difference between the MSP and the market-determined price. This system has many advantages such as follows:

- It will also resolve the issues involved with MSP mechanism such as lack of awareness, procurement confined to selected crops that too from selected states, distortion of the agricultural market and cropping pattern.
- It will also resolve the issue of needless accumulation of the food stock by FCI involving maintenance cost and storage losses.
- Such a mechanism is also needed as other risk management instrument such as crop insurance and future trading have not made much headway.
- In light of the above, it will be effective and efficient to shift to the new mechanism of PDPS.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. With reference to the Guru Ravidas (Bhakti movement), consider the following statements:
 1. The 41 hymns of Guru Ravidas have been included in the Guru Granth Sahib.
 2. He abandoned saguna (with attributes, image) forms of supreme beings, and focussed on the nirguna (without attributes, abstract) form of supreme beings.
 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 taxation of NRIs, consider the following statements:
 1. The Finance Bill, 2020 has proposed that an Indian citizen shall be deemed to be resident in India if he or she is not liable to be taxed in any country or jurisdiction.
 2. The new provision in Finance Bill, 2020 is intended to include in tax net those Indian citizens who are bonafide workers in other 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
3. What is Fermentophone, recently seen in news?
 - (a) **Edible musical instrument made of fermented fruits to showcase how fermentation can make music.**
 - (b) It is an analog sound storage medium in the form of a flat disc.
 - (c) It is a supercomputer made by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).
 - (d) None of the above
4. With reference to the Thwaites Glacier, consider the following statements:
 1. It is an Antarctic glacier flowing into Pine Island Bay, part of the Amundsen Sea.
 2. Along with Pine Island Glacier, Thwaites Glacier has been described as part of the "weak underbelly" of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet.
 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. According to the data tabled by the Ministry of External Affairs in Lok Sabha on Indian diaspora, the highest number of Indians abroad are living in which of the following country?
 - (a) **U.A.E**
 - (b) Qatar
 - (c) U.S.A
 - (d) U.K
6. With reference to the mandamus, consider the following statements:
 1. It orders the person or body to perform a public or quasi-public duty, which they have refused to perform, and where no other adequate legal remedy exists to enforce the performance of that duty.
 2. Under Article 361, mandamus cannot be granted against the President or Governor of a State, "for the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of his office or for any act done or purporting to be done by him in the exercise and performance of those powers and duties".
 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 Pangolins, consider the following statements:
 1. There are a total of two pangolin species across Africa and Asia.
 2. The Indian Pangolin was categorised as critically endangered in IUCN Red list.
 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