

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Manual Scavenging**

The Ministry of Social Justice informed Lok Sabha about the incidents of manual scavenging, which is banned under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.

About:

- According to National Commission for Safai Karamcharis, the number of people who died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in the country increased by almost 62% from 68 in 2018 to 110 in 2019.
- These cases were reported from 18 States and Union Territories, while 13 States and UTs submitted “nil reports”.
- A total of 14,559 manual scavengers had been identified by Municipalities and Gram Panchayats in 13 States from 2013-2014 till January 31, 2020.
- Apart from that, a national survey was conducted in 194 districts in 18 States where 48,345 manual scavengers were identified till January 31, taking the total to 62,904.

Medical equipment as ‘drugs’

The Union Health Ministry has notified that medical equipment would qualify as “drugs” under Section 3 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, with effect from April 1, 2020.

About:

- Medical equipments under this definition include implantable medical devices such as knee implants, CT scan, MRI equipment, defibrillators, dialysis machine, PET equipment, X-ray machine etc.
- The manufacture, import and sale of all medical devices will now need to be certified by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation.
- This will ensure these equipments follow quality standards. The move comes in the wake of years of controversy about faulty hip implants of J&J.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Detaining Children**

The Supreme Court has made it clear that the police have no right to detain children in conflict with law in a lockup or a jail.

About:

- A juvenile in conflict with law, if apprehended, has to be placed immediately under the care of the special juvenile police unit or a designated child welfare officer.
- The child has to be produced before the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB). Once a child is produced before a JJB, bail is the rule.
- If for some reason bail is not granted, a child cannot be put behind bars. He has to be lodged either in an observation home or in a place of safety.
- The law is meant to protect children and not detain them in jail or keep them in police custody.
- The order came after the recent media reports about “children being detained in police custody and tortured in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh” in connection with the protests against the Citizenship (Amendments) Act.

Kota Rani

Among several other reasons why the government believed Mehbooba Mufti, the former chief minister of J&K, should be detained under the Public Safety Act (PSA) was a reference to her being likened to Kota Rani for her “dangerous and insidious machination and usurping nature”.

About:

- Kota Rani (died 1339), was the last ruler of the Hindu Lohara dynasty in Kashmir.
- She was the daughter of Ramchandra, the commander-in-chief of Suhadev, who was the king of Kashmir belonging to the Lohara dynasty.

- She was regent during the minority of her son, and ruled as monarch until 1339.
- She was deposed by Shah Mir, who became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir.

Kutte Kol?

- Kutte Kol is a navigational canal running through the Srinagar.
- It is believed to be commissioned by Kota Rani initially to regulate floods on the Jhelum.
- This canal gets water from Jhelum River at the entry point of city and again merges with Jhelum river beyond the city limits.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

QAnon

QAnon, a conspiracy theory, has now surfaced in political campaigns, criminal cases, merchandising and at least one college class.

About:

- QAnon is a far-right conspiracy theory detailing a supposed secret plot by an alleged "deep state" against U.S. President Donald Trump and his supporters.
- The theory began with an October 2017 post on the anonymous imageboard 4chan by someone using the name Q, a presumably American individual that may have later grown to include multiple people.
- "Q" is a reference to the top-secret Q clearance. QAnon believers commonly tag their social media posts with the hashtag #WWG1WGA, signifying the motto "where we go one, we go all."

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New Umbrella Entity (NUE)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released a 'draft framework for authorisation of a pan-India New Umbrella Entity (NUE) for Retail Payment Systems'.

About:

- RBI has proposed to set up a new pan-India new umbrella entity (NUE) or entities focussing on retail payment systems with a minimum paid-up capital of Rs 500 crore.
- The proposed entity will set up, manage and operate new payment systems especially in the retail space comprising of ATMs, white label PoS, Aadhaar-based payments and remittance services, develop payment methods, standards and technologies, monitor related issues etc.
- No single promoter or promoter group should have more than 40 per cent investment in the capital of the entity.
- The promoters should upfront demonstrate capital contribution of not less than 10 per cent — Rs 50 crore — at the time of making an application for setting up of the entity.
- The promoter or the promoter group shareholding should be diluted to a minimum of 25 per cent after 5 years of the commencement of business. A minimum networth of Rs 300 crore should be maintained.
- The entity eligible to apply as promoter or the promoter group for the NUE should be 'owned and controlled by residents' with 3 years' experience in the payments ecosystem as Payment System Operator (PSO) or Payment Service Provider (PSP) or Technology Service Provider (TSP).

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

COVID-19

The World Health Organization (WHO) gave an official name for the illness caused by the new coronavirus: COVID-19.

About:

- The virus will now be called "COVID-19"; the "CO" stands for coronavirus, "VI" for virus, "D" for disease and "19" for 2019, as the illness was first detected toward the end of last year.
- Until now, versions of the following nomenclature were being used for coronavirus: "nCoV-2019".

- The death toll from the virus has now surpassed 1,000 and has infected tens of thousands of people, the majority of which are in China.

How does the WHO name new diseases?

- Under international guidelines, the WHO had to find a name that did not refer to a geographical location, an animal, an individual or group of people, and which is also pronounceable and related to the disease.
- The names should also be short and should be consistent with the guidelines under the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) Content Model Reference Guide.
- International Classification of Diseases (ICD), which is also managed by the WHO, provides a final standard name for each human disease according to standard guidelines.

Yaravirus

In a lake in Brazil, researchers have discovered a virus called Yaravirus that has a “puzzling origin and phylogeny.”

About:

- The Yaravirus infects amoeba and has genes that have not been described before, something that could challenge how DNA viruses are classified. Over 90% of the Yaravirus’s genome has not been observed before
- Because of the Yaravirus’s small size, it was unlike other viruses that infect amoeba and they named it as a tribute to Yara, the “mother of waters” in the mythological stories of the Tupi-Guarani indigenous tribes.
- The virus does not infect human cells.
- Although it is only now that the virus has been identified, the researchers believe that it has been present on Earth for ages.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY

Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS)

The U.S. Department of State has approved the potential sale of a \$1.867 billion Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) to India.

About:

- The Integrated Air Defence Weapon System, also known as the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS), provides integrated air missile defence and is currently deployed around Washington, DC.
- The IADWS system includes radar, launchers, targeting, and guidance systems, advanced medium-range air-to-air missile (AMRAAM) and Stinger missiles, and related equipment and support.
- The potential sale, which is being processed via the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route, is now before the U.S. Congress for consideration, with a 30-day window for Congress to raise any objections to the sale.

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

World Radio Day

World Radio Day is being observed on February 13, 2020. The theme of this year is Radio and Diversity.

About:

- In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly formally endorsed UNESCO’s proclamation of World Radio Day. During its 67th Session, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming 13 February as World Radio Day.
- The day is observed every year on this date to raise greater awareness among the public and the media of the importance of radio.
- Radio is a low-cost medium specifically suited to reach remote communities and vulnerable people.
- It is a powerful medium for celebrating humanity in all its diversity and constitutes a platform for democratic discourse.

- It also plays a crucial role in emergency communication and disaster relief.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT

Odisha sets up panel for backward classes

The Odisha government constituted Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes (OSCBC) under the chairmanship of Justice Raghunath Biswal, former judge of the Orissa High Court. The other members of the Commission are Navneeta Rath, Mitali Chinara and Prasanna Kumar Patra. Veer Vikram Yadav, IAS, has been nominated as Member Secretary of the Commission.

About:

- The State government constituted the Commission in accordance with the provisions contained in the Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993, according to the CMO.
- Justice Biswal had also served as president of the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission from November 2012 to March 2017.
- Prof. Rath is a distinguished social scientist who has conducted studies on backward classes, while Prof. Chinara is well known in the field of applied and analytical economics, and Dr. Patra is a renowned anthropologist.
- Waking up to the need to protect the interests of backward classes, the Odisha Cabinet had recently resolved that a socio-economic caste survey be conducted simultaneously along with the general census, either by inserting a suitable column in the census format or by prescribing a separate format for a simultaneous enumeration of socially and educationally backward classes and other backward classes/castes.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: A technology should be evaluated both on the basis of its utility and the intention of its creator. Critically examine. (GS-IV)

Ans:

Technology has surrounded every aspect of human life and its utilities are increasing exponentially. Every day we have innovative products and services that announce their arrival in the market place and others that go obsolete. It is this technology and innovation that leads to ethical issues. Issues like data mining, invasion to privacy, data theft and workplace monitoring are common and critical. Technology is mainly evaluated by its utility and usefulness. But, sometimes the intention of its creator also becomes a parameter to evaluate a technology. For example,

- Algorithmic Bias in Artificial Intelligence (AI): An AI system introduced in 2015 in the U.S. failed to recognise faces of African Americans with the same accuracy as those of Caucasian Americans. Google, the creator of this AI system, quickly took remedial action.
- From a teleological perspective, this flawed AI system gets a go ahead. According to the 2010 census, Caucasian Americans constitute 72.4% of the country's population. So an AI system that identifies Caucasian American faces better is useful for a majority of Internet users in the U.S., and to Google.
- However, from a deontological perspective, the system should have been rejected as its intention probably was not to identify people from all races, which would have been the most ethical aim to have.
- Discriminatory Nature: Such technologically biased systems may also be used to deny benefits to people on the basis of caste, religion, gender, region, etc.
- Data theft and Behaviour tracking: Human behaviours are being monitored through social media and electronic gadgets. Their personalised data is being traded without their consent. Businesses, political parties, extremist organisations, etc. manipulate these data according to their own suitability. Cambridge Analytica-Facebook Scandal is a prime example in this regard.
- Privacy Invasion: personal information of citizens being collected by the government and private agencies, though with good intentions, may have consequences in terms of privacy breaching and misuse of data by third parties.

Medicines and Life Care:

- Clinical Trials: Intention plays a very critical role in clinical trials. There are cases where clinical trials were conducted with bad intention of money making by pharma companies, risking the lives of poor people.
- New cloning techniques, genetic modifications or other life saving drugs need continuous monitoring and surveillance to check the original intent of the developer of these technologies.

Conclusion

- The transformative capability of technologies such as AI is huge. However, these technologies must be rooted in an egalitarian ethical basis.
- Adoption of any technology should have a multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach, and have an explicit focus on the ethical basis.
- Technology Giants should have a credible Ethics committee to look after the ethical challenges associated with a specific technology.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

- With reference to the Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS), consider the following statements:
 - The U.S. Department of State has recently approved the potential sale of Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) to India.
 - It includes only advanced medium-range air-to-air missile (AMRAAM).
 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
- What is QAnon, recently seen in news?
 (a) **A conspiracy plot by an alleged "deep state" against U.S. President Donald Trump".**
 (b) Crypto currency
 (c) A description of some deep learning systems.
 (d) A computer chip designed to act as a neural network.
- Consider the following statements:
 - The Union Health Ministry has recently notified that medical equipment would qualify as "drugs" under Section 3 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, with effect from April 1, 2020.
 - The manufacture, import and sale of all medical devices will now need to be certified by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation.
 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
- With reference to the COVID-19, consider the following statements:
 - The World Health Organization (WHO) gave an official name for the illness caused by the new Ebola virus: COVID-19.
 - Under international guidelines, the WHO had to find a name that did not refer to a geographical location, an animal, an individual or group of people, and which is also pronounceable and related to the disease.
 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. With reference to the manual scavenging, consider the following statements:
 1. It is banned under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.
 2. According to National Commission for Safai Karamcharis, the number of people who died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in the country decreased by almost 62% in 2019 as compared to 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
6. Kota Rani was the last ruler of the Hindu Lohara dynasty in:
 - (a) **Kashmir**
 - (b) Kota
 - (c) Jaipur
 - (d) Junagadh
7. With reference to the New Umbrella Entity (NUE), consider the following statements:
 1. RBI has proposed to set up a new pan-India new umbrella entity (NUE) or entities focussing on retail payment systems with a minimum paid-up capital of Rs 500 crore.
 2. No single promoter or promoter group should have more than 40 per cent investment in the capital of the entity.

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
8. Consider the following statements:
 1. A juvenile in conflict with law, if apprehended, has to be placed immediately under the care of the special juvenile police unit or a designated child welfare officer.
 2. Once a child is produced before a Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), bail is the rule.

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. With reference to the World Radio Day, consider the following statements:
 1. It is being observed on February 13, 2020.
 2. The theme of this year is Radio and Diversity.

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
10. With reference to the Yaravirus, consider the following statements:
 1. It only infects human cells.
 2. Recently it has been discovered in a lake in Brazil.

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