INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY

Kambala

Srinivas Gowda – a kambala jockey from Karnataka – competing in a kambala event covered 142.5 m in 13.62 seconds at the Aikala-Bava kambala near Moodbidri. Converting this into 100m sprint, sports buffs said the kambala runner had clocked 9.55 seconds, ahead of Jamaican Usain Bolt's world record of 9.58 seconds!

Kambala

- It is an annual Buffalo Race held in the Tulu region of Karnataka (districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi).
- The contest generally takes place between two pairs of buffaloes, each pair race in wet rice fields, controlled by a whip-lashing farmer.
- The Kambala season generally starts in November and lasts till March during which races are held under the banner of Kambala Samithi (Kambala Association).
- Some farmers also run their buffalo in non-competitive ritualistic manner for thanksgiving for protecting their animals from diseases.

Kambala vs jallikattu:

- Although both of them are traditional animal sports, involving bulls, they are different by principle.
- Kambala is "Buffalo RACING".
- Jallikattu is "Bull TAMING" where a group of people try to hold on to the bull and win).

Lui-Ngai-Ni

The Naga tribes of Manipur celebrated it's seed sowing festival 'Lui-Ngai-Ni', under the theme "Oneness through Culture" in Ukhrul, Manipur.

About:

- Lui Ngai Ni is the seed-sowing festival celebrated by the Naga tribes of Manipur India.
- The festival heralds the season of seed sowing and marks the start of the year for the Nagas and the festival was declared a state holiday since 1988.
- The festival is celebrated annually on 14–15 February at the start of the spring season.
- It is the second major inter-tribe Naga festival after Hornbill Festival.
- Leaders from other communities of the State, mainly Meitei, Kuki and Zomi also participated in Festival to show mutual solidarity for peaceful co-existence.

Gadhika' Products

Amazon has been witnessing a crowd of online shoppers for ethnic products ever since 'Gadhika' products were launched on the e-commerce platform by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Development Department of Kerala in December last year.

About:

- Gadhika products are natural forest produce and eco-friendly handicraft made from bamboo, coconut and coconut shell, and ornaments, food products, clothes, Wayanad turmeric, honey, pickles, puttu kutti, etc.
- They have been hand-crafted by artisans and others belonging to various tribes and the Scheduled Castes of Kerala.

Related Info:

The acceptance for the tribal products was also visible at the tribal festival Gadhika held in Kannur The exhibition could attract over 50,000 people and there was a record sale of over ⬜ 45 lakh.

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC

Southern Ocean Research Programme

In January 2020, the South African oceanographic research vessel SA Agulhas set off from Port Louise in Mauritius, on a two-month Indian Scientific Expedition to the Southern Ocean 2020.

About:

- This week, the vessel was at Prydz Bay, in the coastal waters of "Bharati", India's third station in Antarctica.
- This is the 11th expedition of an Indian mission to the Southern Ocean, or Antarctic Ocean.

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- This Indian expedition has been launched by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCOPR) in Goa, which works under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Project objective:

- Study hydrodynamics and biogeochemistry of the Indian Ocean sector of the Southern Ocean to understand the formation of Antarctic bottom water.
- Study of organisms called coccolithophores that have existed in the oceans for several million years.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY

Ninth Schedule

LJP leader Chirag Paswan said that reservation should be put under the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution. His comments came days after the Supreme Court ruled that reservation in the matter of promotions in public posts was not a fundamental right, and that a state cannot be compelled to offer quota if it chooses not to.

About:

- The Ninth Schedule of the Constitution contains a list of central and state laws which cannot be challenged in courts.
- Currently, 284 such laws are shielded from judicial review. While most of the laws protected under the Schedule concern agriculture/land issues, the list includes other subjects, such as reservation. A Tamil Nadu law that provides 69 per cent reservation in the state is part of the Schedule.
- The Schedule became a part of the Constitution in 1951, when the document was amended for the first time. It was created by the new Article 31B, which along with 31A was brought in by the government to protect laws related to agrarian reform and for abolishing the Zamindari system.
- While Article 31A extends protection to 'classes' of laws, Article 31B shields specific laws or enactments.
- Although Article 31B excludes judicial review, the apex court has said in the past that even laws under the Ninth Schedule would be open to scrutiny if they violated fundamental rights or the basic structure of the Constitution.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

India-Portugal Relations

India and Portugal signed 14 agreements to boost cooperation in a range of areas during the State visit of his President of Portugal to India. The last visit by a President of Portugal to India was in 2007.

Some of the MoUs/Agreements signed during the visit are:

- MOU for Cooperation for Setting Up a National Maritime Museum Heritage Complex in Lothal (Gujarat) between Portuguese Ministry of Defence and Indian Ministry of Shipping.
- MOU between Economic and Food Safety Authority (ASAE) and DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce or co-operation in the field of industrial and intellectual property rights
- Joint Declaration on India and Portugal Mobility Partnership
- MoU between We-Hub Telangana and PARKURBIS Covilha for Exchange of Women Start-up Entrepreneurs
- MOU between VEDA Defence and UA Vision for production of drones
- MOU between TERI-DEAKIN Centre, Gurugram and International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL) Braga for co-operation in Nano-biotechnology

Hubei

Hubei province has been the epicentre of the outbreak of COVID-2019 (the disease caused by the novel coronavirus).

About:

- Hubei is a landlocked province in Central China.
- Its capital is Wuhan.
- The name of the province means "north of the lake", referring to its position north of Dongting Lake.
- The two major rivers of Hubei are the Yangtze River and its left tributary, the Han River.
- The high-profile Three Gorges Dam is located in the province. The Yangtze River enters Hubei from the west via the Three Gorges Dam.

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Hafiz Saeed

Hafiz Saeed, the alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks has been sentenced to jail in Pakistan for five-and-a-half years on terror finance charges.

About:

- Hafiz Saeed, a UN-designated terrorist and head of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), was found guilty of "being part of a banned terrorist outfit" and for "having illegal property" by an anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore.
- The ATC sentenced him and his close aide Zafar Iqbal to five-and-a-half years each and imposed a fine of ☐ 15,000 in eachcase. A total of 11 years sentence will run concurrently.
- This is the first time that Saeed has been formally convicted of an offence. He was put under house arrest on a number of occasions.

Related Info:

- The sentencing comes days ahead of a crucial meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental organisation combating money laundering and terror financing, that has put Pakistan on its grey list.
- Experts believe that if Pakistan continues to fail to satisfy the FATF and is downgraded to its blacklist, there could be serious financial and diplomatic implications, including an impact on a bailout it's getting from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

East-West Metro Corridor In Kolkata

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal inaugurated the first phase of East-West Metro in Kolkata.

About:

- The passengers services in this 5.8 Kilometers stretch will run between Salt Lake's Sector five and Salt Lake Stadium. The remaining 10.6 Kilometers starches of East-West Metro will be completed by December 2021.
- More than 2,400 crore rupees have been spent for first phase of East-West Metro. On completion, it will connect two old cities Kolkata and Howrah.
- It will be Country's first underwater train lines where trains will play in tunnels under river Hooghly.

Essential Commodities Act

Kerala brings bottled water under the purview of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

About:

- Bottled drinking water has come under a price cap in Kerala, with the State making it an essential commodity and fixing a ceiling of ☐ 13 per litre. The current retail price is ☐ 20.
- Government views current prices as exploitation of consumers, makes it an essential commodity.
- The government had also decided to make BIS standards mandatory for all brands of bottled water. This would force unauthorised manufacturers to shut shop.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Human-Elephant Conflict

Ministry of Environment provided latest data in the Rajya Sabha on the Human-elephant conflict in the country over the past five years, from 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Key findings:

- Three States in the eastern and northeastern parts of the country — West Bengal, Odisha and Assam — account for about half of both human and elephant deaths in the overall human-elephant conflict in the country.
- 2,361 human deaths were recorded in elephant attacks across the country, of which 1,132 (48%) fatalities were from these three States. West Bengal had the highest number of human casualties: 403, followed by Odisha with 397, Jharkhand with 349, and Assam with 332 deaths.
- When it comes to unnatural deaths of elephants (mainly due to poaching, train accidents, electrocution and poisoning), the country recorded 510 deaths in the same period (2014-15 to 2018-19). Of these, 259 (53%) occurred in these three States alone.
- Among the reasons for unnatural deaths of elephants, electrocution is at the top of the list, accounting for 68% of elephant deaths in the country. Assam accounted for 66 electrocution deaths, followed by Odisha with 57 deaths and Bengal with 39 fatalities.

- The second most common cause for unnatural deaths of elephants is train accidents. Between 2014-15 to 2018-19, 77 deaths were due to train accidents.

Belgian Malinois

The Kolkata Police announced that Belgian Malinois will be inducted into the specialised dog squad being set up to combat terror activities in Kolkata. Early last year, the Mumbai police too added the Belgian Malinois to its existing dog squad.

About:

- The Belgian Malinois is one of the four breeds of Belgian sheepdogs that were bred for herding. Malinois is the short-coated variety of a Belgian Shepherd Dog.
- The dog breed that helped US Seals track Osama bin Laden in 2011 in Pakistan. In 2019, a male Belgian Malinois, Conan, was used during the Barisha raid to chase Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.
- Dogs have visual and olfactory sensory abilities that can go where a soldier cannot. They can also intimidate a foe more quickly using non-lethal force. Because of these qualities, dogs have been trained for military duties for over a century.

Police dogs in India

- In October 2019, Delhi Police said it would induct five Golden Retrievers into its canine squad.
- These dogs were brought from a kennel in Hyderabad and were trained for six months in a training centre run by the BSF in Tekanpur in Madhya Pradesh.

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

Nasa's Discovery Program Investigation

NASA announced it has selected four Discovery Program investigations to develop concept studies for possible new missions.

About:

- Two proposals are for trips to Venus, and one each is for Jupiter's moon Io and Neptune's moon Triton.
- After the concept studies are completed in nine months, some missions ultimately may not be chosen to move forward. Final selections will be made next year.

These are:

- DAVINCI+: Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigation of Noble gases, Chemistry, and Imaging Plus. This will analyse Venus's atmosphere to understand how it was formed and evolved, and if it ever had an ocean.
- IVO: Io Volcano Observer is a proposal to explore Jupiter's moon Io, which is extremely volcanically active.
- TRIDENT: This aims to explore Neptune's icy moon, Triton.
- VERITAS: Venus Emissivity, Radio Science, InSAR, Topography, and Spectroscopy will aim to map Venus's surface to find out why Venus developed so differently from Earth.

SyRI (System Risk Indicator)

Recently, a Dutch district court ruled against an identification mechanism called SyRI (System Risk Indicator), because of data privacy and human rights concerns.

About:

- The Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs developed SyRI in 2014 to weed out those who are most likely to commit fraud and receive government benefits.
- Legislation passed by Dutch Parliament allowed government agencies to share 17 categories of data about welfare recipients such as taxes, land registries, employment records, and vehicle registrations with a private company, called "The Intelligence Agency".

Recent ruling:

- The Dutch district court held SyRI was too invasive and violative of the privacy guarantees given by European Human Rights Law as well as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation.
- The ruling is also an example of how a data protection regulation can be used against government surveillance.
- This has a context for similar artificial intelligence systems worldwide, especially at a time when identity, citizenship and privacy are pertinent questions in India.

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DEFENCE AND SECURITY

Group On Defence And Internal Security

The Fifteenth Finance Commission has constituted a Group on Defence and Internal Security.

About:

- The mandate of the Group will be 'to examine whether a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security ought to be set up, and if so, how such a mechanism could be operationalised.'
- This group will be chaired by N.K. Singh (Chairman, Fifteenth finance Commission) with A.N. Jha, Member, Fifteenth Finance Commission as well as Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Secretary, Ministry of Defence and Secretary (Expenditure), Ministry of Finance as members.

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

Kashi Mahakal Express

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Kashi Mahakal Express from Varanasi on February 17, 2020.

About:

- This bi-weekly train will run between Varanasi and Indore.
- It will connect three major Jyotirling in India located in Varanasi, Ujjain and Omkareshwar.
- With this, Indian Railways will launch its first overnight journey private train.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Corruption destroys the moral fabric of society and erodes the faith of the common man in the legitimacy of the politico-administrative set up. What are the reasons behind corruption in India? Also, discuss the reform measures to eliminate corruption.

Answer

Corruption refers to the act of misuse and abuse of power especially by those in the government for personal gains either pecuniary or a favor. It promotes illegality, unethicality, subjectivity, inequity, injustice, waste, inefficiency and inconsistency in administrative conduct and behaviour.

Reason for corruption in India:

Political:

- Use of black money in elections: In the last 10 year the declared expenditure has increased by more than 400% for the LS elections with 69% of their income coming from unknown sources.
- Criminalization of politics: More than 30% of the legislators in the country have pending criminal cases against them.
- Crony capitalism: The economic reforms of 1991 has led to the growth of unholy nexus between Politicians and businessmen.

Economic:

- High inequalities: In India 1% of the rich hold about 60% of the total wealth. People at lower income levels are forced to pay bribes to officials even to get their basic needs fulfilled.
- High share of informal sector: In India more than 80% of the workforce is in the informal sector. Such enterprises usually bribe the officials to keep out of the ambit of laws where compliance is costly and complex.
- Low wages:The remuneration in the public sector remains below par with the private sector along with poor career growth opportunities and harsher working conditions.

Administrative:

- Politicization of bureaucracy: Example of honest officers being witch-hunted like Ashok Khemka and Amitabh Thakur are the indicators of the bigger malaise.
- Colonial bureaucracy: The bureaucracy essentially remains colonial in nature characterized by 19th century laws e.g. Police Act 1861, complex rules, wide discretion, secrecy, moral responsibility devoid of legal accountability and the ivory tower attitude.
- Judicial failure:The judiciary has failed to bring to book the corrupt officials including politicians.
- Failed reforms:Lack of political will and resistance from within the bureaucracy has led to failure of major reforms like citizen charter, RTI and e-governance.

Social and Ethical:

- Changes in lifestyle: Increasing shift towards individualization and materialism has led to increased penchant for a luxurious lifestyle.
- Social discrimination: The poor and marginalized due to their lack of awareness and high dependence on the state become the easy target of exploitation by corrupt officials
- Failure of education system: The value education has failed miserably in India to inculcate the value of empathy, compassion, integrity, equity etc. in the young generation.

Measures taken by the government to tackle corruption:

Legal Steps:

- Prevention of corruption Act 1988: Seeks to create a balance between the need to bring the corrupt to the books and protect honest officers. Its main thrust is to prohibit public servants from accepting or soliciting illegal gratification in the discharge of their official functions.
- Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002: It seeks to prevent money laundering including laundering of property through corruption and provides for confiscation of such a property.
- Right to Information Act 2005: Makes disclosure of information a legal right of the public to promote transparency e.g. Vyapam scam of MP
- Lokpal and Lokayukta Act 2013: Appoints an independent authority Lokpal at center and Lokayukta at states to probe into the complaints of wrongdoing by the public servants.
- Whistleblower protection Act 2014: More than 60 RTI activists have been murdered and many more assaulted due to lack of protection.

Administrative reforms:

- E-governance initiatives: e-gov apart from advancing the good governance objectives of accountability and transparency also seeks to reduce the manual interface between state and citizen thus preventing the incidences of bribery
- Citizen Charters and Public Service delivery and Grievance Redress Acts in states: Many states like Karnataka (SAKLA initiative) and Rajasthan have enacted such acts to make bureaucracy legally accountable for delivering quality service within stipulated time periods. Bihar is the only state to have a Grievance Redress Act covering all departments

Economic Reforms:

- Liberalization and Privatization: License-Permit-Quota proved to be a highly potent tool in the hands of bureaucracy to misuse the power of their offices to amass illegal wealth. The LPG era proved to be a chink in the armor of bureaucratic discretion.

Conclusion: Despite these emerging trends, however, the institutional anti-corruption framework generally suffers from a lack of coordination, and overlapping and conflicting mandates between institutions addressing corruption. Therefore, there is a need for a mechanism that provides for simple, independent, speedy means of delivering justice by redressing the grievances of the people without succumbing to the clutches of the executive.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. With reference to the Group on Defence and Internal Security, consider the following statements:
   1. The mandate of the Group will be 'to examine whether a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security ought to be set up.
   2. It will be chaired by Union Defence Minister.

   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. Which of the following state recently brings bottled water under the purview of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955?
   (a) Kerala
   (b) Tamil Nadu
   (c) Andhra Pradesh
   (d) Odisha

3. Gadhika products, often seen in news, are from which of the states?
   (a) Kerala
   (b) Tamil Nadu

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    (c) Gujarat

    (d) Madhya Pradesh

4. Hubei is a landlocked province in:

    (a) China

    (b) Russia

    (c) Thailand

    (d) Singapore

5. With reference to the SyRI (System Risk Indicator), consider the following statements:

    1. It was developed by Google.

    2. It aims to weed out those who are most likely to commit fraud and receive government benefits.

    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 South African oceanographic research Program, consider the following statements:

    1. This is the 11th expedition of an Indian mission to the Southern Ocean, or Antarctic Ocean.

    2. This Indian expedition has been launched by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCOPR) in Goa, which works under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

    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. Discovery Program investigations is an initiative of:

    (a) National Aeronautics and Space Administration

    (b) European Space Agency

    (c) Indian Space Research Organisation

    (d) Both (a) and (c)

8. "Other monitored jurisdictions" is the formal name for:

    (a) FATF black list

    (b) FATF grey list

    (c) FATF white list

    (d) FATF Red list

9. 'Lui-Ngai-Ni' is celebrated in which of the following states?

    (a) Manipur

    (b) Sikkim

    (c) Odisha

    (d) Tamil Nadu

10. With reference to the MoUs/Agreements signed during the visit of President of Portugal to India, consider the following statements:

    1. MOU for Cooperation for Setting Up a National Maritime Museum Heritage Complex in Lothal (Gujarat) between Portuguese Ministry of Defence and Indian Ministry of Shipping.

    2. MoU between We-Hub Telangana and PARKURBIS Covilha for Exchange of Women Start-up Entrepreneurs.

    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. India's first underwater train lines will be in:

    (a) Kolkata

    (b) Mumbai

    (c) Kochi

    (d) Chennai

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12. With reference to the Jet streams, consider the following statements:
    1. They are narrow bands of strong winds that flow over thousands of kilometres from west to east.
    2. In India, the Tropical jet stream influences the formation and duration of the winter monsoon.
    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. With reference to the Belgian Malinois, consider the following statements:
    1. It is one of the four breeds of Belgian sheepdogs that were bred for herding.
    2. Dogs have visual and olfactory sensory abilities that can go where a soldier cannot.
    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

14. With reference to the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution, consider the following statements:
    1. It contains a list of central and state laws which cannot be challenged in courts.
    2. The Schedule became a part of the Constitution in 1973.
    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

15. Kambala is an annual Buffalo Race held in:
    (a) Karnataka
    (b) Kerala
    (c) Tamil Nadu
    (d) Andhra Pradesh

16. With reference to the Human-elephant conflict, consider the following statements:
    1. Three States in the eastern and north eastern parts of the country — West Bengal, Odisha and Assam — account for about half of both human and elephant deaths in the overall human-elephant conflict in the country.
    2. Among the reasons for unnatural deaths of elephants, electrocution is at the top of the list, accounting for 68% of elephant deaths in the country.
    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

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