

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.
QS - WORLD UNIVERSITY SUBJECT RANKINGS 2020

The 2020 edition of the QS World University Subject Rankings has ranked as many as 26 departments of higher education institutions in India among the top 100 in the world in their respective subject category.

- The QS World University Subject Rankings 2020 has been released from London by **Quacquarelli Symonds**. Quacquarelli Symonds is the world's leading provider of services, analytics, and insight to the global higher education sector.
- QS uses **four key metrics** to compile the rankings including **academic reputation, employer reputation, citations per paper** and the **h-index** which measures how productive an institution's research faculty are.
- 1,368 institutions have been ranked across 48 subjects in 5 broad categories across 159 locations.
- **Top Rankers:** Globally, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT - USA) emerged as the world's best-performing institution, achieving 12 number-one positions, followed by Harvard University (USA) with 11 number-one positions and University of Oxford (United Kingdom) with eight top ranked subjects.

India's Performance

- As against **21 institutions getting ranked in 2019**, the latest edition has seen 26 Indian departments entering the top-100 list for their subjects. **All 26 departments are in institutions run by the Union government** — IITs, IIMs, IISc and Delhi University.
- QS has also seen an **increase in the number of Indian programs ranking among the global top 50**.
 - In terms of institutes and subjects, India's highest-ranked programs included Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay's Mineral & Mining Engineering program at 41st rank globally, shared jointly with the University of Delhi's Development Studies program.
 - Top-50 ranks have also been attained by IIT Kharagpur (46) for Mineral & Mining Engineering, IIT Delhi (49) for Electrical & Electronic Engineering and IIT Bombay (50) for Chemical Engineering.
- **IIT Bombay** emerged with more top-100 ranks than any other Indian university in QS World University Rankings by Subject 2020.
- In the **business and management studies subject category**, both Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad and IIM Bangalore were ranked in the 51-100 band.
- The rankings **indicate India's particular strength** in the natural sciences, life sciences, and in engineering disciplines.

Supreme Court removed ban on crypto currency

The Supreme Court has struck down a ban on trading of **Virtual Currencies (VC)** in India, which was imposed by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** in April 2018.

The RBI order prohibited banks and entities regulated by it from dealing in VCs or providing services for facilitating any person or entity in dealing with or settling VCs.

Such services include maintaining accounts, registering, trading, settling, clearing, giving loans against virtual tokens, accepting them as collateral, opening accounts of exchanges dealing with them and transfer/receipt of money in accounts relating to purchase/ sale of VCs.

Highlights of the Judgement
Test of Proportionality

- The ban did not pass the "proportionality" test. The test of proportionality of any action by the government must pass the test of Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution, which states that all citizens of the country will have the right to practise any profession, or carry on any occupation or trade and business.
- Till date, the RBI has not come out with a stand that any of the entities regulated by it have suffered any loss or adverse effect directly or indirectly, on account of VC exchanges.
- Besides, the court found that the RBI did not consider the availability of alternatives before issuing the order i.e. achieving the same objective by imposing a less drastic restraint.
- Inconsistent with the RBI's Stand: The RBI's order was disproportionate" with an otherwise consistent stand taken by the central bank that VCs are not prohibited in the country.
- Referred to the Global Approach: Organisations across the globe have called for caution while dealing with virtual currencies, while also warning that a blanket ban of any sort could push the entire system underground, which in turn would mean no regulation.

On RBI's Power: The Court held that the RBI has powers to regulate any currencies in the system.

Governance
Possible Impact of the Judgement

- With the order, resumption of operations at crypto currency exchanges and backward linkages with the banking sector are expected.
 - Even as virtual currency investors and businesses will welcome the Supreme Court's order on crypto currency, the relief for such players may be only temporary given that the Centre, in a draft law, has **proposed to ban all private crypto currencies**.
- The Supreme Court's judgment could lead to the RBI rethinking its policies surrounding virtual currencies.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

UN Delegation on Palestine to India

Recently, a **UN delegation on Palestine** visited New Delhi to seek India's political and diplomatic support for a peaceful resolution to the long-standing conflict between Israel and Palestine.

- The delegation of the **United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP)** intends to **engage India in the settling of the question of Palestine.**

Key Points

- During the visit of the UN delegation on Palestine, **India has reiterated its stand and supported the Two-State solution** for the **Israel-Palestine issue.**
- The visit aimed to **enhance the political and diplomatic support of India for a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict** and engaging Indian counterparts on synergies in capacity building for staff and institutions of Palestine.
- The delegation intends to involve countries like India as it **shares good relations with both Israel and Palestine**, and are **also attached to multilateral principles**, to play a bigger role in the resolution of the issue.

India's Stand on Israel-Palestine Issue

- **In June 2019**, India voted in **favour of a decision introduced by Israel** in the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.
- **In June 2018**, India had **voted in favour of Palestine** on the **UN General Assembly (UNGA)** resolution to investigate an indiscriminate force usage by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians.
- As a part of **Link West Policy**, India has **de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018** to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- **In December 2017**, India had **criticised the United States** vote for recognising **Jerusalem as the Israeli capital** at the UNGA vote.
- **In 2014**, India favoured **UNHRC's** resolution to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza. Despite supporting the probe, **India abstained from voting against Israel in UNHRC in 2015.**

Additional information

Two-State Solution

- The **"two-state solution"** is based on a **UN resolution of 1947** which proposed two states - one would be a state where Zionist Jews constituted a majority, the other where the Palestinian Arabs would be a majority of the population. The idea was however rejected by the Arabs.
- For decades, it has been held by the international community as the only realistic deal to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

India has consistently voted in favour of those resolutions that promote the two-state solution with a Palestinian claim to **East Jerusalem.**

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

Endophytic actinobacteria for chemical free tea.

Researchers at the **Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) Guwahati**, have found that the endophytic actinobacteria can replace fertilizers & fungicides in tea.

- Endophytic actinobacteria (predominantly free-living microorganisms) which live within a plant are found in diverse environments.
- The Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati is an autonomous institute under Department of Science & Technology.

Key Points

- **Research findings**
 - Endophytic actinobacteria have the potential to exhibit **multiple growth-promoting traits** that positively influence tea growth and production and can hence be used in the **management and sustainability of Teacrop.**
 - Application of endophytic Actinobacteria could **reduce chemical inputs** in Tea plantation.
- In recent years, due to higher demand of chemical residue-free made tea by the importing countries, the export of tea has declined. The use of endophyticactino bacteria on tea plantations is expected to benefit the Indian tea market.

Tea

- **Tea (Camellia sinensis)** plays an important role in the Indian economy as a **major portion of the tea produced is exported.**
- India is the **second largest tea producer** in the world, right behind China.
- Tea found in India is categorized into 3 types namely **Assam tea (highest cultivation), Darjeeling tea (Superior quality tea) and Nilgiri tea (subtle and gentle flavors).**
- **Growth Conditions:** Tea requires well drained soil with a high amount of organic matter and pH 4.5 to 5.5. The performance of tea is excellent at elevations ranging from 1000 - 2500 m. Optimum temperature: 20-270 C.

BIO-DIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Sukhna lake

The **Punjab and Haryana High Court** has declared **Sukhna lake (Chandigarh)** as a **living entity** recently.

- The court invoked its **parens patriae** jurisdiction to declare the lake as a **legal entity** for its **survival, preservation and conservation** having a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.
- All the citizens of Union Territory, Chandigarh, are hereby declared as **loco parentis (in the place of a parent)** to save the lake from extinction.
- Sukhna Lake is a **rain-fed lake**, located within Chandigarh and its catchment area falls both in Punjab and Haryana.
- The lake was **constructed in 1958** and is spread over 3 sq km.
 - An area of 2 km to 2.75 km around the lake has been declared as **an eco-sensitive zone** by the Chandigarh Administration.
 - All activities in this area fall under provisions of the **Environment Protection Act**.
- The court has completely banned new construction in the catchment areas falling in the states of Punjab, Haryana and Union Territory Chandigarh as well as in the **Sukhna Wetland** and **Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- Earlier, **Uttarakhand High Court** declared the rivers **Yamuna and Ganga as legal or juridical persons**, enjoying all the rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.
 - The HC bench was hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition filed in 2014 and gave a landmark judgment stating that the Ganga and the Yamuna must be treated as living entities.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

MILAN Exercise-2020

The Indian Navy has postponed its multi-nation mega naval exercise 'MILAN' due to continuing spread of the corona virus.

- MILAN (11th edition) was scheduled to be held in Visakhapatnam from 18th - 28th March 2020.

Exercise MILAN

- It is a **biennial, multilateral naval exercise** which started in **1995**.
- The Navy has held 10 editions of the Milan exercise, with the theme of "**synergy across the seas**" to enhance professional interactions between friendly foreign navies and learn best practices from each other, since 1995.
- It was conducted at the **Andaman and Nicobar Command until 2018**.
- It is held under the aegis of Eastern Naval Command.
- Over **40 countries were expected** to participate in the exercise in **2020**.

Lalit kala academy

The President of India conferred the **61st annual Lalit Kala Akademi Awards** on 15 meritorious artists at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 4th March, 2020.

- The Lalit Kala Akademi nominated seven member selection Jury of eminent art practitioners, artists and critics from all over the country to finalise the list of artists to be awarded.
- Lalit Kala Akademi organises art exhibitions and award ceremonies every year to promote art as well as to honour talents.
- Artwork of the award-winning artists will be on display till March 22, 2020, at the 61st National Exhibition of Art at the Lalit Kala Akademi galleries in New Delhi.

Janaushadhi week

The Janaushadhi week is being celebrated across the country **from 1st March to 7th March 2020**.

- On this occasion, various activities like health checkup Camp, Jan Aushadhi Paricharcha, Jan Aushadhi ka sath are being organised in the country.

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana

- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) is a campaign launched by the **Department of Pharmaceuticals** in **2008** under the name **Jan Aushadhi Campaign**.
- **Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI)** is the **implementation agency** for PMBJP.
 - The Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India works under the **Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers**.
- **PMBJP stores** have been set up to provide **generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs**.
- It also intends to extend the coverage of quality generic medicines so as to **reduce the out of pocket expenditure on medicines** and thereby redefine the unit cost of treatment per person.
- It will create **awareness about generic medicines through education and publicity** so that quality is not synonymous with an only high price.

Black Redstart

- It is a **small-sized bird** (14-15 cms) and it **breeds across the Himalayan Range**.
- It occurs almost throughout **Europe, Asia** and in the **portions of Africa** and breed in the high altitude areas of **Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet and the Central Himalayan Range**.

- In India, the bird sticks to areas near wetlands, open cultivation, scrubs, gardens and orchards.
- The bird has **two races**:
 - **P. phoenicuroides** (in Western Himalayas)
 - **P. Rufiventris** (in Central and Eastern Himalayas)
- The **primary difference** between them is that the male of the former has a grey crown, nape and lower back while the latter ones are much darker.
- Both sexes display a **bright rufous-orange tail** which is best seen when they fly or flash it open while shivering their tails, justifying the name Redstart (**steort** means 'tail' in proto-Germanic language).
- **IUCN Red List** status- **Least Concerned**.
- It is protected under the **Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Discuss whether the frequent viral outbreaks can be termed as man-made disasters.

Ans.

The ongoing novel corona virus (covid19) outbreak has resulted in over 3000 mortality in China, surpassing the SARS outbreak. The 2018 Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, frequent dengue, malaria in North-West India, Japanese Encephalitis cases in Bihar, Ebola in Western Africa substantiate these rising cases of viral outbreaks, especially in under-developed countries.

A disaster is a sudden occurrence of an event resulting in huge losses – lives, resources.

Reasons for viral outbreaks as man-made disasters

- **Inefficient health infrastructure results in high mortality:** Lack of medicines, doctors etc. lead to inaccessibility to timely treatment as evident in the case of dengue mortality in India even with available treatment. This is mainly due to public health expenditure and income inequality.
- **Lack of Research and Development:** Currently, for such outbreaks, countries depend on international bodies like WHO to develop vaccines/treatments due to lack of internal capacities like in case of Ebola virus. This leads to the unavailability of the local and immediate response to the outbreak.
- **Lack of effective monitoring and quarantine measures** results in rapid and uncontrolled spread of virus. Knee-Jerk measures employed at times of public health emergencies result in mobilisation of huge quantum of resources in a short time, thus affecting other sectors of the economy.
- Social and economic reasons due to high-density urbanisation, increasing globalisation, changing lifestyle, increasing human-wildlife (fruit bats in case of Nipah) contact result in the transmission of zoonotic diseases. Since most cases have underlying reasons emanate from man's changing role in the environment, they can be controlled by addressing such reasons.
- Following protocols with established capacity to tackle sudden outbreak like in case of Global Emergency declaration by WHO.
- Increasing investment in research and development – biotechnology like Human Genome Project, medical infrastructure, especially in public institutions in underdeveloped countries, aid and co-operation by developed countries.
- Effective monitoring: robust disease surveillance system – case of Delhi in bringing down dengue cases, implement laws strictly, especially related to wildlife, environment and health.
- Special resource allocation for handling emergency situations like Contingency Fund.

Conclusion

Though viral outbreaks can take the form of man-made disasters. Such situations can be managed given man's own ability to identify both point and nonpoint sources resulting in such disasters and since most of them accrue due to man's own created ecosystem, they can be mitigated.

DAILY QUIZ

1. What is the time limit within which the Lokpal shall dispose of a complaint of alleged corruption against public servants?

(a) 21 days	(b) 30 days
(c) 45 days	(d) 60 days
2. The Week of March 1 to March 7 is celebrated as which commemorative week across the country?

a) Swachh Bharat Week	b) Janaushadhi Week
b) Kisan Week	c) Beti Bachao Week
3. Which country recently assumes presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of March 2020?

(a) India	(b) China
(c) Japan	(d) Nepal
4. Which state government has announced to provide a financial assistance to the farmers for keeping stray cattle at their homes?

a) Madhya Pradesh	b) Uttar Pradesh
c) Bihar	d) Andhra Pradesh
5. Which country became the first in the world to make public transport free?

(a) Thailand	(b) Luxembourg
(c) Canada	(d) Brazil