

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

Unutilised Budgetary Funds in Education

Recently, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (HRD) has presented a report on the **2020-2021 demand for grants for school education** in the Rajya Sabha.

- The report identifies **shortfalls in budgetary funding and utilisation**, resulting in **critical infrastructure gaps** in the government schools in India.

Key Points

- **Reduction in Finance:**
 - The budgetary allocations experienced a **27% cut from proposals** made by the School Education department.
 - Similarly, **27% of reductions** have been observed in the fund needed for the **implementation of Central and Centrally Sponsored Schemes**.
 - Also, the government has spent only 71% of allotted funds for the core Samagra Shiksha Scheme until December 31, 2019.
- **Access to Electricity and Playground:**
 - Almost **half of the government schools** in the country **do not have any electricity or playgrounds**.
 - **Only 56% of schools have electricity**, with the lowest rates in Manipur and Madhya Pradesh, where less than 20% have access to power.
 - **Less than 57% of schools have playgrounds**, including less than 30% of schools in Odisha and Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Overall Infrastructure:**
 - A **dismal rate of progress has been observed in building classrooms, labs and libraries** to strengthen government higher secondary schools.
 - **Almost 40% of schools did not have a boundary wall**, endangering the safety of students and school property.
 - The **higher secondary schools experienced greater infrastructural gaps** compared to secondary schools and primary schools.
 - Also, **less than 5% of proposed infrastructure** facilities such as ramps and special toilets for **differently-abled students** have been completed in the government schools.

Recommendations

- Additional funds for implementation of the core schemes such as **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**.
- Collaboration of HRD Ministry with the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** to construct boundary walls and other infrastructure facilities.
- Collaboration with the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** to provide solar energy and other renewable energy sources so that schools have access to power.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Commercial Cord Blood Banking

- Recently there has been growing concern regarding the aggressively promoted concept of cord blood banking.

Key Points

- Over the past decade, stem cell banking has been aggressively marketed even as its use is still in experimental stages.
- The stem cell banking companies get access to data of to-be parents and start approaching their prospective customers much before the delivery and offer competitive packages.
- Companies convince parents to bank the cells for several years promising future therapeutic use.
- Enormous fees are charged from parents to preserve cells merely by emotional marketing.
- However, according to **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, there is **no scientific basis** for preservation of cord blood for future self use and this practice therefore raises ethical and social concerns.
- The ICMR does **not recommend commercial stem cell banking**.
- Private storage of the cord blood is advisable when there is an elder child in the family with a condition treatable with these cells and the mother is expecting the next baby.
- In other situations, parents should be educated about the limitations of banking at this point of time.

Cord Blood Banking

- Cord blood is the blood from the baby that is left in the umbilical cord and placenta after birth. Cord blood banking involves taking the **umbilical cord blood**, which is a rich source of stem cells, and preserving it for future use.

- It contains special cells called hematopoietic stem cells that can be used to treat some types of diseases.
- Hematopoietic stem cells** can mature into different types of blood cells in the body.
- Globally, cord blood banking is recommended as a source of **hematopoietic stem cell (derived from bone marrow, peripheral blood, or umbilical cord blood)** transplantation for haematological cancers and disorders where its use is recommended.
- For all other conditions, the use of cord blood as a source of stem cells is not yet established.

Stem Cells

- Stem cells are special human cells that have the ability to develop into **many different cell types**, from muscle cells to brain cells.
- Stem cells are divided into **two main forms- Embryonic stem cells** and **Adult Stem Cells**.
- Embryonic stem cells** come from **unused embryos** resulting from an **in vitro fertilization** procedure and that are donated to science.
 - These embryonic stem cells are **pluripotent**, meaning that they can turn into more than one type of cell.
- Adult Stem Cells:** There are **two types** of adult stem cells.
 - One type comes from fully **developed tissues**, like the brain, skin, and bone marrow.
 - There are only **small numbers** of stem cells in these tissues, and they are more likely to generate only certain types of cells.
 - For example, a stem cell derived from the liver will only generate more liver cells.
 - The second type is induced **pluripotent stem** cells.
 - These are adult stem cells that have been **manipulated in a laboratory** to take on the pluripotent characteristics of embryonic stem cells.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Illegal trade of Red Panda

The trade monitoring network TRAFFIC has released a report titled “**Assessment of illegal trade-related threats to Red Panda in India and selected neighbouring range countries**” recently.

- The report has analysed poaching and illegal trade of the species **for the ten-year period from July 2010 to June 2019**.

Key Findings

- The red panda survival is **crucial for the eastern and north-eastern Himalayan subalpine conifer forests and the eastern Himalayan broadleaf forests**.
- The animal has been **hunted for meat and fur, besides illegal capture for the pet trade**.
 - An estimated **14,500 animals are left** in the wild across Nepal, Bhutan, India, China and Myanmar.
- The report has indicated that the **traditional demand for red panda meat and related products** has **reduced** over time.
- Also, the reduction in poaching and illegal trade of red panda is indicative of the **success of awareness campaigns** about the conservation of the species.

Recommendations

- Community-based conservation** and protection for the species as its habitat stretches across remote areas.
- Trans-boundary law enforcement co-operation** through the use of multi-government platforms like **SAWEN (South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network)**.
 - SAWEN was formally established at an inter-governmental meeting hosted in Paro (a town in Bhutan) by the Royal Government of Bhutan, in January **2011**.
 - It aims to establish **multilateral collaboration to fight wildlife crime** in the region.

Red Panda

- The red panda is a **small reddish-brown arboreal mammal**.
- The only living member of the **genus Ailurus**.
- It is also the state animal of **Sikkim**.
- It is listed as **Endangered in the IUCN** red list of Threatened Species and under **Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- It is found in the forests of **India, Nepal, Bhutan and the northern mountains of Myanmar and southern China**.
- It thrives best at 2,200-4,800m, in **mixed deciduous and conifer forests** with dense understories of bamboo.
- In India, About 5,000-6,000 red pandas are estimated to be present in **Sikkim, western Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling district of West Bengal and parts of Meghalaya**.

- This is the second-largest population after China (6,000-7,000).
- Red pandas have been reported from 11 districts of **Arunachal Pradesh**, which is **presumed to hold the largest red panda population in the country**.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

National Conference on Women in Police and CAPFS

- **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)** organised the **National Conference on Women in Police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) in New Delhi**.
- It was inaugurated by the **Union Minister for Women and Child Development**.

Key Points

- The main objective of the National Conference was to discuss and deliberate on the following **two themes**:
 - **Cyber Stalking and Bullying of Women: Steps for Protection**
 - **Challenges faced by CAPF Women in Operational Areas**
- Few important issues related to women in Police which were highlighted during the conference are:
 - Workplace harassment besides cyber crime.
 - Society should not look at the working **women with bias** and hold the performance of men to be the only benchmark for success.
 - Training of members of the **Child Welfare Committees (CWC)**.
 - The need to **train more female forensic investigators and cyber crime experts**.
 - BPR&D was also advised to make an SoP for **“One Stop Centre for Women”**.
- **To commemorate this event, a hand-out – “BPR&D Mirror – Gender Benders” was released**, which stated the recent initiatives taken by BPR&D to promote Woman Safety.

Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)

- The Government of India established the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** in the 1970s.
- It replaced the Police Research and Advisory Council (1966), with the primary objective of modernization of police force.
- In 1995 Government of India decided to entrust issues relating to Correctional Administration Work to the BPR&D.
- Thereby BPR&D has to ensure the implementation of prison reforms as well.
- The Government of India further decided to create a **National Police Mission** under the administrative control of BPR&D to transform the police forces in the country.
- Recently, BPR&D observed its **50th foundation day**.

Child Welfare Committees (CWC)

- The Child Welfare Committee (CWC) is constituted under the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**. It is the sole authority to deal with matters concerning children in need of care and protection.
- The Committee is constituted for each district or group of districts.

WOMEN RELATED ISSUES

Super Seven

Prime Minister of India on 8th March 2020 marked **International Women’s Day** by handing over control of his social media accounts to seven women achievers.

- Malvika Iyer—For Disability Right
- Arifa Jaan—For Tradition
- Sneha Mohandoss—For Sustainability
- Kalavati Devi—For Sanitation
- Vijaya Power --- For Handicraft
- Veena Devi--- For Self-Sufficiency In Organic Farming

Key Points

- **Namda Traditional Art**
 - Namda is a local term used for **traditional felted wool floor coverings**, made out of a coarse variety of wool.
 - Namda comes from the root word **Namata (Sanskrit for woollen stuff)**.
 - Namda making is **practised as a craft** in several cultures, especially in the countries throughout Asia, viz. **Iran, Afghanistan and India**.
 - **Srinagar in Kashmir and Tonk in Rajasthan** are the two major namda making centres in India.

- In India, it is known to have come from Iran and was actively promoted in the state under the patronage of the Mughal monarchs and the Rajput royals.
- **Rich hues and exquisite designing** are the hallmarks of the handcrafted Namda.
- Unique themes and **floral patterns** provide the themes for these masterpieces and **flowers and leaves, buds and fruits** are the essence of the designs.
- **Banjara Community**
 - The word '**banjara**' is derived from **Vanaj** meaning **to trade**, and **Jara** meaning **to travel**.
 - Banjara (sometimes called **Gypsies**) is a **nomadic tribe of India** and were the vital supply chain for villages.
 - They were **commercial nomads**, that is, hundreds of years ago they distributed salt and other essential items to interior villages, but they did have a connection with the land.
 - The Banjaras were among many tribes that resisted the British attempt to seize their lands for plantations and enroll them as labour.
 - Their constant revolt frustrated the British, and in 1871, the Banjaras and several other tribes were brought under the **Criminal Tribes Act**.
 - The community was denotified in the 1950s but were listed under the **Habitual Offenders Act, 1952**.
 - With **roots in Rajasthan**, Banjaras now live in several states and are known by different names like **Lambada or Lambadi in Andhra Pradesh, Lambani in Karnataka; Gwar or Gwaraiya in Rajasthan** etc.
 - They are listed in various States as Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Other Backward Class (OBC) and as Vimukta Jati/denotified tribes.
 - The language of Banjara is known as "**Gorboli**" "**Gor mati Boli**" or "**Brinjari**" an independent dialect.
 - The dialect falls in the category of **Indo-Aryan language**.
- **Foodbank India**
 - The **India Food Banking Network (IFBN)** is evolving an ecosystem for **food security interventions** to support thousands of feeding programmes in India by bringing the government, private sector and NGOs together to fight hunger and malnutrition in India.
 - **Vision:** To have a **hunger and malnutrition free India** which falls in line with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 2- Zero Hunger by 2030)**.
 - It aims to achieve the vision by establishing a strong and efficient network of FoodBanks throughout the country so that **every district has access to at least one FoodBank by 2030**.
 - It is a **multi-stakeholder partnership** of global, domestic and local community partners who contribute voluntarily to support the humanitarian and development projects.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

KIRAN Scheme

The **Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing (KIRAN) Scheme** is one of the several pioneering initiatives started by the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** for promoting women in science.

Key Points

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is implementing 'Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing (KIRAN)' Scheme to provide various career opportunities to women scientists and technologists.
- It is primarily aimed to **bring gender parity in the Science & Technology sector** by inducting more women talent in the research & development domain through various programmes.
- It also provides **fellowship support ranging from Rs 25000 to 55000 to women ranging in the age group 27 to 57 years** for continuing higher education in Science and Technology **after a break in career**.

Conference on Empowering Women Entrepreneurs 2020

The **Conference on Empowering Women Entrepreneurs 2020** has been inaugurated on the occasion of the International Women's Day (8th March) in New Delhi.

Key Points

- The three-day conference has been **organised by the Ministry of MSME** in collaboration with various industry associations like FICCI-flo, CII and India SME Forum.
- Also, a discussion on '**Creating a conducive business Eco System for Empowering Women Entrepreneurs**' has been arranged for more than 300 women entrepreneurs from all parts of the country.

- The conference mentioned **MSME Sambandh** and **Udyam Sakhi portal** which has helped to generate a pool of successful women entrepreneurs in the country.
 - **MSME Sambandh** aims to monitor the implementation of public procurement from MSMEs by Central Public Sector Enterprises.
 - **Udyam Sakhi portal** intends to provide the right information for **women entrepreneurs** about self-employment on one single portal.

Warli Adivasi Revolt

- In 1945, it began in **Zari village, Talasari taluka (Maharashtra)**.
- Affected from the exploitation from the landlords and money-lenders, nearly 5,000 indentured tribals gathered and refused to work on landlords' fields until they received 12 annas a day in wages.
- Their resistance sowed the first seeds of **rights-based movements** among the region's indigenous communities.
- **Women played an important role** in the revolt and helped the men in all possible aspects.
- The involvement of the women was supported by the **Kisan Sabha leader, Godaveri Parulekar**, also known as **Godutai** (elder sister) by the Adivasis.
- Women followed her and spoke at meetings about the oppression they faced and encouraged other women to join the struggle.

Warli Tribe

- They are spread across Thane, Nashik and Dhule districts of **Maharashtra**, Valsad district of **Gujarat**, **Karnataka**, **Goa** and the Union Territories of **Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu**.
- They are **small-scale cultivators** and cultivate **rice, pulses and vegetables**. They also sell **toddy, mahua** and **fuelwood** to their tribesmen and neighbouring communities for a living.
- Warli are **nature worshippers**.
- **Warli art** stems from their belief system shaped by their centuries-old subsistence on forest land.
- They **did not have a written word** until recent times and their art was a way of transmitting their belief systems from one generation to the next.

Their drawings revolve around **community traditions**, the tools they use and their association with nature.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. What are 'Orphan Crops'? How are they significant to ensure food security globally? (150 words)
Ans.

- Orphan crops are a diverse set of minor crops like tef, finger millet, yam, roots and tubers that tend to be regionally important but not traded around the world and receive no attention by research networks.
- They are largely grown and used locally by communities. They are not part of the main crops that are traded internationally and which have often been considered staple crops, such as rice or maize.
- Several pulses are considered orphan crops, along with certain types of cereals, fruits, nuts, vegetables, roots, tubers and oil seeds. For example, in Africa, several types of beans such as cowpeas are considered orphan crops.
- They get less research attention and so, the breeding technology for orphan crops is lagging way behind modern technology.

Significance of orphan crops in ensuring food security globally

- Orphan crops are incredibly important in the countries where they're grown. They provide income for the poorest farmers and serve as staples in the local diet.
- These "orphan" crops are an important component of diets in many countries and can help provide balanced nutrition and support resilience and sustainable agricultural practices.
- Developing countries rely on these crops more heavily than rice and wheat.
- Though lagging breeding technology has hurt their resilience, especially to pests and disease, **they are uniquely adapted to the environment in which they are grown.**
- They are Resilient, being both drought- and frost-tolerant as well as able to grow in harsher environments than many staple crops.
- The potential to increase productivity, diversity and nutritional outcomes through investments in orphan crops is tremendous.
- Orphan crops provides an option to increase productivity, diversity and nutritional outcomes in global food system.

Conclusion

Orphan crops require more attention and funding if they are to fully contribute to food security, nutrition and sustainability. Orphan crops should be prioritised more in agricultural research and production.

DAILY QUIZ

- Recently, two rare species of wildlife - a rusty spotted cat and a coral red kurki snake - were spotted in which Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh?
 - Rajaji
 - Pilibhit**
 - Dudhwa
 - Amangarh
- Consider the following statements with respect to Rusty Spotted Cat
 - It is listed in schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
 - It is a carnivore, survives on insects, birds and rodents and is nocturnal in nature.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Consider the following statements with respect to Coral Red Kukri Snake
 - It is listed in schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act.
 - Its innate characteristic was to remain underground most of the time and is nocturnal in nature.
 - It normally preyed on earthworms and larvae.
 Which of the statements given above are correct?
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 2 and 3 only**
 - 1, 2 and 3
- Consider the following statements with respect to Nari Shakti Puraskar
 - Nari Shakti Puraskar is the highest civilian honour among awards given exclusively for women in India.
 - It will be awarded every year and was formerly called as Stree Shakti Puraskar.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Freedom in the World 2020 Report has been released recently by?
 - German Watch
 - Freedom House**
 - Human Rights Watch
 - Amnesty International
- Consider the following statements with respect to SAWEN (South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network)
 - It is an inter-governmental wildlife law enforcement support body of South Asian countries.
 - SAWEN operates its activities from the Secretariat based in Kathmandu, Nepal.
 - India and Pakistan are members of this organisation.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3**
- Union Law Ministry has recently notified a panel headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai. It was notified for which of the following purposes?
 - Elimination of Death Penalty
 - Delimitation of Constituencies**
 - Reforms in Criminal Justice System
 - Creation of All India Judicial Service
- “Sahyadri Megha” often seen in the news recently is a/an?
 - New variety of Paddy**
 - Shivalik class stealth frigate
 - Irrigation project in Tamil Nadu
 - Programme for tribal women empowerment
- Consider the following statements with respect to WISTEMM Program.
 - It aims to provide opportunities to Indian Women Scientists, Engineers & Technologists to undertake international collaborative research in premier institutions around the world.
 - The program was implemented jointly by the Department of Science and Technology and UN Science & Technology Forum.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2**
- Consider the following statements with respect to Red Panda
 - It is a reddish-brown marsupial found in four Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim and West Bengal.
 - It is listed as “critically endangered” on the IUCN Red List of threatened species.
 - Almost 50% of the red panda’s habitat is in the Eastern Himalayas.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 - 3 only**
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3