COVID-19 NEWS

Mobile Bsl-3 VRDL Lab

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated through videoconference a mobile virology research and diagnostics laboratory (MVRDL).

About:

- The mobile lab namely "Mobile BSL-3 VRDL Lab" has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), together with ESIC Hospital, Hyderabad, and the private industry.
- The mobile lab will be helpful in carrying out diagnosis of COVID-19 and in virus-culturing for drug screening, convalescent plasma-derived therapy, comprehensive immune profiling of patients towards vaccine development and early clinical trials specific to Indian population.
- The MVRDL is the combination of a bio-safety level (BSL)-3 lab and a BSL-2 lab.

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC

Kasowal Bridge

Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has constructed and opened a new permanent bridge on the 'Ravi River' connecting Kasowal enclave in Punjab to the rest of the country.

About:

- The 484-meter bridge was built by Border Roads Task Force (BRTF) of Project Chetak.
- The enclave of around 35 square kilometres had hitherto been connected via pontoon bridge of limited load capacity which used to be dismantled every year prior to the Monsoon or else it would have got washed away in the strong currents of the river.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY

Reservation For Tribal Teachers

A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court held it unconstitutional to provide 100% reservation for tribal teachers in schools located in Scheduled Areas across the country.

Key highlights of the Judgement:

- The court held that 100% reservation is discriminatory and impermissible. The opportunity of public employment is not the prerogative of few.
- It is an obnoxious idea that tribals only should teach the tribals. When there are other local residents, why they cannot teach?
- Merit cannot be denied in toto by providing reservation.
- A 100% reservation to the Scheduled Tribes has deprived Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes also of their due representation.
- The court also referred to the Indira Sawhney judgment, which caps reservation at 50%.
- The government is "duty-bound" to periodically review the reservation process to ensure that the benefits "trickle down and are not usurped by" the affluent in these categories (OBCs and the SC/STs).

Background: The case stemmed from a legal challenge to a order issued in 2000 by the Andhra Pradesh Bench providing 100% reservation to the Scheduled Tribe candidates, out of whom 33.1/3% shall be women, for the post of teachers in schools located in the Scheduled Areas of the State.

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

Swamitva Scheme

On the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day 2020 (April 24), PM Modi launched Swamitva Scheme.

About:

- The Swamitva scheme which is launched in pilot mode in 6 states helps to map rural inhabited lands using drones and latest survey methods.
- The scheme will ensure streamlined planning, revenue collection and provide clarity over property rights in rural areas.
- This will open up avenues for applying for loans from financial institutions by the owners. Disputes related to property would also be settled through the title deeds allotted through this scheme.3

E-Gramswaraj Portal And App

1

Plot-1441, Opp. IOCL Petrol Pump, CRP Square, Bhubaneswar-751015
Ph.: 8984111101, 8093083555. Web: www.vanikias.com, E-mail: vaniksias@gmail.com

On the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day 2020 (April 24), PM Modi launched a unified e-GramSwaraj Portal and mobile application.

About:

- The e-GramSwaraj will help in preparing and executing Gram Panchayat Development Plans.
- It will ensure real time monitoring and accountability and is a major step towards digitization down to the Gram Panchayat level.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

World Immunization Week 2020

World Immunization Week is being celebrated this year with the theme "#VaccinesWork for All."

About:

- World Immunization Week is celebrated annually in the last week of April (24 to 30 April).
- It is a global public health campaign which aims to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease.
- Immunization is one of the most successful and cost effective health interventions. However, nearly 20 million children are still unvaccinated and under-vaccinated worldwide.
- The theme this year is #VaccinesWork forAll. The campaign focuses on how vaccines as well as the people who develop, deliver and receive them are vaccine champions by working to protect the health of everyone, everywhere.

Related Info: Given that WHO has designated 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, WHO will highlight nurses and midwives for their crucial role as early vaccine champions for new parents and parents-to-be.

Noor

Iran announced that it successfully launched Noor, the nation's first military satellite.

About:

- The satellite, dubbed "Noor" or light, was sent into orbit using a long-range rocket.
- Such a launch raised concerns among experts on whether the technology used could help Iran develop intercontinental ballistic missiles. This is another move in the fight between U.S and Iran over the regime's missile programs.

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

National Panchayati Raj Day

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu extended his greetings on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day (April 24). On the occasion, Panchayati Raj Ministry conferred Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) Award to Baramulla district in Jammu and Kashmir.

About:

- Ministry of Panchayati Raj commemorates 24th April of every year as the National Panchayati Raj Day, as the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into force on this date, thus institutionalizing the Panchayati Raj.
- Awards: On this occasion, Ministry of Panchayati Raj awards the best performing Panchayats/States/UTs across the country under various categories namely
  - Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar (DDUPSP),
  - Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar (NDRGGSP),
  - Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award (CFGPA),
  - Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) Award and
  - e-Panchayat Puraskar (given to States/UTs only).
- This year, due to lockdown, awards under only three categories viz. Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar (NDRGGSP), Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award (CFGPA) and Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) Award have been finalized.

World Malaria Day 2020

World Malaria Day 2020 is being celebrated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on April 25 with the theme 'Zero malaria starts with me'.

About:

- World Malaria Day was established on April 25 in 2007 by the 60th session of the World Health Assembly, WHO's decision-making body.

- Prior to it, Africa Malaria Day was held on April 25, which began in 2001, one year after the Abuja Declaration was signed by 44 malaria-endemic countries at the African Summit on Malaria.
- The day was established to provide "education and understanding of malaria" and spread information on "year-long intensified implementation of national malaria-control strategies.

"Zero malaria starts with me"

- On World Malaria Day 2020, WHO joins the RBM Partnership to End Malaria in promoting "Zero malaria starts with me", a grassroots campaign that aims to keep malaria high on the political agenda and mobilize additional resources for malaria prevention and care.
- The "Zero malaria" campaign, first launched in Senegal in 2014, was officially endorsed at the African Union Summit by all African Heads of State in 2018.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: India is still home to the largest number of poor. Discuss the underlying factors responsible for the prevalence of poverty in India and suggest strategy in order to accelerate poverty eradication in a sustainable manner?

Ans:

Poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs and the person is unable to fulfil the basic necessities for the sustenance of life. According to the 2018 global Multidimensional Poverty Index(MPI) released by the UN, over 270 million people in India moved out of poverty in the decade since 2005-06. But India is home to 26% of the global extreme poor. Global Hunger Index 2018 placed India at 103rd position out of 119 countries. There are different dimensions to poverty in India such as:

Economic causes:

- Slow economic growth leads to increase in unemployment and poverty.
- Decreased agricultural output due to unpredictable weather patterns leads to some serious inflation issues.
- Due to inadequate industrialization in certain areas employment opportunities become limited.
- Uneven concentration of wealth and resources in the country.
- Unemployment and Under-employment.

Social causes:

- Social evils like untouchability affects democratic rights like employment etc. which leads to poverty among certain lower castes.
- Widespread ignorance and illiteracy: Uneducated people are unaware of their full potential which leads to limited earning sources.
- Mass migration to cities causes increased competition in the employment sector especially in cities which leads to poverty even among the educated population.
- High divorce rates and unequal employment opportunities to women leads to feminization of poverty.

Geographical Factors:

- Selective fertility of land creates fertile islands in the country and the unfertile lands are pushed towards poverty naturally.
- Environmental and climatic factors include floods, droughts etc.

Now there is more focus on job creation via entrepreneurship and converting job seeker into job creator through hand holding approach in terms of targeted loans under Mudra Scheme, Start-Up India, Stand-Up India, Aspire etc.

Providing employment also mitigates poverty in following ways:

- Better wages provide access to education as well as health care thus, providing future avenues of poverty alleviation
- Increased Income also provides better access to government services, even if they are for free.

According to NITI Aayog, the strategy for combating poverty must rest on two approaches, that is, that are:

- Sustained rapid growth that is also employment intensive and
- Making anti-poverty programs even more effective.

3

Plot-1441, Opp. IOCL Petrol Pump, CRP Square, Bhubaneswar-751015
Ph.: 8984111101, 8093083555. Web: www.vanikias.com, E-mail: vaniksias@gmail.com

Thus, rapid growth alone is not a sufficient condition for rapid expansion of social spending, but it is a necessary condition nonetheless. There needs to be focus on combating Poverty through efficient anti-poverty programmes as well to ensure direct help to the poor in terms of addressing specific aspects of poverty such as food and nutrition, water, toilets, literacy, health etc.:

Various steps taken by the government to mitigate poverty:

- National Food Security Act: Providing 75% rural population and 50% urban population with 5 kg of food grains per month, ensuring health and prospects of coming out of poverty.
- MGNREGA: provides with specified wage in a given year to unskilled labour, thus providing them some source of income, thereby increasing their purchasing power for essential needs.
- Housing for All- rural and Urban to enable affordable asset creation for poor covering shelter part for the poor.
- In order to make anti-poverty programs effective, the government has taken a lot of efforts like channelizing the potential of JAM (Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar, and Mobile) trinity, providing biometric identity to the poor to avail the benefits of government schemes.

These direct measures towards poverty reduction are required to support poor families to ensure basic necessities are available and accessible for the poor. At the same time, job creation is also important to empowering them so that they continue to fulfil their needs.

To have sustainable poverty reduction, these areas must be focused:

- Accelerate rural poverty reduction: Capitalize on growing connectivity between rural and urban areas, and between the agriculture, industry and services sectors, has been effective in reducing poverty.
- Creating more and better jobs: Efforts are needed to address tepid job creation in labour intensive sectors.
- More focus is required on the low participation of women in the labour market and the slow progress among Scheduled Tribes.
- Smart Cities along with Smart Villages are required (PURA model).
- Improve human development outcomes for the poor which are central to improving their quality of life.
- Special Employment Schemes for the Poor such as MGNREGA.
- Need to incorporate technology for identification of beneficiaries to prevent leakages of various subsidies, adopt direct benefit transfers such as in PDS.
- Revolutionizing the anti-poverty programmes by replacing the current cumbersome and checking the leakages in the distribution of benefits.
- Adopting a holistic definition of poverty should be considered instead of the current expenditure-based poverty line etc.

Poverty is a multi-faceted problem so the solution also needs to be a multi-faceted one. We have taken leaps in poverty reduction with the increased employment based growth and efficient anti-poverty scheme implementation, but more needs to be done to take poverty heads on. Overcoming poverty should be seen as a fundamental right of the citizens and should be given its due importance.

4

Plot-1441, Opp. IOCL Petrol Pump, CRP Square, Bhubaneswar-751015
Ph.: 8984111101, 8093083555. Web: www.vanikias.com, E-mail: vaniksias@gmail.com