

COVID- 19 NEWS**Adb's Covid-19 Active Response And Expenditure Support Programme (CARES Programme)**

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$1.5 billion loan to support India's COVID-19 immediate response.

About:

- They signed the loan agreement for the ADB's COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support Programme (CARES Programme).
- It will be used to implement (i) COVID-19 containment plan to rapidly ramp up test-track-treatment capacity, and (ii) social protection for the poor, vulnerable, women, and disadvantaged groups to protect more than 800 million people over the next three months.

Related Info : Established in 1966, Asian Development Bank (ADB) is owned by 68 members—49 from the Asia and the Pacific region. It is Headquartered in Manila, Philippines.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Raja Ravi Varma**

April 29 is the birth anniversary of the famed Indian painter Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906), remembered for giving Indians their western, classical representations of Hindu gods and goddesses.

About:

- Raja Ravi Varma (1848 – 1906) is considered among the greatest painters in the history of Indian art. Varma was patronised by Ayilyam Thirunal, the next Maharaja of Travancore and began formal training thereafter.
- A prolific artist, Varma is believed to have made around 7,000 paintings before his death at the age of 58. His most famous works include Damayanti Talking to a Swan, Shakuntala Looking for Dushyanta, Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair, and Shantanu and Matsyagandha.

Key highlights of his work

- His works are held to be among the best examples of the fusion of European techniques with a purely Indian sensibility.
- Through his printing press, Varma's humanised depiction of Hindu pantheon travelled beyond the surfaces of costly canvases, and into the prayer and living rooms of working-class homes.
- He was notable for making affordable lithographs of his paintings available to the public, which greatly enhanced his reach and influence as a painter and public figure.
- His depictions of Hindu deities and episodes from the epics and Puranas have received profound acceptance from the public and are found, often as objects of worship, across the length and breadth of India.

Honours

- In 1904, Viceroy Lord Curzon, on behalf of the British King Emperor, bestowed upon Varma the Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal.
- In 2013, the crater Varma on Mercury was named in his honor.
- Government of Kerala has instituted an award called Raja Ravi Varma Puraskaram, which is awarded every year to people who show excellence in the field of art and culture.

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC**New List Of Names Of Tropical Cyclones Over North Indian Ocean**

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) released a new list of names of tropical cyclones over north Indian Ocean including Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea, comprising of 169 names including 13 from India such as Gati, Tej, Aag, Neer, Vyom, Jhar and Jaladhi among others.

About:

- The current list has, in fact, 13 names each from all 13 member countries of the Regional specialised meteorological centres (RSMCs) including Bangladesh, Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- The IMD being one of the six RSMCs in the world to provide tropical cyclone and storm surge advisories finalised the new list of 169 names.
- Significance: Naming of Tropical Cyclones helps the scientific community, disaster managers, media and general masses to
 - identify each individual cyclone.
 - create awareness of its development.

- remove confusion in case of simultaneous occurrence of TCs over a region
- remember a TC easily
- rapidly and effectively disseminate warnings to much wider audience
- Once the last name (Amphan) of the previous list is used, the TCs thereafter will be known one-by-one as Nisarga (shared by Bangladesh), Gati (India), Nivar (Iran) in that order from the list of 169 names.
- The other names from India in the new list include Murasu, Probaho, Prabhanjan, Ghumi, Ambud and Vega. The names of TCs over the north Indian Ocean are not repeated. Once used, it will cease to be used again.

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

Mid-Day Meal Scheme

Government has announced around 11 % increase in annual central allocation of cooking cost under Mid-day meal scheme to 8,100 crore rupees in view of situation arising out of COVID-19.

About:

- With a view to enhancing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 1995. In 2001 MDMS became a cooked Mid Day Meal Scheme.
- The Mid-Day Meal Scheme covers children of classes I-VIII studying in government, government-aided schools, special training centres (STC) and madarsas/ maqtabas supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). It is the largest school feeding programme in the world.
- The Midday Meal Scheme is covered by the National Food Security Act, 2013.

Svamitva Scheme

Union Minister of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj issued guidelines regarding the SVAMITVA scheme, a new initiative of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

About:

- SVAMITVA scheme is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, State Panchayati Raj Departments, State Revenue Departments and Survey of India.
- The program is currently being implemented in six states - Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
- It aims to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural India, engaging the latest Drone Surveying technology, for demarcating the inhabitant land in rural areas. Under this, mapping of rural housing land can be done using the latest survey methods and drones.
- This scheme will help in streamlining planning and revenue collection in rural areas and ensuring clarity on property rights. This will also help in resolving property related disputes. The scheme will enable creation of better-quality Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs), leveraging the maps created under this programme

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

Uscirf Annual Report-2020

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has downgraded India to the lowest ranking, “countries of particular concern” (CPC) in its 2020 report.

About:

- The report, released in Washington by the federal government commission that functions as an advisory body, placed India alongside countries, including China, North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. India was categorised as a “Tier 2 country” in last year’s listing.
- This is the first time since 2004 that India has been placed in this category.
- According to the report, India took a sharp downward turn in 2019, which included specific concerns about the Citizenship Amendment Act, the proposed National Register for Citizens, anti-conversion laws and the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Government of India reacted sharply to the USCIRF report on Tuesday, terming it “biased and tendentious” and rejected its observations.

Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2019

NITI Aayog has questioned the methodology adopted by Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2019 to rank India as the seventh worst terrorism affected country ahead of conflict-ridden countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Palestine and Lebanon.

About:

- The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) is a report published annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), a global think tank headquartered in Sydney, Australia.
- The index provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism since 2000. It produces a composite score in order to provide an ordinal ranking of countries on the impact of terrorism.
- The GTI is based on data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) which is collected and collated by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland.

2019 index

- Deaths from terrorism fell for the fourth consecutive year, after peaking in 2014. Afghanistan has replaced Iraq as the country most affected by terrorism.
- India has moved to the seventh position from the previous year's eighth in the annual Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2019. The countries ahead of it are Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, Pakistan and Somalia.

Trends In World Military Expenditure, 2019

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a Swedish think tank, released its annual report titled 'Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2019.'

About:

- The global military expenditure rose to \$1917 billion in 2019, an increase of 3.6% from 2018.
- In 2019, the top five largest spenders — U.S. (\$732 bn), China (\$261 billion), India (\$71.1 billion), Russia (\$65.1 bn) and Saudi Arabia (\$61.9 bn) — accounted for 62% of the global expenditure.
- India and China emerged among the top three spenders. India was at the fourth position in 2018 with Saudi Arabia at the third.
- The \$71.1 billion spent by India on defence in 2019 was 2.4% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). India's expenditure in 2019 was 6.8% more than that in 2018.
- India's military expenditure grew 259% over a 30-year period between 1990 and 2019 and by 37% over the decade of 2010–19. However, its military burden fell from 2.7% of GDP in 2010 to 2.4% in 2019."

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Petersberg Climate Dialogue XI

Union Minister for Environment, Prakash Javadekar represented India in the first virtual Petersberg Climate Dialogue.

About:

- The first virtual Climate Dialogue, was the eleventh session of Petersberg Climate Dialogue.
- It has been hosted by Germany since 2010 to provide a forum for informal high-level political discussions, focusing both on international climate negotiations and the advancement of climate action.
- The dialogue saw participation from Ministers and representatives of about 30 countries.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Analyze the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the global oil sector. (250 words)

Ans:

Oil prices were already facing a downward trend, owing to a disagreement between Russia and Saudi Arabia (regarding oil production cut, leading to an oversupply of oil- Price war). Covid-19 has just acted as a catalyst in bringing down oil prices (because of too little demand).

Impact of Covid-19 on Oil Sector

- **Reduced Demand:** China, which is the world's manufacturing base and one of the leading consumer of oil, has been impacted by the lockdown imposed by the pandemic.

- Similarly, other major economies like the US, EU and India etc. are also witnessing economic shutdowns.
- This, in turn, has reduced the demand for oil and dragged the oil prices to a historic low.
- **Impacting Industries:** Further, the major demand for crude oil comes from transportation and industries like electricity, aviation, tourism etc. which are under shut down mode.
- **Fear of Global Recession:** IMF fears that the global recession triggered by Covid-19 will be one of the worst economic crisis since the Great depression of 1929.
 - The subdued demand in the global economy will further keep the prices of oil at a low level.
- **Political Instability in West Asia:** This crash in oil prices may undermine the political stability of several oil-exporting countries in West Asia.
- **Domino Effect:** Given the high interdependence in the world economy, the oil crisis will create a domino effect in other non-oil-producing countries and further impact the growth prospects of the global economy.
- **Shifting of Wealth:** In the long run, the wealth would transfer from oil-exporting countries to oil-importing countries.
 - The sharp fall in oil prices can turn out to be a blessing in disguise to large oil-importing countries like India and China.

Conclusion

Oil is critical for the energy needs of the world economy. Thus, there is a need for a multilateral effort to finalize an agreement which could help bring the oil prices to a healthy range (which could be beneficial for the consumers and economically viable for the producers). In this context, G-20 can take the lead in coming up with an international intergovernmental framework for energy governance.