COVID- 19 NEWS

Shramik Special Trains

Railway Ministry will run Shramik Special trains to move stranded migrant workers and others.

About:

- Under the Special Shramik Trains run by Ministry of Railways, the first train carrying almost 1,200 stranded labourers of Jharkhand from Telangana will reach to the native state tonight.
- Ministry of Railways and State Government efforts have worked in unison to bring back stranded labourers and students stuck in different states across the country.

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY

Chakma And Hajong

The Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region (DoNER) has directed the Arunachal Pradesh government to include the Chakma and Hajong communities in the COVID-19 relief programme.

About:

- The Chakmas and Hajongs are ethnic people. Chakmas are predominantly Buddhists; Hajongs are Hindus.
- They were inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) who migrated to India due to –
- Submergence of their land by the Kaptai dam on the Karnaphuli River in the 1960s.
- Religious persecution they faced in East Pakistan as they were non-Muslims.
- The Indian government set up relief camps in Arunachal Pradesh and a majority of them continue to live there even after 50 years.
- An estimated 1 lakh Chakma and Hajong refugees are staying in India. When they came in 1964, there were about 15,000 Chakmas and about 2,000 Hajongs.

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC

Kashmir Saffron

Kashmir saffron, which is cultivated and harvested in the Karewa (highlands) of Jammu and Kashmir, has been given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Geographical Indications Registry.

About:

- The unique characteristics of Kashmir saffron are its longer and thicker stigmas, natural deep-red colour, high aroma, bitter flavour, chemical-free processing, and high quantity of crocin (colouring strength), safranal (flavour) and picrocrocin (bitterness).
- It is the only saffron in the world grown at an altitude of 1,600 m to 1,800 m AMSL (above mean sea level).
- The spice is grown in some regions of Kashmir, including Pulwama, Budgam, Kishtwar and Srinagar.
- Kashmir saffron is a very precious and costly product. Kashmir saffron is renowned globally as a spice. It rejuvenates health and is used in cosmetics and for medicinal purposes. It has been associated with traditional Kashmiri cuisine.
- Iran is the largest producer of saffron and India is a close competitor.

Types: The saffron available in Kashmir is of three types —

- 'Lachha Saffron', with stigmas just separated from the flowers and dried without further processing;
- 'Mongra Saffron', in which stigmas are detached from the flower, dried in the sun and processed traditionally; and
- 'Guchhi Saffron', which is the same as Lachha, except that the latter's dried stigmas are packed loosely in air-tight containers while the former has stigmas joined together in a bundle tied with a cloth thread.

Kovilpatti Kadalai Mittai

Kovilpatti kadalai mittai (chikki or sweet made of peanuts and jaggery) has got geographical indication (GI) tag.

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

About:

- Now, members of the Kovilpatti Regional Kadalai Mittai Manufacturers and Retailers Association, based out of Kovilpatti and some towns and villages in Tuticorin district of Tamil Nadu, will have an exclusive right over the tag.
- The GI tag has been granted to the groundnut sweet by the Geographical Indications Registry recognising the uniqueness of the ingredients used for its manufacture procured from the geographical area of Kovilpatti.
- The ingredients include groundnuts grown in the native black soil of Kovilpatti, organic jaggery and water sourced from the Thamirabarani river.
- The other recognised uniqueness includes the production process which is done using 'veragu aduppu' (firewood stove).

Chak-Hao

Chak-Hao, scented glutinous rice popularly known as Black Rice which is cultivated in Manipur since centuries has got GI (Geographical Indications) registration.

About:

- Chak-Hao is aromatic rice cultivated in Manipur.
- Chak-Hao of Manipur is registered under GI certificate number 364, application for which was filled by North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMAC).
- GI status is an indication that identifies goods as produced from a particular area, which has special quality or reputation attributable to its geographical origin and GI branded goods possess a recall value amongst consumers.

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

Rebate of State Levies (ROSL) Scheme

Garment and made-up exporters who have Rebate of State Levies (ROSL) Scheme arrears will receive it in the form of scrips, according to a Department of Revenue communication.

About:

- The ROSL Scheme, which reimburses the State levies that garment and made-up exports incurred, was discontinued on March 7 last year and replaced with the Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies scheme.
- The Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council has welcomed the move, while pointing out that exporters were in need of funds now and that the scrips would provide relief. They can use it for imports too, if needed, according to the Council.

One Nation, One Ration Card Plan

Union Consumer Affairs Minister has approved the integration of five more States and Union Territories with the National Cluster under the One Nation, One Ration Card plan.

About:

- These States and UTs are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.
- With this, the facility of national and inter-state portability will be available for nearly 60 Crore beneficiaries of 17 States and UTs.
- They will now lift their entitled quota of foodgrains from any Fair Price Shop of their choice, anywhere in these 17 States and UTs by using their existing ration card under One Nation, One Ration Card plan.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Kisan Sabha App

Kisan Sabha App developed by CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI), New Delhi to connect farmers to supply chain and freight transportation management system was launched.

About:

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Ph.: 8984111101, 8093083555. Web: www.vanikias.com, E-mail: vaniksias@gmail.com

- The portal connects the farmers, transporters, Service providers (like pesticides/ fertilizer/ dealers, cold store and warehouse owner), mandi dealers, customers (like big retail outlets, online stores, institutional buyers) and other related entities for timely and effective solution.
- The portal acts as a single stop for every entity related to agriculture, be they a farmer who needs better price for the crops or mandi dealer who wants to connect to more farmers or truckers who invariably go empty from the mandis.
- Kisan Sabha has 6 major modules taking care of Farmers/Mandi Dealers/Transporters/Mandi Board Members/ Service Providers/Consumers.

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

R&D Statistics And Indicators 2019-20

The R&D Statistics and Indicators 2019-20 based on the national S&T survey 2018 was released by the National Science and Technology Management Information (NSTMIS), Department of Science and Technology (DST).

Some of the key findings of the report are the following:

- India's gross expenditure in R&D has tripled between 2008 & 2018.
- India spent 0.7% of its GDP on R&D in 2017-18, while the same among other developing BRICS countries was Brazil 1.3%, Russian Federation 1.1%, China 2.1% and South Africa 0.8%.
- DST and DBT were the two major players contributing 63% and 14%, respectively of the total extramural R&D support in the country during 2016-17.
- Number of researchers per million population in India has increased to 255 in 2017 from 218 in 2015 and 110 in 2000.
- India occupies 3rd rank in terms of number of Ph. D.'s awarded in Science and Engineering (S&E) after USA (39,710 in 2016) and China (34,440 in 2015).
- During 2018, India was ranked at 3rd, 5th and 9th in scientific publication output as per the NSF, SCOPUS and SCI database respectively
- According to WIPO, India's Patent Office stands at the 7th position among the top 10 Patent Filing Offices in the world.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. "Digital India requires strong focus on cyber security." Discuss the challenges faced by cyber security and suggest ways to increase cyber expertise in India.

Digital India aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. However, the transition to a Digital India comes with a new set of vulnerabilities.

Vulnerabilities of cyberspace in India:

- India ranks 3rd in terms of the highest number of internet users in the world after USA and China.
- The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has reported a steep four-fold rise of cybersecurity incidents in a year (2017 to 2018).
- Some of the important examples of cyber-attacks are- Union Bank Of India Heist (2016), Wannacry Ransomware (2017), Data Theft At Zomato (2017), PETYA Ransomware (2017) etc.

Thus, Cyber Security becomes very significant in protecting our digital space from attack, damage, misuse and economic espionage.

- 'Digital India' dream requires a strong focus on cybersecurity more than ever before, however, our cybersecurity is marred by several challenges.
- Lack of national-level architecture for Cybersecurity: There is a lack of unified efforts to secure Critical Infrastructure of the public as well as the private sphere. This reduces the capability of security architecture to assess threats and tackle them effectively, in a coordinated manner.

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Ph.: 8984111101, 8093083555. Web: www.vanikias.com, E-mail: vaniksias@gmail.com

- Shortage of trained workforce: Although India is rife with a young workforce with considerable IT prowess, there is a dearth of talent when it comes to specific niches, such as Cyber Security. The demand for talented and skilled labour far outgrows supply.
- Lack of high-end secured devices: In India, less than 1% of mobile phone users have access to mobile phones with higher security norms. With varying income groups in India, not everyone can afford high end secured phones and this increases vulnerability.
- Imported hardwares may increase cyber threats: Most equipment and technology for setting up Cyber Security infrastructure in India are currently procured from global sources and their embedded softwares may increase the cyber security threats.
- Lack of awareness: There is a lack of awareness about cyber fraud, cyber laws and regulations at both corporate levels as well as individual levels.
- Cyberspace, as it always keeps evolving, has inherent vulnerabilities that cannot be removed.

Measures to enhance cybersecurity expertise of India

- Updation of outdated policy: India needs to refresh its National Cyber Security Policy that must be in sync with present-day technological and ecosystem realities.
- India's cybersecurity framework should be able to protect against intrusions at all levels in the public and private sector.
- Whole of Government' Approach: It is needed to define roles and responsibilities for oversight and implementation across implementation agencies. This will enable strong intra-government coordination on cybersecurity issues.
- Also, there is a need to enhance cybersecurity capacity at the state level.
- Creating skilled Human Resource: Skilled and trained workforce is key to better cybersecurity in the country. They can be able to create a safe and secured cyber architecture.
- Cooperation with private sectors: It required budgetary allocations and opportunities for raising additional resources, through the involvement of the private sector, toward meeting the cybersecurity challenge.

Conclusion

- The digital economy today comprises 14-15% of India's total economy and is targeted to reach 20% by 2024. India's future economic prospects depend very much on cyber security. Thus, it is imperative that we take the necessary steps to make India's cyberspace safe and secured with expertise in cybersecurity.