NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC

Covid -19 Indian National Supermodel

Department of Science and Technology (DST) has initiated a COVID-19 Indian National Supermodel to help monitor the future transmission of infection.

About:

- This will aid decisions involving health system readiness and other mitigation measures.
- Numerous mathematical models for Covid-19 forecasting and surveillance are being worked out by investigators funded by DST-SERB (Science and Engineering Research Board) and other agencies.
- As part of this initiative, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) and IISc, Bangalore will co-ordinate to connect and work with all COVID-19 modeling projects and programs in the country.

Responsible AI For Youth

The Union Minister for Electronics and IT launched a National Program for the youth called "Responsible AI for Youth".

About:

- Objective: To empower the youth to become AI ready and help reduce the skill gap, while enabling youth to create meaningful social impact solutions.
- Bodies involved: The Program has been created and launched by the National e-Governance Division, Ministry of Electronics & IT in collaboration with Intel India, with support from Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L), Ministry of HRD.
- Coverage: The National Programme is open to students of classes 8 - 12 from Central and State government-run schools (including KVS, NVS, JNV) from across the country.
- Strategy: The identified students will attend online training sessions on AI who will submit their ideas through a 60 seconds video explaining a proposed AI enabled solution. From the submitted ideas, top 100 ideas will be shortlisted and these students will be invited to attend sessions. Post the sessions, these students will be asked to create real time projects and submit their final project in a video format on the website.

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC

Baghjan Oilfield

Assam Chief Minister apprised Union Petroleum Minister about the incidents of gas explosion at oilfields in Baghjan, Tinsukia.

About:

- Baghjan oil field is located in Assam's Tinsukia district.
- It is being managed by Oil India Limited.
- The blast occurred at Baghjan oil field due to some technical problems. There was no report of any casualty in the incident.

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

Pm Cares Fund

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has refused to disclose details on the creation and operation of the PM CARES Fund, telling an RTI applicant that the fund is "not a public authority" within the ambit of the RTI Act, 2005.

About:

- The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund accepts donations and provides relief during the COVID-19 pandemic, and other similar emergencies.
- According to PMO, "PM CARES Fund is not a Public Authority under the ambit of Section 2(h) of the RTI Act, 2005.
- The PMO cited a Supreme Court (SC) observation that "indiscriminate and impractical demands under RTI Act for disclosure of all and sundry information would be counterproductive".

National AI Portal Of India

The Union Minister for Electronics and IT launched India's national Artificial Intelligence Portal called www.ai.gov.in.

About:

- This portal has been jointly developed by the Ministry of Electronics and IT and IT Industry. National e-Governance Division of Ministry of Electronics and IT and NASSCOM from the IT industry will jointly run this portal.
- This portal shall work as a one stop digital platform for AI related developments in India, sharing of resources such as articles, startups, investment funds in AI, resources, companies and educational institutions related to AI in India.

Rozgar Setu

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister has announced the launch of the 'Rozgar Setu' scheme, to help secure employment for skilled workers who have returned.

About:

- After such workers requiring employment are identified, the government will contact factory, workshop owners and contractors overseeing infrastructure projects such as road and bridge construction.
- Thus, the State government will act as a setu [bridge] between workers and employers so that both are benefited. According to CM, Madhya Pradesh is the first state to devise such a work plan.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

Covid-19 Technology Access Pool (C-Tap)

WHO and Costa Rica launched the landmark COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP).

About:

- Thirty countries and multiple international partners and institutions have signed up to support the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP).
- C-TAP is an initiative aimed at making vaccines, tests, treatments and other health technologies to fight COVID-19 accessible to all.
- The COVID-19 (Technology) Access Pool will be voluntary and based on social solidarity. It will provide a one-stop shop for scientific knowledge, data and intellectual property to be shared equitably by the global community.
- With supportive countries across the globe, C-TAP will serve as a sister initiative to the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator and other initiatives to support efforts to fight COVID-19 worldwide.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Fiscal Deficit

India's fiscal deficit widened to 4.6% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019-20 mainly on account of poor revenue realisation, according to official data provided by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

About:

- The fiscal deficit for 2019-20 worked out to be 4.59% of the GDP. The deficit, which signifies the gap between government revenue and expenditure, is higher than the revised estimate of 3.8% for the fiscal.
- The revenue deficit for 2019-20 was 3.27% of the GDP. The effective revenue deficit was 2.36%.
- Revenue receipts during the year worked out to be only 90% of the revised estimate. In absolute terms, total receipts of the government were Rs. 17.5 lakh crore against the estimate of Rs.19.31 lakh crore.
- The data showed the government's total expenditure was Rs. 26.86 lakh crore, lower than the ₹26.98 lakh crore projected earlier.

National Income

The National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics, has released the Provisional Estimates of National Income for the financial year 2019-20 and Quarterly Estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the fourth quarter (January-March) of 2019-20, both at Constant (2011-12) and Current Prices.

About:

- Real GDP or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at Constant (2011-12) Prices in the year 2019-20 is now estimated to attain a level of Rs. 145.66 lakh crore.
- The growth in GDP during 2019-20 is estimated at 4.2 percent as compared to 6.1 percent in 2018-19. This is the lowest annual growth rate of GDP registered under the new GDP data series which uses 2011-12 as the base year.
- GDP at Current Prices in the year 2019-20 is estimated to attain a level of Rs. 203.40 lakh crore, as against the First Revised Estimates of Rs. 189.71 lakh crore in 2018-19, showing a growth rate of 7.2 percent as compared to 11.0 percent in 2018-19.
- The Per Capita Income in real terms (at 2011-12 Prices) during 2019-20 is estimated to attain a level of Rs. 94,954 as compared to Rs. 92,085 in the year 2018-19, resulting in growth of 3.1 percent during 2019-20, as against 4.8 per cent in the previous year.
- The Per Capita Income at current prices during 2019-20 is estimated to be Rs. 134,226, showing a rise of 6.1 percent as compared to Rs. 1,26,521 during 2018-19.
- GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in Q4 of 2019-20 is estimated at Rs. 38.04 lakh crore, as against Rs. 36.90 lakh crore in Q4 of 2018-19, showing a growth of 3.1 percent.

Index Of Eight Core Industries

The Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) released the Index of Eight Core Industries (Base: 2011-12=100) for the Month of April, 2020.

About:

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- The growth rate of Index of Eight Core Industries for April 2020 declined by 38.1% (provisional) compared to decline of 9% (provisional) previous month of March 2020.
- In view of nationwide lockdown during April 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic, various industries viz. Coal, Cement, Steel, Natural Gas, Refinery, Crude Oil etc. experienced substantial loss of production.
- Production of coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity contracted by 15.5%, 6.4%, 19.9%, 24.2%, 4.5%, 83.9%, 86%, 22.8%, respectively.
- The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- During 2019-20, core industries recorded 0.6% growth against 4.4% in 2018-19.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India grew by 13% to a record of $49.97 billion in the 2019-20 financial year, according to official data released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
About:
- FDI into India rose 13% to a record $49.97 billion in FY2019-20 from $44.36 billion a year earlier.
- While FDI through FIPB route/RBI's Automatic Route/Acquisition Route rose 13% on year, total FDI that also includes equity capital of unincorporated bodies, reinvested earnings and other capital was up 18% on year to $73.45 billion, more than double from $36.04 billion in 2013-14.
- Sectors which attracted maximum foreign inflows during 2019-20 include services ($7.85 billion), computer software and hardware ($7.67 billion), telecommunications ($4.44 billion), trading ($4.57 billion), automobile ($2.82 billion), construction ($2 billion), and chemicals ($1 billion).
- Singapore emerged as the largest source of FDI in India during the last fiscal with $14.67 billion investments followed by Mauritius ($8.24 billion).
- Among states, Maharashtra garnered the highest share of FDI at 30% with investments clocking $7.26 billion. Karnataka and Delhi followed with 18% and 17% share, respectively.

National Career Service (NCS) Project
The Ministry of Labour and Employment under its National Career Service (NCS) project has now started offering free online "Career Skills Training" in partnership with TCS ION for its registered job-seekers.
About:
- The Ministry of Labour and Employment is implementing the National Career Service (NCS) project for transformation of the National Employment Service to provide a variety of employment related services like job search, job matching, career counselling, vocational guidance, information on skill development courses through an on-line portal (www.ncs.gov.in).
- Around 1000 employment exchanges including 200 Model Career Centers across the country are integrated with NCS.
- A Special link for Work from Home Jobs and Online Trainings has been created on NCS portal Home Page to give direct access to job-seekers to such jobs.
- NCS also offers the functionality of creation of video profiles for job-seekers in partnership with HIREMEE, a platform which provides online assessment and hiring services. Job-seekers can showcase their ability to recruiters using short video clips. All services on NCS are free.

MFP Items In MSP List
Ministry of Tribal Affairs has announced inclusion of 23 additional Minor Forest Produce (MFP) items in Minimum Support Price (MSP) list. They include Van Tulsi seeds, Van Jeera, Mushroom, Black Rice and Johar Rice among others.
About:
- The decision enhancing the coverage from 50 to 73 items comes in view of the COVID-19 pandemic so that much needed support could be provided to the tribal MFP gatherers.
- The Ministry has provided flexibility to States to fix MSP upto 10% higher or lower than MSP declared by the Government.
- This was done under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme titled "Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of value chain of MFP" which was launched in 2011.
- TRIFED is the nodal agency for the implementation of the scheme.

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

World No Tobacco Day
World No Tobacco Day is being observed on May 31 with the theme "Tobacco and related industry tactics to attract younger generations" to debunk myths and expose devious tactics employed by Tobacco industries.
About:
- Every year, on 31 May, the World Health Organization (WHO) and global partners celebrate World No Tobacco Day (WNTD).

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- The Member States of the World Health Organization created World No Tobacco Day in 1987 to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and disease it causes.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q. What is a cyber threat? Discuss various challenges associated with cyber threats along with steps taken by the government to prevent it.

Ans:

A cyber or cybersecurity threat is a malicious act that seeks to damage data, steal data, or disrupt digital life in general. It also refers to the possibility of a successful cyber attack that aims to gain unauthorized access, damage, disrupt, or steal an information technology asset, computer network, intellectual property or any other form of sensitive data. Today's cybercrime landscape is diverse. Cyber threats can come from within an organization by trusted users or from remote locations by unknown parties.

Some common cyber threats include:

- Malware: Malware is software that does malicious tasks on a device or network such as corrupting data or taking control of a system.
- Spyware: Spyware is a form of malware that hides on a device providing real-time information sharing to its host, enabling them to steal data like bank details and passwords.
- Phishing attacks: Phishing is when a cybercriminal attempts to lure individuals into providing sensitive data such as personally identifiable information (PII), banking and credit card details and passwords.
- Distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks: It aims to disrupt a computer network by flooding the network with superfluous requests to overload the system and prevent legitimate requests being fulfilled.
- Ransomware: Ransomware is a type of malware that denies access to a computer system or data until a ransom is paid.
- Trojans: A trojan creates a backdoor in your system, allowing the attacker to gain control of your computer or access confidential information.

Cyber attack is a particularly major threat to sectors identified under Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) that include financial systems, air traffic control and telecommunications.It involves Intellectual property theft, theft of money, data manipulation and data destruction etc.

Challenges

- Increased use of mobile technology and the internet by people.
- Proliferation of Internet of Things (IoT) and lack of proper security infrastructure in some devices.
- Cyberspace has inherent vulnerabilities that cannot be removed.
- Internet technology makes it relatively easy to misdirect attribution to other parties.
- It is generally seen that attack technology outpaces defence technology.
- Lack of awareness on Cyber security.
- Lack of Cyber security specialists.
- Increased use of cyberspace by terrorists.
- The Indian government has also been aggressively addressing the rising prevalence of cyber threats. India has ranked 47 out of 165 nations on the Global Cybersecurity Index 2018, released by the International Telecommunication Union. This shows India's commitment to cybersecurity.

Steps taken by Government:

- National Cyber Security Policy 2013 has been framed to create a secure cyber ecosystem, ensure compliance with global security systems and strengthen the regulatory framework.
- National Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-in) functions as the nodal agency for coordination of all cyber security efforts, emergency responses, and crisis management.
- Cyber Surakshit Bharat Initiative: It was launched in 2018 with an aim to spread awareness about cybercrime and building capacity for safety measures for Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT staff across all government departments.
  National Cyber security Coordination Centre (NCCC): In 2017, the NCCC was developed. Its mandate is to scan internet traffic and communication metadata (which are little snippets of information hidden inside each communication) coming into the country to detect real-time cyber threats.
- Cyber Swachhta Kendra: In 2017, this platform was introduced for internet users to clean their computers and devices by wiping out viruses and malware.
- Information Security Education and Awareness Project (ISEA)– raises awareness and provides research, education and training in the field of Information Security.

The need of the hour for Indian government is to develop core skills in cyber security, data integrity and data security fields while also setting stringent cyber security standards to protect banks and financial institutions. Adequate funding should be provided for strategic research and development. India must enhance its technological and investigative capabilities.