

**INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY****Faridkot**

The Punjab and Haryana High Court passed a judgment in a three-decade-old case upholding the property rights of women in the family of Harinder Singh Brar, the last Maharaja of Faridkot, who died in 1989.

**About:**

- Faridkot is a royal and historic city in the state of Punjab, India. It is the headquarters of the Faridkot district.
- The city is named in the honor of Baba Farid, a revered 13th century Sufi saint.
- Prior to independence, a large part of the Faridkot district was under the rule of the Maharaja of Faridkot and later it became a part of the Patiala & East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) in 1948.

**GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC****Delhi Earthquakes**

Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) have recorded at least 14 earthquakes of low or medium intensity since April, 2020.

**About:**

- As per the 2002 map by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), India is divided into four seismic zones – viz. Zone II, III, IV and V – based on seismicity, earthquakes occurred in the past and tectonic setup of the region.
- Delhi falls in Zone IV, which makes it vulnerable to earthquakes. Delhi does not lie on a plate boundary. It is located on a single plate, and the seismic activity is generated by internal deformities.

**Seismic Zones:**

- Zone II: This is seismically the least active region. It covers parts of India that are not included in Zone III, IV and V.
- Zone III: Comprises Kerala, Goa, Lakshadweep islands, remaining parts of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and West Bengal, Parts of Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- Zone IV: It covers parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, Sikkim, Northern parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, parts of Gujarat and small portions of Maharashtra near the west coast and Rajasthan.
- Zone V: This is seismically the most active region. Parts of the Himalayan boundary in North and Northeast India fall in this zone. Kutch area in the West also falls here. Remaining parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, part of North Bihar and Andaman and the Nicobar Islands are included.

**CONSTITUTION AND POLITY****GAIRSAIN**

Gairsain in Chamoli district has been formally declared as the summer capital of Uttarakhand. A notification was issued after state governor gave her assent to the move.

**About:**

- The development came three months after Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat Chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat had announced making Gairsain the summer capital, besides Dehradun, during the budget session of the assembly on March 4.
- Now, with the announcement of Gairsain as the summer capital, there is a lack of clarity on the status of Dehradun.

**Background:**

- Gairsain is a town and Nagar Panchayat in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand. Gairsain is situated at the eastern edge of the Dudhatoli mountain range.
- Uttarakhand was carved out as a separate state from Uttar Pradesh in 1998.

- Statehood activists had long contended that Gairsain, a tehsil in Chamoli district, was best suited to be the capital of the mountainous state as it was a hilly region falling on the border of Kumaon and Garhwal regions. But it was Dehradun, located in the plains, that served as the temporary capital.
- The state Assembly is located in Dehradun, but sessions are held in Gairsain as well.

### **Vamsadhara River Water Dispute**

The Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha will hold talks to clear out all differences with regard to the sharing of Vamsadhara river waters. Andhra Pradesh wants to build the Neradi bridge across the river which will be possible only after Odisha's consent.

#### **Key Points**

- Andhra Pradesh also wants to complete the inter-linking of its Nagavali river with the Vamsadhara and expand the Madduvalasa Reservoir project soon.
  - Madduvalasa Project is a Medium Irrigation Project with a reservoir across Suvarnamukhi river, a tributary of Nagavali river.
- Agriculture is the only assured economic activity for the people living in the backward region and in the absence of rapid industrialisation, there is a need to concentrate on irrigation projects to make agriculture a viable activity.

#### **Background:**

In February 2006, Odisha sent a complaint to the Central Government under Section 3 of the Inter-State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956 regarding its water disputes with Andhra Pradesh pertaining to Inter-State River Vamsadhara. It demanded for the constitution of an Inter-State Water Disputes Tribunal for adjudication.

#### **Grievances of Orissa:**

- Adverse effect of undertaking the construction of a canal (called a flood flow canal at Katragada, Andhra Pradesh) taking off from the river Vamsadhara.
  - The flood flow canal would result in drying up the existing river bed and consequent shifting of the river affecting the groundwater table.
- Failure of Andhra Pradesh to implement the terms of the inter-state agreement relating to use, distribution and control of waters of vamsadhara and its valley.
- Odisha also raised the issue of scientific assessment of available water in Vamsadhara at Katragada and Gotta Barrage, Andhra Pradesh and the basis for sharing the available water.

### **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**

#### **Aguada Fénix**

A 3,000-years-old Mayan temple has been discovered in Mexico through laser mapping technique, making it the ancient civilisation's oldest and largest monument.

#### **About:**

- The temple site called Aquada Fenix, in Mexico, is 4,600 feet long and up to 50 feet high, making it larger than the Mayan pyramids and palaces of later periods.
- It was built between 800 BC and 1,000 BC.
- One of the most remarkable revelations from the find was the complete lack of stone sculptures related to rulers and elites, such as colossal heads and thrones, that are commonly seen in other Mayan temples.
- This suggests that the people who built it were more egalitarian than later generations of Mayans.

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### **FOREX RESERVES**

India's foreign exchange reserves are rising and are slated to hit the \$500 billion mark soon. In the month of May, forex reserves jumped by \$12.4 billion to an all-time high of \$493.48 billion (around Rs 37.30 lakh crore) for the week ended May 29.

About:

- Meaning: Foreign-exchange reserves (also called forex reserves or FX reserves) are reserve assets held by a central bank in foreign currencies, used to back liabilities on their own issued currency as well as to influence monetary policy.
- Components: India's foreign exchange reserves comprise
  - Foreign currency assets (FCAs). These are maintained in currencies like US dollar, euro, pound sterling, Australian dollar and Japanese yen.
  - Gold
  - SDR (special drawing rights) in IMF: This is the reserve CURRENCY with IMF
  - RTP (reserve tranche position) in IMF: This is the reserve CAPITAL with IMF
- Reserves are denominated and expressed in the US dollar, which is the international numeraire for the purpose.
- India's FOREX is governed by RBI under RBI act, 1934. The level of foreign exchange reserves is largely the outcome of the RBI's intervention in the foreign exchange market.

Why are forex reserves rising despite the slowdown in the economy?

- The major reason is the rise in investment in foreign portfolio investors in Indian stocks and foreign direct investments (FDIs).
- On the other hand, the fall in crude oil prices has brought down the oil import bill, saving the precious foreign exchange.

Importance of Forex:

- Reserves are held for maintaining liquidity and allowing time to absorb shocks in situations where access to borrowing is curtailed or are very costly.
- It provides confidence that the authorities are committed to the timely discharge of external obligations and to supporting the value of the local currency. It is an important component of the Balance of Payment and an essential element in the analysis of an economy's external position.

**Draft Frameworks For Sale Of Loan Exposures And Securitisation Of Standard Assets**

RBI has released draft Frameworks for 'Sale of Loan Exposures' and 'Securitisation of Standard Assets'.

About:

- These draft guidelines are applicable to all Scheduled Commercial Banks (excluding Regional Rural Banks); All India Financial Institutions (NABARD, NHB, EXIM Bank, and SIDBI); and, all Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) including Housing Finance Companies (HFCs).
- The guidelines attempt to align the regulatory framework with the Basel guidelines on securitisation that have come into force effective January 1, 2018.
- The revisions also take into account the recommendations of the Committee on Development of Housing Finance Securitisation Market in India (Chair: Dr. Harsh Vardhan) and the Task Force on the Development of Secondary Market for Corporate Loans (Chair: Shri T.N. Manoharan), which were set up by the RBI in May, 2019.

Salient features of draft guidelines:

- Only transactions that result in multiple tranches of securities being issued reflecting different credit risks will be treated as securitisation transactions.
- Two capital measurement approaches have been proposed: Securitisation External Ratings Based Approach (SEC-ERBA) and Securitisation Standardised Approach (SEC-SA).
- A special case of securitisation, called Simple, Transparent and Comparable (STC) securitisations, has been prescribed with clearly defined criteria and preferential capital treatment.
- The definition of securitisation has been modified to allow single asset securitisations. Securitisation of exposures purchased from other lenders has been allowed.
- Standard Assets would be allowed to be sold by lenders through assignment, novation or a loan participation contract. The Stressed Assets, however, would be allowed to be sold only through assignment or novation.

- Requirement of Minimum Retention Requirement (MRR) for sale of loans has been done away with.

**Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (Eclgs)**

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said that the COVID Emergency Credit Facility covers all companies and not just Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

**About:**

- The Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) is the biggest fiscal component of the Rs 20-lakh crore Self-Reliant India Mission package announced by Finance Minister last month.
- Under the scheme, 100 per cent guarantee coverage will be provided by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC) for additional funding of up to Rs 3 lakh crore to eligible companies and borrowers, in the form of a guaranteed emergency credit line (GECL) facility.
- For this purpose, a corpus of Rs 41,600 crore was provided by the government, spread over the current and next three financial years.
- The scheme will be applicable to all loans sanctioned under GECL facility during the period from the date of announcement of the scheme to October 31 or till an amount of Rs 3 lakh crore is sanctioned under GECL, whichever is earlier.
- The main objective of the scheme is to provide an incentive to member lending institutions to increase access and enable availability of additional funding facility to borrowers, in view of the economic distress caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

**ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES****Asiatic Lion**

According to June 5, 2020 census, the number of Asiatic lions have now risen by 29% over five years to an estimated 674 in the Gir forest region and other revenue areas of coastal Saurashtra. During 2015, their population was 523 lions. Geographically, distribution area is up by 36%.

**About:**

- Scientific Name: Panthera Leo Persica.
- Common Name: Asiatic lion, Indian Lion.
- Status: Listed in Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, in Appendix I of CITES and as Endangered on IUCN Red List.
- Characteristics: Asiatic lions are slightly smaller than African lions. The most striking morphological character is a longitudinal fold of skin running along belly of Asiatic Lions.
- Habitat and Distribution: At present Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat is the only abode of the Asiatic lion. They live in a compact tract of dry deciduous forest and open grassy scrublands in southwestern part of Saurashtra region of Gujarat.

**DEFENCE AND SECURITY****Operation Desert Chase**

Under operation named Desert Chase, Rajasthan Police arrested two civil defence employees in Jaipur based on Military Intelligence (MI) inputs that they had been passing on sensitive information to Pakistan's spy agency ISI.

**About:**

- Operation Desert Chase was the name of the Anti-espionage operation started by Military Intelligence (MI) in early 2019.
- It successfully culminated in June 2020 with the arrest of two men. Both were arrested under relevant sections of Official Secrets Act, 1923.

**Related Info :**

- The Directorate of Military Intelligence (M.I.) is the Intelligence arm of the Indian Army. The agency was set up in 1941 and is based at Sena Bhavan in Delhi. M.I.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Q. "The caste-based discrimination in India is different from the racial discrimination in the USA". Evaluate.**

Answer:

India's caste system is the world's one of the longest surviving vertical social hierarchies. It encompasses a complex ordering of social groups on the basis of descent. The groups at the bottom like untouchables or Dalits are considered 'lesser human beings', 'impure' and 'polluting' to other caste groups, it involves massive violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Racial discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably, or not given the same opportunities, as others in a similar situation, because of their race, the country where they were born, their ethnic origin or their skin colour.

Factors Behind Discrimination

**Caste Based Discrimination**

- Sense of caste prestige: Feeling of own caste superiority over other castes is the main factor. It is people's strong desire to enhance caste prestige. Members of a particular caste or sub-caste have the tendency of developing loyalty to their own caste.
- Caste endogamy: Caste endogamy refers to marriage within the same caste. Caste endogamy is therefore responsible for the emergence of the feeling of casteism.
- Belief in religious dogmas: Due to illiteracy, people are governed by belief in religious dogmas, blind beliefs and superstitions. Due to the practice of 'Jati Dharma' they take interest in their own caste. It leads to caste feeling and casteism.
- Social distance: Especially in rural areas, people belonging to the higher caste maintain social distance from the lower castes.
  - Dalits in rural villages are forbidden in Hindu temples and disallowed with their shoes on in higher-caste neighborhoods.
  - They maintain it through different restrictions like inter-caste marriages, Inter-dinning etc.
  - The ideology of an individual is associated with his caste norms and values. This has given rise to casteism.

**Racial discrimination in US**

- Trans-Atlantic slave trade: The European colonies imported African slaves to US, for making plantation agriculture in the Americas profitable. It led to poor economic conditions of the blacks which persists even today.
- Systematized racism: European Americans who participated in the slave industry tried to justify their economic exploitation of black people by creating a "scientific" theory of white superiority and black inferiority.
- Segregation of population: Cultural and political segregation of the public space continues to occur despite anti-segregation laws.
- Financial distress: Despite the emancipation of slavery system the black population faces severe problems in gaining employment and attaining standard of living.
- Law enforcement: Prejudiced law enforcement officials are often seen violating legal norms and being discriminatory towards black population.

Legal Measures

- Article 17 of the constitution abolished the practice of untouchability and made its practice a punishable offence.
- The legislations focused on the discrimination and oppression of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These include:
  - The Untouchability Offences Act of 1955 (renamed to The Protection of Civil Liberties Act) was enacted which provided penalties for preventing a person from entering a place of worship or from taking water from a tank or well.
  - The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

- The United Nations (UN) has declared 21 March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- After the American civil war, the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime.
  - In U.S, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in public accommodations and employment.
- The United Nations through the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaim the right of everyone to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms, without distinction to race, colour or national origin.

#### Comparison of Racial and Caste Discrimination

- Economic condition: Various data shows one-fourth of Afro-American population is at the poverty line, which is much higher than other groups.
  - In India, the condition of Dalits has been extremely pathetic for centuries. They are mostly landless communities and forced to live in small hamlets out of the village.
- Mob violence: Mob violence is committed against Dalits on the name of animal slaughtering and a disproportionate number of rapes are committed against Dalit women.
  - In comparison, post-Civil War white mob violence against blacks has morphed into state-condoned violence of homicides of African Americans by police.
- Racial inequality in America has its parallel in caste inequality in India even though by definition, race and caste are not the same thing.
- According to the United Nations, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), “the term “racial discrimination” shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.
  - Caste discrimination is recognised by the United Nations as a contemporary form of racial discrimination.

#### Conclusion

- People affected by descent-based discrimination face significant challenges with respect to their enjoyment of human rights. These challenges arise from a variety of legal, social, and structural barriers and constructs, both historic and contemporary in nature.
- To address descent-based discrimination we must tackle the broader social norms, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate and reinforce prejudices and stereotypes of hierarchy, and accompanying forms of domination and exclusion that are endemic to caste and other systems of inherited status.