

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Kodumanal Excavation**

The Kodumanal excavation of 10 pots and bowls, instead of the usual three or four pots, placed outside three-chambered burial cists and inside the cairn-circle, has thrown light on burial rituals and the concept of afterlife in megalithic culture.

About:

- Kodumanal is a village located in the Erode district in Tamil Nadu. It is located on the northern banks of Noyyal River, a tributary of the Cauvery.
- It was once a flourishing ancient trade city known as Kodumanam, as inscribed in Patittrupathu of Sangam Literature.
- The place is an important archaeological site, under the control of State Archaeological Department of Tamil Nadu.

Related Info :

- A megalith is a large pre-historic stone that has been used to construct a structure or monument, either alone or together with other stones. Megaliths in South Asia are dated before 3000 BC, with recent findings dated back to 5000 BC in southern India.

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC**Neera**

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has rolled out a unique project to produce Neera and Palm jaggery which has huge potential to create employment.

About:

- The project that aims at promoting Neera as a substitute to soft drinks while also creating self-employment to Adivasis and traditional trappers was launched at Dahanu in Palghar district of Maharashtra.
- Neera, extracted from palm trees before sunrise, is a nutrient-rich health drink consumed in many states. However, due to lack of institutionalized market technique, the commercial production and large scale marketing of Neera has not commenced yet.
- There are about 10 crore palm trees across the country and a wide range of products like candies, milk chocolates, palm cola, ice-cream and traditional sweets can be produced from neera if properly marketed.
- India has an abundance of palm fields in states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Daman & Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar that can make India a leading producer of Neera globally.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Non-Permanent Members Of Unsc**

India has been elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the term 2021-22 after winning 184 votes in the 193-member General Assembly. Along with India, Ireland, Mexico and Norway also won the Security Council elections.

'Non-permanent seats' at the UNSC

- The UNSC is composed of 15 members: five permanent members — China, France, Russian Federation, the United States, and the United Kingdom — and 10 non-permanent members who are elected by the General Assembly.
- The non-permanent members are elected for two-year terms — so every year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members out of the total 10.
- These 10 seats are distributed among the regions of the world: five seats for African and Asian countries; one for Eastern European countries; two for Latin American and Caribbean countries; and two for Western European and Other Countries.
- Of the five seats for Africa and Asia, three are for Africa and two for Asia. Also, there is an informal understanding between the two groups to reserve one seat for an Arab

country. The Africa and Asia Pacific group takes turns every two years to put up an Arab candidate.

India and UNSC

- India was a candidate for a non-permanent seat from the Asia-Pacific category for the 2021-22 term.
- India's overall objective during the fresh tenure in the UN Security Council will be the achievement of O.R.M.S. which stands for New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System.
- This is the eighth time that India will sit at the UN high-table. India has earlier been a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92 and 2011-12. For the 2011-12 term, India won 187 of 190 votes after Kazakhstan stood down from its candidacy.

Victory Day Parade

India has decided to send a contingent of 75 personnel from its three armed forces to participate in Russia's 75th World War II Victory Day Parade on 24 June, 2020.

Key Points

- The Russian parade is held every year on Victory Day (May 9), which marks the surrender of Nazi Germany in 1945.
 - This year it was delayed because of the Covid-19.
- The victory day parade honours the heroism and sacrifices made by the Russian and other friendly people.
- India's participation in the parade will be a mark of tribute and solidarity with the people of Russia.
- Earlier in January 2020, Russia had invited India to take part in the victory day parade.

India-Russia Defence Cooperation

- Defence remains the most significant aspect of India's relations with Russia with both sides looking to encourage joint manufacturing of equipment under India's Make-in-India programme and through transfer of technology.
- After the Vladivostok summit in 2019, both the countries had recognized the requirement of an institutional arrangement for reciprocal provision of logistic support and services for the armed forces.
 - They had also agreed to prepare a framework for cooperation on it.
- During the 5th India Russia military industry conference held during the Defexpo 2020 in Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), companies from both the countries signed various Memorandum of Understanding(MoUs) to develop a range of defence equipment.
- In 2019, despite the threat of U.S. sanctions, India went ahead with the decision to purchase the S-400 missile defence system, worth over \$5 billion.
- Both the countries continue to encourage military to military cooperation through military political dialogue and joint military exercises.
 - In 2019, India and Russia carried out a second joint tri-service exercise INDRA.
 - In 2019, India also took part in Exercise TSENTR 2019 of the Russian Armed Force.
- Despite Russia's deep military and political ties with China, and its own relations with the U.S., India continues to look at Russia as a key partner.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Housing Finance Companies (Hfcs)

RBI has released a draft of the proposed changes in regulations applicable to Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) for public comments.

These changes are as follows:

- Defining principal business and qualifying assets for HFCs;

- Defining the phrase ‘providing finance for housing’ or ‘housing finance’;
- Classifying HFCs as systemically important (asset size of ₹500 crore & above) and non-systemically important (asset size less than ₹500 crore);
- Reserve Bank’s directions on Liquidity Risk framework &, LCR, securitisation, etc., for NBFCs, to be made applicable to HFCs;
- HFCs should not be simultaneously allowed to lend to a real estate developer as well as homebuyers in the developer’s project

Related Info :

- The proposed changes in the rules have come following RBI’s taking over as the regulator of mortgage lenders from National Housing Bank (NHB) in August 2019.
- Following the review of the rules, home financiers will now be regulated as a category of non-banking financial companies.

India’s Refining Capacity

Union Minister for Petroleum announced that India is set to double its refining capacity for crude oil to 450-500 million tonnes per annum by 2030.

About:

- India’s current refining capacity of 249.9 million tonnes per annum exceeds domestic consumption of petroleum products which was 213.7 million tonnes in the previous fiscal.
- However, India’s consumption of petroleum products is likely to rise to 335 million tonnes per annum by 2030 and to 472 million tonnes by 2040. India needs to boost refining capacity to meet growing demand.

Ratnagiri project

- The construction of a new refinery in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra with a refining capacity of 60 million tonnes per annum is set to start soon.
- The project has received investment from Saudi Arabia and the UAE’s national oil companies — Saudi Aramco and ADNOC respectively — which together own 50 per cent of the project while the remaining 50 per cent is owned by Indian PSUs, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd.

Central Transmission Utility (CTU)

The power ministry has asked state-owned Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) to set up a central transmission utility (CTU) with separate accounting and board structure.

About:

- PGCIL is engaged in power transmission business with the responsibility of planning, implementation, operation and maintenance of Inter-State Transmission System.
- There have been allegations that PGCIL is at advantage as developer of power transmission projects because it is a central transmission unit (CTU).
- Therefore it has been decided that PGCIL shall immediately set up a CTU, a 100 per cent owned subsidiary of PGCIL with separate accounting and board structure, which would be responsible for carrying out statutory functions, as identified for CTU under the Electricity Act 2003, and also other functions assigned to CTU by Central Electricity Regulatory Commission.
- The subsidiary would be separated from the PGCIL into a new CTU Ltd, a wholly-owned Government of India company, within six months or till the completion of formalities.

AIIB Loan for India

Recently, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved a \$750 million loan to India to strengthen the country’s battle against the adverse impact of Covid-19 pandemic on poor and vulnerable households. Earlier, it had approved \$500 million for ‘Covid-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project’ initiated by India.

Key Points

- \$750 million loan: It is co-financed by the AIIB and the Asian Development Bank.
- Aim:
 - It aims to ensure economic resilience to prevent long-term damage to productive capacity, including human capital.
 - The support will go towards bolstering economic aid for businesses, including for the informal sector, expanding social safety nets for the needy, and strengthening the country's health care systems.
- Loan by AIIB to India:
 - AIIB's sovereign loans to India amounts to \$3.06 billion.
 - The current loan will be the second for India under AIIB's Covid-19 Crisis Recovery Facility.
 - The Crisis Recovery Facility has been formed in response to urgent economic, financial and public health pressures and to support a quick recovery after the current crisis (Covid-19).
 - It will offer \$5-10 billion of financing to public and private entities over 18 months i.e. from April 2020 to October 2021.
 - The funding is done either with the World Bank or ADB.
- Loan by ADB to India:
 - It has assured Indian government of \$2.2 billion support to fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Earlier, it had provided a \$1.5 billion loan to India.

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

I-Lab (Infectious Disease Diagnostic Lab)

The Minister for Science & Technology inaugurated and flagged off India's first I-Lab (Infectious disease diagnostic lab) for Covid testing in rural and inaccessible areas of India.

DBT-AMTZ COMManD

- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science & Technology along with Andhra Pradesh Med-tech Zone (AMTZ) has initiated the DBT-AMTZ COMManD [COVID Medtech Manufacturing Development] Consortia to address the shortage of critical healthcare technologies in India and move progressively towards a stage of self-sufficiency.
- AMTZ is Asia's first medical equipment manufacturing ecosystem, uniquely dedicated for Medtech and supported by various Ministries.

I-Lab

- Under this Consortia, India's first I- lab (infectious disease diagnostic lab) has been built at AMTZ in record time of 8 days from the date of receipt of Automotive Chassis, from Bharat Benz.
- This is a mobile diagnostic unit with biosafety facility. The I- lab is a BSL-2 facility with on-site ELISA, RT-PCR, Bio chemistry analysers.
- It can be deployed in remote areas and can be lifted from Automotive Chassis and can be put on goods train for sending to any location in the country.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY

Mountain Strike Corps

As tensions between India and China remain high on the disputed border, a search for military options is leading to questions about the current status of the mountain strike corps, sanctioned seven years ago but stalled two years ago for lack of funds.

About:

- The Panagarh-headquartered 17 Corps of the Indian army was sanctioned in 2013. The first division of the mountain strike corps was raised in the eastern sector but the raising of the second division at Pathankot in 2017-18 was never completed.
- The aim of raising the mountain strike corps in a non-defensive role was to create capabilities to deter China's aggressive behaviour along the 3,488 km long Sino-India border.
- This had followed the raising of two new divisions in 2010 to strengthen the deployment in Arunachal Pradesh, along with an armoured, artillery and infantry brigade for other sectors of the LAC.

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

International Day For The Elimination Of Sexual Violence In Conflict

The sixth annual International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict 2020 is being observed on 19 June.

About:

- The term "conflict-related sexual violence" refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.
- On 19 June 2015, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 19 June of each year the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict
- The date was chosen to commemorate the adoption on 19 June 2008 of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), in which the Council condemned sexual violence as a tactic of war and an impediment to peacebuilding.
- The day aims to raise awareness of the need to put an end to conflict-related sexual violence and to honour the victims and survivors of sexual violence around the world.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q. What are novel viruses? Discuss its threats and suggest measures to deal with them.

Ans:

A virus is a submicroscopic infectious agent that replicates only inside the living cells of an organism. Such a virus that has not previously been recorded is called Novel virus. It can be isolated from its natural reservoir or isolated as the result of spreading to an animal or human host where the virus had not been identified before.

Well-known examples of novel viruses are the Zika virus transmitted by mosquitoes, bird flu viruses, MERS from camels and Novel Covid19 virus which caused the ongoing pandemic, and is being associated with Bats.

Threats from Novel Viruses

- Novel viruses can cause large-scale outbreaks of infectious diseases that can become a pandemic. It greatly increases morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and causes significant economic, social, and political disruption.
- Economic impact: Viruses outbreak causing pandemic to have a negative impact on business confidence, financial markets and the travel sector, including disruption to supply chains. This halts the overall economic growth.
 - Global economic growth undergoes a downturn decreasing the GDP growth rate of the majority of countries.
 - Causes loss of jobs and economic hardships especially for the lowest strata of society.
 - The quality of educational and academic activities have to be compromised.

- Social threats: Lockdown and social distancing measures to prevent the spread of novel viruses like Covid19 cause decline in social capital value i.e. relationships between individuals or groups and the resulting ability to secure or obtain resources or information.

Measures to Combat Adversities from Novel Virus Outbreak

A whole-of-society approach is needed to counter pandemic due to novel viruses. A significant role is played by all the sectors especially the Health sector. Government, individuals, families, and communities should work together in mitigating the effects of a virus pandemic.

Administrative Measures

- Role of government: The governments should:
 - Identify, appoint, and lead the coordinating body for pandemic preparedness.
 - Enact or modify legislation and policies required to sustain and optimize pandemic preparedness.
 - Initiate capacity building, and coordinate efforts across all sectors.
 - Prioritize and guide the allocation and targeting of resources judiciously.
- Filling key gaps in information and knowledge: Initiate scientific exploration to understand the nature of novel viruses and develop vaccines with the coordination of scientific organisations and pharma companies..
- Health Sector
 - In addition to raising awareness of the risk and potential health consequences of a virus pandemic. The health sector should be ready to:
 - Provide reliable information on the risk, severity, and progression of a pandemic.
 - Prioritize and continue the provision of health-care during a virus pandemic.
 - Enact steps to reduce the spread of the virus outbreak in the community.
 - Protect and support health-care workers during a pandemic.
- Individuals and Families
 - During a virus pandemic, it is important that households take measures to ensure they have access to accurate information, food, water, and medicines.
 - For families, access to reliable information from sources such as WHO and local and national governments are essential.

Conclusion

- Novel virus pandemics bring threats to lives, and dislodge the social and economical dimensions of humanity. Crises like these call for resilience in sectors such as healthcare, business, government and wider society. Immediate relief measures need to be implemented and adjusted for those that may fall through the cracks. Medium and longer-term planning is needed to re-balance and re-energise the economy following this crisis.