

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Ashadhi Bij**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has greeted the people on the occasion of Ashadhi Bij, the Kutchi New Year.

About:

- Date: Ashadi Beej or Ashadhi Bij is observed on the second day of the Shukla Paksha or waxing phase of moon in Ashada month.
- Region: It is the Kutchi New Year. This Hindu New Year is observed in the Kutch region in Gujarat.
- Celebrations: Ashadi Beej is mostly a traditional affair and is a celebration of rains. During Ashadhi-beej, farmers check the moisture in the atmosphere to help predict which crop would do best in coming monsoon.

GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC**Senkaku Islands**

Japan has approved a plan to change the name of the area covering the Tokyo-controlled Senkaku Islands — known by Taiwan and China as the Diaoyu — from “Tonoshiro” to “Tonoshiro Senkaku”.

About:

- Location: The Senkaku Islands are a group of uninhabited islands in the East China Sea. They are located east of Mainland China, northeast of Taiwan, west of Okinawa Island, and north of the southwestern end of the Ryukyu Islands.
- Names: They are also known as the Diaoyu Islands in Mainland China, the Diaoyutai Islands in Taiwan and the Pinnacle Islands by other observers.
- Dispute: The islands are the focus of a territorial dispute between Japan and China and between Japan and Taiwan.
- Administration: Japan administers and controls the Senkaku islands as part of the city of Ishigaki in Okinawa Prefecture.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**‘Country Of Origin’ Must On GeM Platform**

In a push to promote local products, the Union government has made it mandatory for all sellers on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), a platform for public procurement, to list the country of origin while registering new products.

About:

- The changes to the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), a Special Purpose Vehicle under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, are in line with the Centre’s Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India policies.
- Buyers on the platform can now see the percentage of local content in various products. They can also switch on a new Make in India filter to see products that match their preferences on local content.
- For example, buyers can choose to buy only those products that meet a minimum 50% local content criteria.
- In case of bids, buyers can now reserve any bid for Class I local suppliers (local content > 50%). For those bids below INR 200 crore, only Class I and Class II local suppliers (local content > 50% and > 20% respectively) are eligible to bid, with Class I supplier getting purchase preference.

Related Info :

- The purchases through GeM by Government users have been authorised and made mandatory by Ministry of Finance by adding a new Rule No. 149 in the General Financial Rules, 2017.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**United Nations Relief And Works Agency For Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)**

India has announced contributing 10 million US dollar to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) over the coming two years.

About:

- Establishment: It was established in 1949, following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate.
- Mandate: To support Palestinian refugees, and their patrilineal descendants, who fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 Palestine war and 1967 Six Day war.
- Services: It provides education, health care, and social services to the population it supports.
- Regions covered: Aid is provided in five areas of operation: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Aid for Palestinian refugees outside these five areas is provided by UNHCR.
- Funding: It is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States. It also receives some funding from the Regular Budget of the United Nations.

Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

China will join the UN Arms Trade Treaty that is designed to control the flow of weapons into conflict zones. It comes after U.S. President Donald Trump announced plans last year to pull the U.S. out of the agreement.

About:

- History: The Treaty entered into force in 2014.
- Objective: The Treaty seeks to regulate the international trade in conventional arms (from small arms to battle tanks, combat aircraft and warships).

What it does?

- It requires member countries to keep records of international transfers of weapons and to prohibit cross-border shipments that can be used in human rights violations or attacks on civilians.
- It establishes common standards for the international trade of conventional weapons and seeks to reduce the illicit arms trade.

What it doesn't?

- The ATT does not place restrictions on the types or quantities of arms that may be bought, sold, or possessed by states.
- It also does not impact a state's domestic gun control laws or other firearm ownership policies.
- Present status: While 130 countries originally signed the treaty, only 104 have joined it. India has not signed the treaty.

U.S. Suspends H-1B and other visas

The US administration announced that it was extending the 60-day ban on immigration and non-immigrant worker visas till the end of 2020.

About:

- Popular work visas including the much-coveted H-1B and H-2B, and certain categories of H-4, J, and L visas shall also remain suspended until December 31.
- The suspension will not affect those already in the US on the visas. The Optional Practical Training (OPT) that most foreign students are eligible for after they graduate in the US also remains unaffected.
- The move, US President Donald Trump said, was to protect domestic workers who had been impacted due to a contraction in the economy in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

What are H-1B, H-2B, L and other work visas?

- In order to fill a vacuum of highly-skilled low-cost employees in IT and other related domains, the US administration issues a certain number of visas each year which allows companies from outside the US to send employees to work on client sites.
- Of these work visas, the H-1B remains the most popular among Indian IT companies. The US government has a cap of 85,000 total H-1B visas for each year.
- Apart from the H-1B visas, the US government also issues L1 visas which allows companies to transfer highly skilled workers to US for a period of up to seven years.
- H-2B visas allow food and agricultural workers to seek employment in the US.

Anti-dumping Duty on Steel Imports

Recently, India imposed anti-dumping duty on imports of certain types of steel products from China, Vietnam and South Korea.

Key Points

Dumping:

- In international trade practise, dumping happens when a country or a firm exports an item at a price lower than the price of that product in its domestic market.
- Dumping impacts the price of that product in the importing country, hitting margins and profits of local manufacturing firms.
- Anti-dumping duty is imposed to rectify the situation arising out of the dumping of goods and its trade distortive effect.

Imposition of Anti-dumping Duty:

- The anti-dumping duty was imposed after the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), in its probe, found that the steel products imported in India from these three countries were below its associated normal value, which resulted in dumping.
 - The duty has been imposed for five years with a view to guard domestic manufacturers from cheap imports from these countries.
 - Earlier, a provisional duty was imposed in October 2019 on these products from these three countries, which expired in April 2020.
- According to global trade norms, including the World Trade Organization (WTO) regime, a country is allowed to impose tariffs on such dumped products to provide a level-playing field to domestic manufacturers.

- The duty is imposed only after a thorough investigation by a quasi-judicial body, such as DGTR, in India.

Different from Countervailing Duty:

- Anti-dumping duty is different from countervailing duty. The latter is imposed in order to counter the negative impact of import subsidies to protect domestic producers.
- Countervailing Duties (CVDs) are tariffs levied on imported goods to offset subsidies made to producers of these goods in the exporting country.
- CVDs are meant to level the playing field between domestic producers of a product and foreign producers of the same product who can afford to sell it at a lower price because of the subsidy they receive from their government.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Yukti 2.0

Union HRD Minister launched the second phase of YUKTI to help systematically assimilate technologies having commercial potential and information related to incubated start-ups in country's higher education institutions.

About:

- Earlier, the Minister had launched the YUKTI (Young India combating COVID with Knowledge, Technology and Innovation) web portal on 11 April, 2020.
- Ministry of HRD prepared the portal in view of Coronavirus. Through this portal, the Ministry of HRD will endeavour to ensure that students, teachers and researchers in higher educational institutions are getting appropriate support to meet the requirements needed to advance their technologies and innovations.
- YUKTI 2.0 is logical extension of earlier version of 'YUKTI' to identify ideas relevant in COVID pandemic.

Indian Economy Growth

Niti Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar said that India will transform into a middle-income country from a lower middle-income economy by 2030.

World bank classification:

- For the current 2020 fiscal year, low-income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method, of \$1,025 or less in 2018.
- Lower middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$1,026 and \$3,995.
- Upper middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$3,996 and \$12,375.
- High-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of \$12,376 or more.

National Institute Of Public Finance And Policy (NIPFP)

Almost 18 months after his early exit as Reserve Bank of India Governor, Urjit Patel has been appointed as the chairman of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), India's premier economic think tank.

About:

- NIPFP is an autonomous body set up jointly by the Ministry of Finance, the erstwhile Planning Commission, and several state governments.
- It maintains an independent non-government character and pursues research in public policy, advising the Central government as well as states.
- It was founded in 1976 and is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- NIPFP's Governing Council includes the Revenue Secretary, Economic Affairs Secretary and the Chief Economic Advisor from the Union Finance Ministry, besides representatives from Niti Aayog, RBI and three state governments.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q. "Fundamental duties are not made enforceable by a writ of court like the fundamental rights, but they are fundamental to the well being of society and individuals." Examine. (250 words)

Ans:

Fundamental Duties of the citizens of India mentioned in Article 51A of the Indian Constitution. It has been enumerated by the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution in 1976. The balancing of Fundamental rights is a constitutional necessity as every right gives rise to a corresponding duty. Besides, in a democratic setup participation of the citizens in the process of governance and nation building is a fundamental obligation.

Rationale for making Fundamental Duties Enforceable

- Fills legal vacuum making them obligatory: If the existing laws are inadequate to enforce the needed discipline and behavioural change among citizens, the legislative vacuum needs to be filled. This could call for strategies such as making fundamental duties enforceable.
 - In *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court introduced compulsory learning of lessons on protection and improvement of the natural environment in all the educational institutions of the country as a part of Fundamental duty under Article 51-A (g).

- Enables judiciary to examine legislative reasonableness: There have been certain situations, where the Courts have been called upon to examine the reasonableness of any legislative restriction on the exercise of a freedom, the fundamental duties are of relevant consideration.
- Guide the elected representatives: The fundamental duties enjoined on citizens under Article 51-A should also guide the legislative and executive actions of elected or non-elected institutions and organisations of the citizens including the municipal bodies.
 - In the case of public authorities, each and all Fundamental Duties can be enforced by suitable legislation and departmental rules of conduct. Appropriate sanctions can be provided for lapse in respect of each
- Legislative potentials like DPSP: At times, Directive Principles Of State Policy (DPSP) has taken precedence over Fundamental Rights and some of them have found their way into statute books. The judiciary has been appreciative of DPSP as they promote common good. The same yardsticks need to be made applicable to Fundamental Duties.
- Reinforce constitutional obligations: For example Article 51A(k) was introduced as a fundamental duty in 2002, along with Article 21A as a fundamental right. Through Article 51A(k) read with Article 21A, the State and the parents are made to share obligations with regard to education of the children in the following manner: by the State with free education by the parents with compulsory education.
- Promote patriotism: The Fundamental Duties are defined as the moral obligations of all citizens to help promote a spirit of patriotism and to uphold the unity of India. These duties, set out in Part IV–A of the Constitution concern individuals and the nation. Citizens are morally obligated by the Constitution to perform these duties.

Caveats in Making Fundamental Duties enforceable

- Provides opportunity to implant political propaganda : To attain vested interests under the garb of fundamental duty like protecting the culture, tampering with curriculum is facilitated. For example omitting and tampering with school curriculum.
- Redundant when suitable legislative actions are available: for example fundamental duty to protect and improve the natural environment including forests and wildlife only repeat what the existing environment protection laws prescribe for.
- Futility of legal enforcement without will and aspirations of citizens: Out of the ten clauses in Article 51A, five are positive duties and the other five are negative duties.
 - Clauses (b), (d), (f), (h) and (j) require the citizens to perform these Fundamental Duties actively. It is said that by their nature, it is not practicable to enforce the Fundamental Duties and they must be left to the will and aspiration of the citizens.
- Difficulty in determining scope: Fundamental duty such as ‘to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture’ leaves the scope of such duties open ended. Such ambiguity enables unscrupulous elements for moral policing. Example recent lynching by cow vigilantes.
- Voluntary obedience more suitable: Making fundamental duties may facilitate compulsory allegiance of citizenry obligations but that's not democratic. Even Gandhiji always believed in moral persuasion rather than forceful adherence.
- Lack of adequate awareness: For the proper enforcement of duties, it is necessary that it should be known to all. This should be done by a systematic and intensive education of people that is by publicity or by making it a part of education.

Conclusion:

- As Mahatma Gandhi said that the true source of right is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. Enforcement of Fundamental Duties are important for building nationhood and a vibrant civil society. The provisions for enforcement of fundamental duties should be made considering the multiculturalism and pluralism of India.