

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC****Know India programme (KIP)**

A group of Indian Origin youth have visited India under the 54th Edition of KIP, scheduled from 1st August to 25th August, 2019 in association with the partner states of Punjab and Haryana.

**KIP**

- KIP is a 25-day orientation programme organized by the Ministry of External Affairs in partnership with the states of India.
- The objective of the programme is to make Indian diaspora (aged between 18-30 years) aware about India, its cultural heritage, art and to promote awareness about the progress made by India in various fields such as Industry, Education, ICT, Climate and Power & Renewable Energy etc.
- Since 2004, the Ministry has conducted 53 editions of KIP with participation of 1821 Overseas Indian youth.
- In 2016, the scheme was revamped to increase duration from 21 to 25 days, with a 10-day visit to one or two States and preference given to PIOs from Giritiya countries.
- Since 2016, six KIPs are being organised in a year.
- A maximum of 40 Indian Diaspora youth are selected for each programme and provided full hospitality in India.

**Related Facts:**

- “Giritiyas” or Indentured Labourers, is the name given to the Indians who left India in the middle and late 19th Century to serve as labourers in the British colonies, where the majority eventually settled.
- Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago are known as Giritiya Countries.

**GEOGRAPHY****First Monument in Memory of a Glacier**

Iceland honours the passing of Okjokull, its first glacier lost to climate change. A bronze plaque was unveiled in a ceremony to mark Okjokull — which translates to “Ok glacier” — in the western Iceland. It will be the first monument to a glacier lost to climate change anywhere in the world.

**Okjokull Glacier**

- Okjokull, also called OK (jokull is Icelandic name for “glacier”), was part of the Langjökull group—one of Iceland’s eight regional groupings of glaciers.
- It is situated atop of OK volcano in the west central Iceland.
- Glaciologists stripped Okjokull of its glacier status in 2014.
- According to the University of Iceland report (2017), the glacier measured around 16 square kilometre (6.2 square miles) in 1890, which now remains just 0.7 square kilometre.
- It was also labelled as “415 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>,” which means the record level of carbon dioxide measured in the atmosphere.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS****PM’s Visit to Bhutan**

During the visit of the Prime Minister of India to Bhutan, both the countries reiterated their commitment to maintain close coordination on matters affecting each other’s security and national interests.

**Key Takeaways**

- The two countries inked 10 Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) in the fields of space research, aviation, IT, power and education to infuse new energy in their ties.
- Both sides emphasised the importance of “hydro-power development” as one of the most important areas of mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation.
  - The two Prime Ministers formally inaugurated the recently completed 720 MW Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Plant and resolved to continue working together to expedite the completion of other ongoing projects such as Punatsangchhu-1, Punatsangchhu-2 and Kholongchhu.

- Both the leaders agreed to collaborate on the joint development of a small satellite for Bhutan.
- The two countries agreed to further expand bilateral trade and investment.
  - The Prime Minister of India assured the Bhutan Prime Minister of “positive consideration” of Bhutan’s request for enhancement of the currency swap limit under the SAARC Currency Swap Framework.
  - As an interim measure, he offered an additional USD 100 million of currency swap under the Standby Swap Arrangement.
  - The Union Cabinet had, on March 1, 2012, approved the framework on currency swap arrangement for SAARC member-countries with the intention to provide a line of funding for short-term foreign exchange requirements or to meet balance of payments crisis till longer term arrangements are made or the issue is resolved in the short-term itself.
  - India has also incorporated a \$400-million ‘Standby Swap’ facility within the existing approved overall \$2 billion currency swap arrangement for SAARC member-countries.
  - This incorporation of ‘Standby Swap’ provides the necessary flexibility to the current ‘framework on currency swap arrangement’ and enable India to provide a prompt response to the request from SAARC member- countries for availing themselves of the swap amount exceeding the present limit prescribed under the SAARC Swap Framework.
- India announced the increase in scholarships for Bhutanese students for studies at Nalanda University from 2 to 5.
- Both the leaders launched the facility for use of Indian RuPay cards in Bhutan, which would facilitate Indians’ travel to Bhutan by reducing the need to carry cash, boost the Bhutanese economy and further integrate the two economies
  - They also agreed for a feasibility study on the use of India’s Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) app in Bhutan to promote cashless payments between the two countries.
- The two Prime Ministers also inaugurated in Thimphu the Ground Earth Station of the South Asian Satellite, constructed with the support of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

### **BASIC Meeting on Climate Change**

- The BASIC countries held their 28th ministerial meeting on Climate Change from 14th to 16th August 2019 in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- The countries expressed their concern about climate change and its adverse effects, and reaffirmed their commitment to the successful implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), its Kyoto Protocol and its Paris Agreement, in accordance with the principles of Equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), in the light of different national circumstances.
- The Ministers stated the importance of responsible, comprehensive, urgent and ambitious actions against climate change, including in the urban environment.
- The group noted with concern the trend of developing countries being denied their right to support in different fora, including the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). It stressed in this regard that climate finance should not be a vehicle for increasing the indebtedness of developing countries.
- The BASIC Ministers urged developed countries to fulfill their climate finance commitments of mobilizing USD 100 billion annually by 2020 for developing countries in a transparent manner and on a grant basis.
- The Ministerial meeting was held in the run-up to the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP-25) meet to be held in Chile from 2nd-3rd December, 2019.

### **BASIC**

- The BASIC group was formed as the result of an agreement signed by the four countries (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) on 28th November, 2009.

- The signatory nations committed to acting together at the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference, commonly known as the Copenhagen Summit, scheduled in Copenhagen, Denmark from December 7-18 of that year.
- BASIC is one of several groups of nations working together to fight climate change and carry out negotiations within the UNFCCC.
- Other than BASIC, there are the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the group of countries of Central Asia, Caucasus, Albania and Moldova (CACAM), etc.
- Brazil, South Africa, India and China put together has one-third of the world's geographical area and nearly 40% of the world's population.
- China will host the next meeting of the BASIC Ministers. The 27th BASIC Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change was held on 19th-20th November, 2018 in New Delhi, India.

### **UAE Awards Highest Civilian Honour to the Prime Minister**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has awarded ZAYED Medal, the highest civilian award to the Prime Minister of India for consolidating the long-standing friendship and joint strategic cooperation between the two nations. It can be noted that recently India was invited by the host UAE as the "Guest of Honour" to attend the 46th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). This was the first time that India was invited to any OIC meeting as a guest of honor.

#### **Zayed Medal**

- The Order of Zayed is awarded to the Head of Government/Head of State for their international relations with UAE.
- The order is in the name of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father of the UAE.
- It consists of a collar cantered by a medallion bearing the name 'Zayed'.
- In the past, this award has been conferred to
  - Russian President Vladimir Putin,
  - Former US President George W Bush,
  - Former French President Nicholas Sarkozy,
  - German Chancellor Angela Merkel,
  - Chinese President Xi Jinping
  - UK's Queen Elizabeth II.

### **5th Meeting of India-Nepal Joint Commission to be held in Kathmandu**

- The 5th Meeting of India-Nepal Joint Commission will be held in Kathmandu, Nepal. The meeting will be chaired by foreign ministers of both countries.
- India-Nepal Joint Commission was established in June 1987. The meetings are held alternately in Nepal and India. The last meeting of the Commission was held in New Delhi in 2016.
- The meeting will review the overall state of bilateral relations and various areas of cooperation such as (a) connectivity and economic partnership, (b) trade and transit (c) power and water resources (d) culture (e) education and (f) other matters of mutual interest..

## **INDIAN ECONOMY**

### **Bottom-up Consultative Process for PSBs**

The Finance Ministry has asked Public Sector Banks (PSBs) to initiate a month-long consultation process with officers at branch level to seek suggestions on streamlining banking sector to help the country achieve its target to become a 5 trillion dollar economy by 2024-25.

- The consultative process has been divided into three stages with the first being at the branch or regional level, followed by the state level. It will culminate with a national-level two-day brainstorming in Delhi.
- The suggestions emanating from a month-long campaign beginning 17th August, 2019 will be used as inputs to prepare a road map for the future growth of the banking sector.

#### **Agenda of the Process**

- Performance review and synchronisation of banking with region-specific issues.
  - Branches will be assessed on swachh credit (lending in water and sanitation sector), financial inclusion and women's empowerment, direct benefit transfer, digital

economy, ATM usage and performance and corporate social responsibility, among others.

- Finding solutions to the challenges faced by banks such as huge Non Performing Assets (NPAs), reduced profits etc.
- Making banks more responsive to customers.
- Analyzing the preparedness of the banks in areas such as cybersecurity and data analytics.
- Focus on raising credit offtake for supporting economic growth, credit support to infrastructure and role of the banking sector in doubling farmers' income and water conservation.
  - Supporting green economy, improving education loan and other sectors such as Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and exports.

#### Background

- The economy of the country has slowed to a 5-year low of 6.8%.
  - The automobile sector is facing its worst crisis in two decades and reports suggest thousands of job losses in the auto and ancillary industry.
  - In the real estate sector, the number of unsold homes has increased, while fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies have reported a decline in volume growth in the first quarter (April - June, 2019).
- Banks, facing the charge of not passing on the full extent of the easing of the policy rates. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had cut the repo rate by 75 basis points between February and June, 2019, but banks have reduced their interest rates on fresh rupee loans by 29 basis points only.
- Though lending by banks to industries has shown a significant jump from 0.9% in the June 2018 quarter to 6.6% in the corresponding period of 2019, the same to the job-creating MSME sector has slipped from 0.7% to 0.6% during the same period.
- However, there has been an improvement in non-performing assets of the banks. The total bad loans of commercial banks declined by Rs 1.02 lakh crore to Rs 9.34 lakh crore in 2018-19.

### **ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**

#### Preservation of Sundarban

Discovery India and World Wide Fund (WWF) India have partnered with the Government of West Bengal and local communities in the Sundarban to help save the world's only mangrove tiger habitat.

- They are working with a vision to create climate-smart villages in the Sundarbans.
  - Climate Smart Villages are sites where farmers, researchers, local government and the private sector come together to understand which climate smart agriculture practices are best suited for a particular location.
- The project will use technology to solve several of the issues faced in the region. This includes building datasets on impacts of climate change on estuarine ecosystem.
  - Through this project, in partnership with the West Bengal Forest Directorate and Indian Institute of Science Education and Research(IISER) Kolkata, two Sundarbans ecological observatories will be set up, each featuring data loggers, monitoring buoys and an onsite laboratory.
  - Farmland productivity: The initiative also focuses on enhancing farmland productivity through low-cost measures and adjusting crop calendars to deal with climate change.
- The initiative will also include work towards securing habitats for tigers and prey species.
- The project at Sundarbans is part of a global movement, Project CAT (Conserving Acres for Tigers), aimed at building healthy habitats for Tigers by conserving six million acres of protected land across four countries.

#### Project CAT (Conserving Acres for Tigers)

- Discovery Communications is working with World Wildlife Fund and others to support a worldwide effort to double the number of tigers in the wild by 2022.

- It is a mission to ensure a future for tigers and other endangered wildlife by conserving nearly a million acres of protected land on the border of India and Bhutan.
- Tigers face multiple threats from poaching, habitat loss and fragmentation, conflict with humans and overhunting of their prey species.
- As a large predator, tigers are an umbrella species. They play a key role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.
- By protecting tigers and their habitat, the others risk animals that share this habitat, like Asian elephants, greater one-horned rhinos, clouded leopards and important prey species are also getting protected.

#### The Sundarbans Mangrove Forest

- The Sundarbans mangrove forest, one of the largest such forests in the world, lies across India and Bangladesh on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal.
- It is adjacent to the border of India's Sundarbans World Heritage site inscribed in 1987.
- The site is intersected by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands of salt-tolerant mangrove forests, and presents an excellent example of ongoing ecological processes.
- The area is known for its wide range of fauna, including 260 bird species, the Bengal tiger and other threatened species such as the estuarine crocodile and the Indian python.
- It is home to many rare and globally threatened wildlife species such as the estuarine crocodile, Royal Bengal Tiger, Water monitor lizard, Gangetic dolphin, and olive ridley turtles.

### **ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**

#### Odisha's Lake Conservation

The Odisha Wetland Authority has approved implementation of an integrated management plan for :

- Chilika, country's largest brackish water lagoon, and
- Ansupa, state's largest freshwater lake.

Aim: The five-year management of lakes is intended at strengthening livelihood of thousands of fishermen relying on the two water-bodies. Besides, tourism promotion and conservation of ecology will also be taken up.

#### Pollution in Odisha: State scores equal or more aerosol value vis-a-vis 'notorious' Delhi

A study of the Aerosol Optical Depth (AOD) of Odisha for today revealed that in districts like Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Khurda, Ganjam, Gajapati, Jharsuguda and parts of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar adjoining Jharkhand measured AOD in the range of 0.4- 0.5. Significantly, the AOD of Delhi for today is also measured at around 0.5 -0.8.

- However, when the AOD in districts like Dhenkanal and Angul was measured at around 0.5-0.8, places in districts like Rayagada and Koraput have AOD worse than Delhi. The AOD there is measured at 0.9 – 1, which is categorised as the worst pollution level.
- The solace for the State is the atmosphere in rest of the districts in the State is not that worse as the AOD there is measured at around 0.2. However, as per NOAA (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration) data, the AOD of US is 0.1 – 0.15. And 0.01 is considered the cleanest air.

Aerosol: A suspension of tiny particles like dust, smoke and pollutants (particulate matters) in the atmosphere. High concentration of aerosol is considered dangerous because, it has the potential to block the sunlight by absorbing or scattering it. The absorption, basically done by carbon particles in the suspension, leads to rise in the temperature, which is known as global warming.



## DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

**Qns: Discuss the areas of cooperation and contention between India and Bhutan?**

**Ans:** Bhutan was the first country to recognize India's independence in 1947 and afterwards the India Bhutan Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in 1949. However the diplomatic relations between the two countries were officially established in 1968 after the appointment of an Indian representative as a resident in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. Later on the India Bhutan Trade and Commerce Agreement was signed in 1972. It provided for free trade and commerce between the two countries.

### Areas of Cooperation

#### Diplomatic Cooperation:

- Regular visits between highest level Government functionaries of both the countries have become a tradition. For example, in 2014, our Prime Minister chose Bhutan as his first country to visit after getting elected.
- India sends foreign service officers to Bhutan to maintain good diplomatic relations
- Security Cooperation:
- Border relationship between India and Bhutan has remained very peaceful. There are no outstanding border disputes between the two countries.
- Both the countries have conducted joint military operation against insurgents. The most notable was in 2004, the Royal Bhutanese army conducted operations against ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam)

#### Economic Cooperation:

- The currency of Bhutan is Indian Rupees
- India remains the single largest trading partner of Bhutan
- In 2016 a new trade agreement was signed. This agreement aims at cutting down the documentation related to trade and establishing additional trading points in Bhutan
- India has provided large scale financial assistance to Bhutan for its Five Year Plans
- In the hydropower sector, many hydropower projects in Bhutan has been developed with India's assistance
- India imports around 1540 MW of hydropower from Bhutan
- India has provided a standby credit facility of Rs 1000 crores to help Bhutan overcome the rupee liquidity crunch

#### Cultural and Educational Cooperation:

- India Bhutan foundation was established in 2003 for improving people to people cooperation in the areas of culture, education and environment protection
- India has provided scholarships for Bhutanese students studying in Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses in Indian institutions
- Environment Cooperation: India is considering to involve Bhutan in National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayas. The project aims at protecting the Himalayan ecosystem that has been endangered by numerous ecological problems.

#### Areas of Contentions

- The Motor Vehicles Agreement that was signed in 2015 involving Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) was blocked by Bhutan's upper house citing environmental concerns.
- India has been occasionally complained by Bhutan for meddling in its internal affairs. For Example, India's decision to withdraw its subsidies in cooking gas and kerosene in 2013. The timing of the decision was few weeks before general election in Bhutan and was seen as an attempt to influence the election outcome.
- Bhutan wants to increase its export power tariff to India that is complained for being lesser than its cost of production

#### China's Role:

- Bhutan was guided by India in its Defence and Foreign affairs. These provisions were removed by the 2007 treaty. This has the potential for China to have inroads in Bhutan's internal affairs and foreign policy.
- Bhutan has problems like high rates of unemployment and national debt. This can be a source for an economically strong China to exert its influence.
- There has been reports that China claims Doklam Plateau and other parts of Chumbi valley (they legally belong to Bhutan) as its own territory. The Chumbi valley is close to Indian state of Sikkim and Chicken's neck (the passage between mainland India and Northeastern States which is also known as Siliguri corridor). This poses security concerns for India. The Doklam standoff in 2017 between India & China continued for more than two months

#### Way Forward

- India needs to complete some of the hydropower projects that were delayed due to lack of sufficient funds
- India has a very good relationship with Bhutan whereas China has many border disputes with Bhutan. This relationship and goodwill must be maintained to counter China's strategic calculations in Bhutan.
- India needs to augment the connectivity of Bhutan and its North Eastern states for the region's economic development.
- India needs to combine the Gross National Happiness of Bhutan with its own economic development to maintain a shared prosperity and relationship between the two countries.

**DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQ**

1. Which of the following countries is not considered as a Girmitiya Country?
  - (a) Mauritius
  - (b) Fiji
  - (c) Maldives
  - (d) All of the above
2. Which of the following statement is NOT correct about the Know India Programme (KIP)?
  1. It is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs.
  2. It is to make the NRIs aware about Indian Culture
  3. Punjab and Haryana are the partner states for the KIP, 2019Select the correct answer from the codes given below:
  - (a) 1 and 2
  - (b) 1 and 3
  - (c) 2 and 3
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3**
3. Consider the following statements:
  1. A glacier is a persistent mass of compacted ice that accumulates more mass each winter than it loses through summer melt and moves constantly under its own weight.
  2. The Okjökull glacier was declared dead in 2014.
  3. The glacier is situated atop of OK Volcano in the west central Norway.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
  - (a) 1 only
  - (b) 1 and 2**
  - (c) 1 and 3
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3
4. With reference to ‘Zayed Medal’, which of the following statements is/are NOT correct?
  1. It is the highest civilian award of Saudi Arabia.
  2. The award has been named after the Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father of the Saudi Arabia.
  3. Recently Prime Minister of India has become the first head of any Asian country to win the medal.Select the correct answer using the code given below:
  - (a) 1 only
  - (b) 2 only
  - (c) 1 and 2 only
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3**
5. Consider the following statements:
  1. The Sundarbans mangrove forest lies across India and Bangladesh on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal.
  2. It is adjacent to the border of India’s Sundarbans World Heritage site inscribed in 1987.
  3. It is home to many rare and globally threatened wildlife species such as Royal Bengal Tiger, Water monitor lizard, Gangetic dolphin, and olive ridley turtles.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
  - (a) 1 only
  - (b) 1 and 2
  - (c) 2 and 3
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3**
6. With reference to ‘Chilka Lake’, which of the following statements is/are correct?
  1. It is Asia's largest and world's second largest lagoon.
  2. It lies on the east coast of India in the state of Odisha, separated from the mighty Bay of Bengal by a small strip of sand.
  3. It was the first Indian wetland designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention in 1981.Select the correct answer using the code given below:
  - (a) 1 and 2
  - (b) 2 only
  - (c) 2 and 3
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3**
7. Consider the following statements with reference to BASIC
  1. It was established in 2009
  2. Bangladesh is a member of the group
  3. Recently the ministerial conference of the group was held in New DelhiWhich of the statements is/are NOT correct?
  - (a) 1 and 2
  - (b) 1 and 3
  - (c) 2 and 3**
  - (d) 1, 2 and 3