

**GEOGRAPHY****Cyclone Maha**

- A depression that developed in the Comorin Sea (near the southernmost end of India) has intensified into a cyclonic storm, named 'Maha'.
- The name has been given by Oman.
- It lies centered over Lakshadweep and the adjoining southeast Arabian Sea and the Maldives area.
- Cyclone storm 'Maha' is the second in the 2019 northeast monsoon season, following close on the heels of super cyclone Kyarr which took its way towards the Arabian peninsula.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS****Second Assembly of ISA**

The second assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) is being hosted by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

- The Assembly is the supreme decision making body of the ISA, and gives directions on various administrative, financial and programme related issues.
- India (represented by the Minister for New and Renewable Energy and Power) is the President and France is the Co-President of the ISA Assembly.
- Till now, 81 countries of the 121 prospective member countries have signed the Framework Agreement of the ISA. Of these, 58 countries have ratified the same.
  - During the first Assembly of the ISA, an Indian resolution to extend the Membership of the organisation to all countries that are Members of the United Nations was adopted.
- Since the first assembly on 3rd October 2018, ISA has initiated many activities and programmes.
  - For building domestic capacity of the ISA member countries programmes such as STAR - C Programme, development of the Infopedia etc. have been launched. (STAR C is a Solar Technology Application Resource Centre project. And Infopedia is an online platform dedicated to the dissemination of information, best practices and knowledge on Solar Energy.)
  - The ISA sent country missions to eight countries over the course of 2019 in order to understand the challenges and issues 'on the ground'.
  - ISA has significantly extended outreach and have partnered with over 40 organizations. These broadly include United Nations (UN), Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), etc.

**International Solar Alliance**

- The ISA, is an Indian initiative that was launched by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France on 30th November 2015 in Paris, France on the side-lines of the Conference of the Parties (COP-21), with 121 solar resource rich countries lying fully or partially between the tropic of Cancer and tropic of Capricorn as prospective members.
- The overarching objective of the ISA is to collectively address key common challenges to the scaling up of solar energy in ISA member countries.
- The Government of India has allotted 5 acres of land to the ISA in National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) campus, Gurugram and has released a sum of Rs. 160 crore for creating a corpus fund, building infrastructure and meeting day to day recurring expenditure of the ISA up to the year 2022-23.

**INDIAN ECONOMY****Pension Fund Regulatory And Development Authority (PFRDA)**

PFRDA has now permitted Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) to enroll in National Pension Scheme (NPS) at par with Non-Resident Indians.

About:

- An OCI may subscribe to the National Pension System governed and administered by PFRDA, provided such person is eligible to invest as per the provisions of the PFRDA Act and the annuity/accumulated saving will be repatriable, subject to FEMA guidelines.
- Contributions made towards NPS are eligible for an additional tax deduction under section 80CCD(1B) upto Rs. 50,000 which is over and above the Rs 1,50,000 limit of deduction available under sec 80CCD(1).

About PFRDA

- PFRDA is the statutory Authority established by an enactment of the Parliament, to regulate, promote and ensure orderly growth of the National Pension System (NPS) and pension schemes to which this Act applies.
- NPS was initially notified for central government employees joining service on or after 1st Jan 2004 and subsequently adopted by almost all State Governments for its employees. NPS was extended to all citizens of Indian on voluntary basis from 2009 and to corporates in 2011 and to Non-Resident Indians in 2015.

Nirvik Scheme

Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) has introduced the Export Credit Insurance Scheme (ECIS) called NIRVIK to enhance loan availability and ease the lending process. It is an insurance cover guarantee that will cover up to 90% of the principal and interest. The cover will include both pre and post-shipment credit. (The ECGC currently provides credit guarantee of up to 60% loss.) The enhanced cover will ensure that Foreign and Rupee export credit interest rates will be below 4% and 8% respectively for exporters.

Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India

- ECGC Ltd is wholly owned by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The Government of India had initially set up Export Risks Insurance Corporation in 1957.
- After the introduction of insurance covers to banks during the period 1962-64, the name was changed to Export Credit & Guarantee Corporation Ltd in 1964.
  - It was changed to ECGC Ltd in August 2014.
- Its objective was to promote exports from the country by providing credit risk insurance and related services for exports.

**ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES**Sentinel-3 World Fire Atlas

Citing data from its Sentinel-3 World Fire Atlas, the European Space Agency (ESA) has announced that compared to August 2018, there were almost five times as many wildfires across the world in August 2019.

About the prototype

- Sentinel-3 is an Earth observation satellite constellation developed by the European Space Agency (ESA) as part of the Copernicus Programme.
- The Sentinel-3 World Fires Atlas Prototype product has been developed by ESA over the southern countries of the ESA member states.
- it aims to provide continuity to ESA ATSR World Fire Atlas (operating from June 1995 to March 2012) taking on board all the improvements of Sentinel-3 SLSTR instrument.

Key findings:

- The ESA's Copernicus Sentinel-3 mission recorded 79,000 fires in August this year, compared to just over 16,000 fires detected during the same period last year.
- The data revealed that 49% of the fires were detected in Asia, around 28% were detected in South America, 16% in Africa, and the remaining were recorded in North America, Europe and Oceania.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC****Lymphatic Filariasis**

Dr. Harsh Vardhan inaugurates National Symposium on the theme 'United to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis.'

**About:**

- Lymphatic filariasis (LF), commonly known as elephantiasis or Hathipaon, is a neglected tropical disease.
- Cause: LF disease is caused mainly by *Wuchereria Bancrofti* and spread by *Culex* mosquito. This mosquito grows in dirty accumulated water. Infection occurs when filarial parasites are transmitted to humans through mosquitoes. The infection is usually acquired in childhood, causing hidden damage to the lymphatic system.
- Effect: LF does not kill the affected people, but may cause permanent disfigurement, reduced productivity and social stigma.
- Vulnerable groups: The disease affects the poorest population in society, particularly those living in areas with poor water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Global scenario: It is one of the oldest and most debilitating neglected disease, which is currently endemic in 73 countries of the world, including India.
- The Global Program to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (GPELF) was launched by the World Health Organization in 2000.
- Government of India launched the Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (APELF) in 2018. By the end of February 2019, India successfully rolled out IDA treatment across 4 districts including Arwal in Bihar, Simdega in Jharkhand, Nagpur in Maharashtra and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.

**Cyber Attacks**

Recently, the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) has confirmed that a malware had infected its system at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP).

- The malware named 'Dtrack' is a new spyware tool that is believed to be actively targeting a large number of Indian institutions, in order to steal confidential data as well as a remotely downloading malicious tool- tracking key logs and monitoring IP (internet protocol) traffic.
- Dtrack was originated in North Korea by the hackers' group Lazarus.
- The attack revived the memories of Stuxnet virus attack on an Iranian nuclear facility in 2018.
- The acceptance of cyberattack in NPCIL systems highlights the fact that nuclear reactors are not only prone to natural disasters but also to cyberattacks.

**ODISHA DEVELOPMENT****A new step for tourism development in Odisha**

- The Odisha government will develop closed and abandoned mines in the State into tourist destinations.
- If tourism and water bodies are developed in abandoned and closed mines, it will benefit the locals affected by the mining
- Government has already started the auction process of mineral blocks. Auction of nine blocks has already been completed while notification has been issued for auction of another 31 mineral blocks.

**PRELIMS SPECIFIC FACTS- INDICES, DAYS, AWARDS ETC****Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index (MMGPI) 2019**

According to the Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index (MMGPI) 2019, India has marginally improved its ranking to 32nd position in terms of providing pension and retirement benefits to citizens compared to last year.

**About:**

- The MMGPI, which covers 37 countries, is based on how they fare on providing pension and retirement benefits to citizens across different income groups.
- India stood at 32nd position in 2019 out of 37 countries, while it was ranked at 33rd place in 2018 out of 34 countries in the list. The country's score in the MMGPI 2019 rose to 45.8 from 44.6 last year. India's index value increased largely due to the improvement in all three sub-indices of adequacy, sustainability and integrity.
- In the overall list, the Netherlands had the highest index value (81.0), while Thailand had the lowest value (39.4).
- Sub-index wise, Ireland had the highest score for adequacy (81.5), Denmark for sustainability (82.0) and Finland for integrity (92.3). Thailand scored the lowest for adequacy (35.8), Italy for sustainability (19.0) and Philippines for integrity (34.7)

**National Unity Day**

National Unity Day is celebrated every year on 31st October to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

- It is also known as Rashtriya Ekta Diwas.
- It was celebrated for the first time in 2014 with the aim to pay tribute to the 'Iron man of India' by remembering his extraordinary works for the country.
- Several events are organized on this day like 'Run For Unity'-a nationwide marathon to increase awareness about the contribution of Sardar Patel to national integrity, National Unity pledge, etc.
- In 2018, the Government of India unveiled the 'Statue of Unity' in Gujarat in the honour of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel which is the tallest statue in the world.

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**It is always the simple that produces marvelous.**

## **DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns: Examine the challenges faced by the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in meeting its objective. Suggest a way-forward for the same.**

**Ans:**

ISA is partnership of solar resource rich countries to address their special energy needs and provide a platform to collaborate on development of solar energy resource. It is an intergovernmental body registered with the United Nations under Article 102 of the UN Charter. The ISA is open to 121 countries, most of them located between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. However, ISA is now considering to open the membership to all countries. 68 countries have joined the alliance and 44 countries have ratified the framework agreement so far. The main aim of ISA is to create a collaborative platform for increased deployment of solar energy technologies to enhance energy security & sustainable development and ensure equitable access to energy.

Objectives:

- Promote solar technologies and investment in the solar sector to enhance income generation for the poor and global environment
- Formulate projects and programmes to promote solar applications
- Develop innovative Financial Mechanisms to reduce cost of capital
- Build a common Knowledge e-Portal for sharing of policy development experiences and best practices in member countries
- Facilitate capacity building for promotion and absorption of solar technologies and R&D among member countries

Issues and Challenges with ISA

- Many critics are of the opinion that the alliance is more a platform for some countries to showcase their technologies and programmes.
- Many of the member countries of ISA have poor technical capabilities, therefore they do not know how best to leverage the platform
- The cost of solar installations remains high in many of the ISA countries. Most African countries have a high most favoured nation (MFN) tariffs for photo voltaic (PV) cells, modules and semi-conductor devices. This is aggravated by their lack of manufacturing capacities and high tariffs. The Pacific island countries have the highest MFN applied rates for solar products. High tariffs are detrimental to cost-effective solar development
- Capital cost is the biggest obstacle to solar deployment. An important challenge for ISA is attracting investments
- There has also been perception that the International Solar Alliance has not become a global institution. Further, there's a lack of clarity on what exactly the ISA does and what its role in the future would be.

Way forward

- There should be greater clarity and better communication so as to convey the purpose of the alliance
- ISA should focus on its core goals—aggregating demand, technical collaborations, financial assistance for achieving its target of TW of solar energy by 2030. There should be dedicated focus with deadlines and milestones in order to measure progress
- ISA should create awareness among the masses with regard to the use and benefits of solar energy. It further needs to ensure that solar benefits are clear and tangible to users.
- ISA should demonstrate business models that are viable for users, suppliers and financiers. Further, the alliance should support member countries in implementing policies to fasten adoption of these business models
- ISA should open its membership to all countries across the geography. The inclusion of new members, like US and China, would help member countries have access to more advance technology and finances.

**DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQS**

1. With reference to the Lymphatic filariasis (LF), consider the following statements:
  1. It is a neglected tropical disease.
  2. It is caused mainly by Aedes aegypti mosquitos.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 (a) **1 only**      (b) 2 only      (c) Both 1 and 2      (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. With reference to the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), consider the following statements:
  1. PFRDA has now permitted Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) to enroll in National Pension Scheme (NPS) at par with Non-Resident Indians.
  2. It is the statutory Authority established by an enactment of the Parliament.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 (a) 1 only      (b) 2 only      (c) **Both 1 and 2**      (d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Consider the following statements:
  1. NIRVIK scheme aims to boost exports by easing the loan lending process.
  2. It is the scheme of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 (a) **1 only**      (b) 2 only      (c) Both 1 and 2      (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Which of the following statements are incorrect with reference to Rashtriya Ekta Divas?
  1. It is celebrated on October 31
  2. It is celebrated in the honor of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel.
 Select the correct answer using codes given below:  
 (a) 1 only      (b) 2 only      (c) Both 1 and 2      (d) **Neither 1 nor 2**
5. Consider the following pairs:
 

<b>Nuclear Power Plant</b>	<b>Location</b>
1. Kudankulam	- Andhra Pradesh
2. Rawatbhata	- Rajasthan
3. Narora	- Uttar Pradesh
4. Tarapur	- Maharashtra

 Which of the pairs given above is/are correct?  
 (a) 1 and 3      (b) 2 and 4      (c) 1, 3 and 4      (d) **2, 3 and 4**
6. Recently in news, Dtrack is a/an
  - (a) Mobile application for road safety
  - (b) **Computer Spyware**
  - (c) Electronic device to track Spywares
  - (d) None of the above
7. Consider the following statement with reference to cyclone 'Maha'
  1. It is a result of North-east Monsoon
  2. It has been named by Oman
 Which of the above statement is/are correct?  
 (a) 1 only      (b) 2 only      (c) **Both 1 and 2**      (d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. Which of the following agencies published the Sentinel-3 Wild Fire Map?
  - (a) World Meteorological Organization
  - (b) **European Union**
  - (c) United Nations
  - (d) Indian Meteorological Department