

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC

Drug Discovery Hackathon 2020

Union HRD Minister and Health Minister jointly launched the Drug Discovery Hackathon 2020.

About:

- The objective of this Hackathon is to identify drug candidates against SARS-CoV-2 by in-silico drug discovery through the hackathon and follow up by chemical synthesis and biological testing.
- Drug Discovery Hackathon is first of its kind national initiative for supporting drug discovery process. It is an online competition and anybody from anywhere in the country or world can participate.
- It is a joint initiative of MHRD, AICTE and CSIR and supported by partners like CDAC, MyGov, Schrodinger and ChemAxon.
- In this initiative, HRD Innovation cell and AICTE will focus on identifying potential drug molecules through the Hackathon while CSIR will take these identified molecules forward for synthesis and laboratory testing.

Sahiya Didis

In Jharkhand, the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) generally known as Sahiya didis have played an important role in the recently conducted door-to-door Intensive Public Health Survey from June 18 to 25 to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

About:

- Jharkhand has become the first state to complete such a survey within a stipulated time.
- The Sahiya didis identified 55 thousand 215 people aged above 40 years with the highest risk of Corona infection, or are suffering from severe respiratory diseases.
- The ASHAs in Jharkhand, known as "Sahiyas", have been supporting delivery of health care services to the last mile, especially in the tribal areas.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

Accelerate Vigyan (AV) Scheme

The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) has launched a new scheme called 'Accelerate Vigyan' to provide a single platform for research internships, capacity building programs and workshops across the country.

About:

- The primary objective of this inter-ministerial scheme is to encourage high-end scientific research and prepare scientific manpower, which can lead towards research careers and knowledge-based economy.
- Accelerate Vigyan will initiate and strengthen mechanisms for identifying research potential, mentoring, training and hands-on workshop on a national scale.
- The scheme is sub-divided into two components: 'ABHYAAS' and 'SAMMOHAN'.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

Interpol

Iran has issued an arrest warrant for US President Donald Trump and has requested the Interpol to issue a "Red Notice" and detain him and others who they believe carried out the drone strike that killed Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3 this year.

About:

- Full name: The International Police Organisation is commonly known as Interpol.
- Mandate: It is an international organization facilitating international police cooperation against cross-border terrorism, trafficking, and other crime.
- Governance: All decisions regarding the activities of INTERPOL are made by the General Assembly which is its supreme governing body which meets annually.
- Status: It is 'NOT' a unit or part of united nation system. It is an independent international organization.
- HQ: Lyon in France.
- Founded in: 1923.

Interpol Notices:

It issues 8 type of notices (7 of which are colour-coded) which are in the form of alert/requests allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.

- Red Notice: To seek the location and arrest of a person wanted by a judicial jurisdiction or an international tribunal with a view to his/her extradition. It is the "closest instrument to an international arrest warrant."

- Blue Notice: To locate, identify or obtain information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation.
- Green Notice: To warn about a person's criminal activities if that person is considered to be a possible threat to public safety.
- Yellow Notice: To locate a missing person or to identify a person unable to identify himself/herself.
- Black Notice: To seek information on unidentified bodies.
- Orange Notice: To warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing an imminent threat and danger to persons or property.
- Purple Notice: To provide information on modus operandi, procedures, objects, devices or hiding places used by criminals.
- Interpol-UNSC Special Notice: To inform Interpol's members that an individual or an entity is subject to UN sanctions.

United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT)

The alleged torture and custodial killing of TN father and son by police last week pointed towards a broken criminal justice system and highlighted the need for police reforms and the ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT).

United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT)

- The UNCAT is an international human rights treaty, under the review of the UN and was adopted in 1984.
- It aims to prevent torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment around the world.
- The convention requires states to take effective measures to prevent torture in any territory under their jurisdiction and forbids states to transport people to any country where there is reason to believe they will be tortured.
- Since the convention's entry into force, the absolute prohibition against torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment has become accepted as a principle of customary international law.

The Committee against Torture (CAT)

- It is a body of human rights experts that monitors implementation of the Convention by State parties.
- The Committee is one of eight UN-linked human rights treaty bodies.
- All state parties are obliged under the Convention to submit regular reports to the CAT on how rights are being implemented.
- Upon ratifying the Convention, states must submit a report within one year, after which they are obliged to report every four years.
- The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of "concluding observations."
- Under certain circumstances, the CAT may consider complaints or communications from individuals claiming that their rights under the Convention have been violated.

Optional Protocol to CAT

- The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) was adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2002.
- It provides for the establishment of a system of regular visits undertaken by independent international and national bodies to places where people are deprived of their liberty, in order to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

India needs to ratify UNCAT

- India signed the convention in 1997 but it remains among a handful of countries including Pakistan and China which are yet to ratify the convention.
- India is in the company of 25 other nations which have not ratified.
- The National Human Rights Commission had said custodial violence and torture are already "rampant" in the country.
- About 1,731 people had died in custody in 2019 a/c to NHRC report.

West Bank Annexation Plan

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed that the Israeli leader's plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank would not start on the original target date as the British PM made an extraordinary appeal to Israel to call off the plan. The strategic location of Gaza strip, West Bank, Dead Sea etc. creates a hotspot for a possible map based prelims question.

West Bank Located

- The West Bank is located to the west of the Jordan River.
- It is a patch of land about one and a half times the size of Goa, was captured by Jordan after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.
- Israel snatched it back during the Six-Day War of 1967 and has occupied it ever since.
- It is a landlocked territory, bordered by Jordan to the east and Israel to the south, west, and north.
- Following the Oslo Accords between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) during the 1990s, part of the West Bank came under the control of the Palestinian Authority.
- With varying levels of autonomy, the Palestinian Authority controls close to 40 per cent of West Bank today, while the rest is controlled by Israel.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Red Coral Kukri

A "very rare" Red Coral Kukri snake was spotted in the Dudhwa National Park in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri.

About:

- Red Coral Kukri is a nocturnal non-venomous reptile feeding on insects and worms.
- It gets its name from its red orange colour and its teeth, which are shaped like Nepali "khukri" to break eggs.
- The reptile was first sighted in Dudhwa in 1936 and even its zoological name "oligodon Kheriensis" finds its roots in its Kheri-specific location.
- Sightings of this brightly-coloured snake are rare - it was seen last year for the first time after a gap of almost 82 years. This is only the fourth sighting of the Red Coral Kukri snake in the last couple of years - which in itself is a marked increase from earlier sightings.

Van Mahotsav Week

Minister for Environment has called upon people to resolve to plant trees during the Van Mahotsav week which is being held from July 1, 2020.

About:

- Van Mahotsav is an annual one week tree planting festival in India.
- It was started in 1950 by K. M. Munshi (1887 – 1971), the then Union Minister for Agriculture and Food to create an enthusiasm in the mind of the populace for the conservation of forests and planting of trees.

Central Zoo Authority (CZA)

The Environment Ministry has reconstituted the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) to include an expert from the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, and a molecular biologist.

About:

- The CZA is a statutory body chaired by the Environment Minister and tasked with regulating zoos across the country.
- The authority lays down guidelines and prescribes rules under which animals may be transferred among zoos nationally and internationally.
- Apart from the chairman, it consists of 10 members and a member-secretary. Almost all of them are officials in the Environment Ministry and non-government experts are those who are wildlife conservationists or retired forest officers.

INTERNAL SECURITY, DISASTER MANAGEMENT PRELIMS SPECIFIC FACTS- INDICES, DAYS, EVENTS, AWARDS ETC

Indra Mani Pandey

Senior diplomat Indra Mani Pandey has been appointed as the next Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva.

About:

- Mr Pandey, a 1990 batch IFS officer is presently additional secretary in the External Affairs ministry.
- The Permanent Mission is the diplomatic mission that every member state deputed to the United Nations, and is headed by a Permanent Representative, who is also referred to as the "UN ambassador".

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q. "The cracks in the global order were apparent but the pandemic has accentuated the challenges to the global order. In light of this, examine the challenges to global order is facing the role that India should play."

The corona crisis has laid bare the fissures in the global order. This article examines the four issues that are principal global challenges. Pandemic has accentuated these challenges.

Principal global challenges

- Geopolitical tensions
- Climate crisis
- Global mistrust
- The dark side of the digital world — are four issues which U.N. Secretary-General Guterres listed as primary threats.
- The four challenges have, for now, been overshadowed by the corona pandemic crisis.

Climate change challenge

- The drop in emissions in 2020 is projected to be about 8 per cent down on last year.
- This drop will just put us on track to where we should be if we are to reach the Paris agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5 C.
- The threat of climate change, although raising its head again, has been constrained.

Digital space and its dark side

- Cyberspace has been a digital saviour during the corona crisis.
- Virtual communications enhanced through various services, new apps, expanded coverage has been key to enhanced virtual lives for millions by increase of the avenues for working from home, video chat connectivity and online delivery of goods.
- Companies that have deftly used cyberspace have prospered the most: Amazons net capital gain has been over \$400 billion in 2020.
- However, a surge in cybercrime and cyber fraud is anticipated, if not there already.
- The logic being that cyberspace use has expanded without commensurate growth in security features.
- There are dire projections of an impending “cyber Pearl Harbour”.

Geopolitical tensions

- Accentuation of geopolitical tensions during the corona crisis is well-documented.
- The US-China relationship was already deteriorating, the blame game over the virus has exacerbated it.
- The brazen behaviour of China in matters relating to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, South China Sea and the India-China border has added to the inflammable state of geopolitics.
- Rarely has the world seen such paucity of international cooperation since World War II.
- The unravelling of the international institutions and partnerships that have been built since World War II is stark.

Trust deficit among states

- Trust amongst states has plummeted to its worst since World War II.
- When faced with corona crisis shortages, almost all EU states responded at the national level.
- Globally, at one time, more than 70 per cent of the world's ports of entry — air, sea and land — restricted travel.
- According to a Global Trade Alert study, nearly 90 governments blocked the export of medical supplies while 29 restricted food exports.

Efficiency to self-sufficiency

- Lack of trust is also impacting diversified supply chains.
- The corona crisis is driving a shift from efficiency to self-sufficiency.
- Japan is paying companies to relocate factories from China.
- President Emmanuel Macron has pledged “full independence” for France in crucial medical supplies by year-end.
- Prime Minister Modi has called for self-reliance and being vocal for local in India.
- In the US, support for “Buy American” benchmarks for government health spending has growing bipartisan support.

India's role

- Challenges that transcend borders are of cardinal importance to India's well being.
- It is, therefore, time to conceptualise, in concrete terms, pathways to address them.
- This will need to include our envisaging the new order and India's own role in it as well as who our partners in this venture are to be.
- Others are already working on their game plans.

Conclusion: If India wants to be “rule shapers” rather than being “rule takers”, then we need to start working in partnership at blueprints for change. It is never too early to plan for the future.