

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE, HISTORY**Mahatma Ayyankali**

PM remembers Mahatma Ayyankali on his 157th Birth Anniversary- 28th August.

Who is Mahatma Ayyankali?

Born on August 28th, 1863 in a small village in the princely state of Travancore, now within the south of the modern-day nation of Kerala,

The caste discrimination he faced as a child turned him into a leader of an anti-caste movement and who later fought for basic rights including access to public spaces and entry to schools.

1. Mahatma Gandhi called Ayyankali as 'Pulaya king'. Indira Gandhi described him as 'India's greatest son'.

His contributions to Dalit developments:

1. Ayyankali in 1893 rode an ox-cart challenging the 'ban' on untouchables from accessing public roads by caste-Hindus.
2. He also led a rally to assert the rights of 'untouchables' at Balaramapuram. The walk Ayyankali took came to be known as 'walk for freedom' and the consequent riots as 'Chaliyar riots'.
3. Ayyankali efforts influenced many changes that improved social wellbeing of those people, who are today referred to as Dalits.
4. Ayyankali became a stated protestor for Pulayar rights. Because of the protests led through Ayyankali, in 1907 a decree turned into issued to confess students from the untouchable network to government schools.
5. Inspired by Sree Narayana Guru, a social reformer from Ezhava caste, Ayyankali started Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (association for the protection of the poor) which later raised funds to start their own schools.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**EU urges Turkey to stop Mediterranean drilling**

The European Union has urged Turkey to halt its drilling activities in contested waters in the Mediterranean and ordered EU officials to speed up work aimed at blacklisting some Turkish officials linked to the energy exploration.

What's the issue?

Over recent weeks, tensions have been rising in the waters of the Eastern Mediterranean, prompted by what seems like a simple rivalry over energy resources.

1. Turkey has pursued an aggressive gas exploration effort, its research vessel heavily protected by warships of the Turkish Navy.
2. There have been encounters with rival Greek vessels and a third Nato country, France, has become involved, siding with the Greeks.
3. These tensions also highlight another shift in the region – the decline of US power.

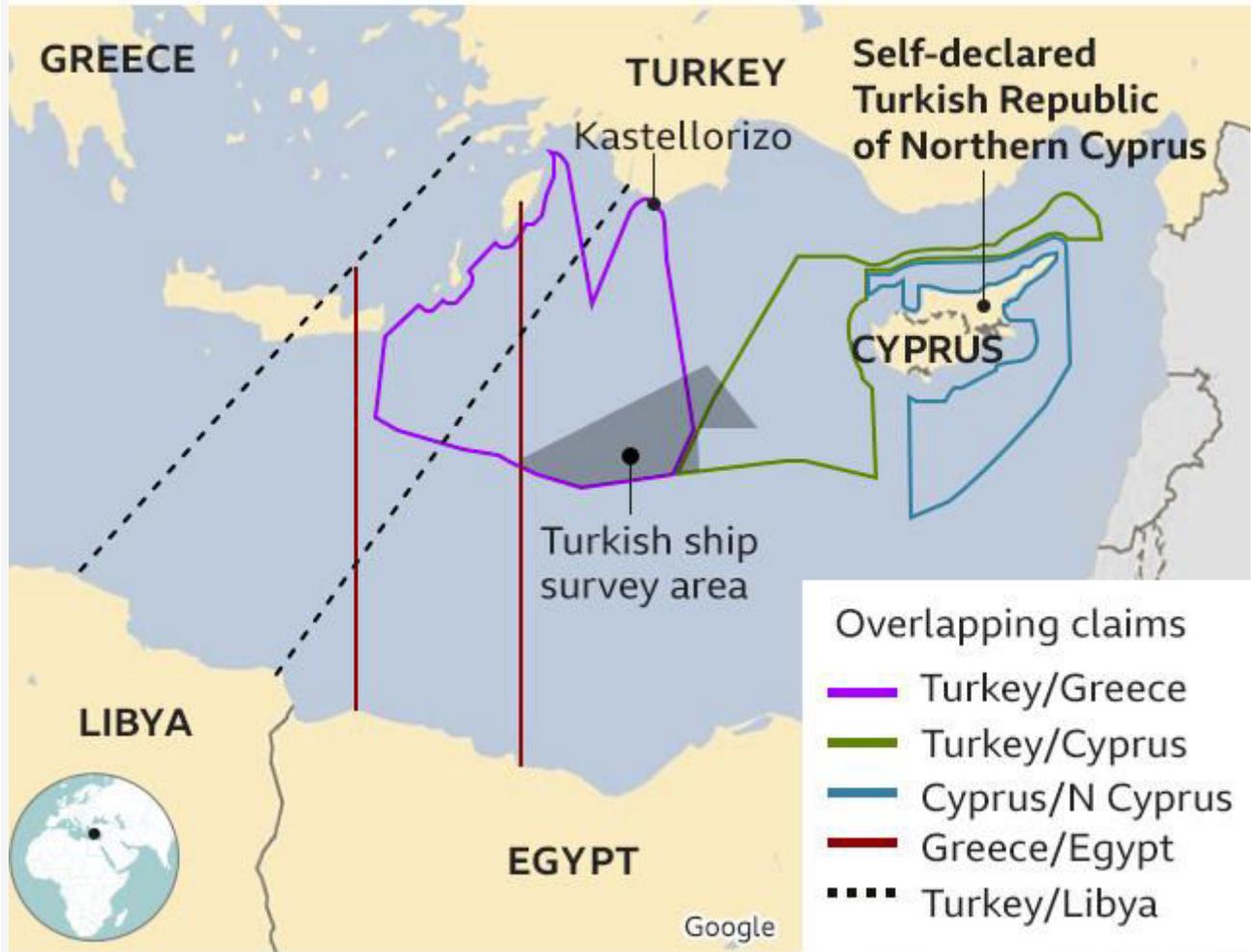
Cause for latest tensions:

Tensions are mounting to breaking point between Turkey and Greece over Turkey's drilling work near the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, which like Greece is an EU member country.

1. Turkey doesn't recognize the divided island of Cyprus as a state and claims 44 per cent of Cyprus' exclusive economic zone as its own.

Cyprus was split along ethnic lines in 1974 when Turkey invaded in the wake of a coup by supporters of union with Greece.

Greece and Turkey have overlapping claims in the Eastern Mediterranean



About the Mediterranean

It is a vast sea positioned between Europe to the north, Africa to the south, and Asia to the east. The Mediterranean Sea connects:

1. to the Atlantic Ocean by the Strait of Gibraltar (known in Homer's writings as the "Pillars of Hercules") in the west
2. to the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea, by the Straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus respectively, in the east
3. The 163 km (101 mi) long artificial Suez Canal in the southeast connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea.

Africa declared free of wild polio

Africa has been declared free from wild polio by the independent body, the Africa Regional Certification Commission.

1. Now only the vaccine-derived polio virus remains in Africa.

When a country is certified as free of wild polio?

A region is certified as free of wild polio after three years have passed without the virus being detected in any of its countries.

1. Nigeria is the last African country to be declared free from wild polio.

Where wild polio is still present?

Wild polio is still present in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

What is a vaccine-derived poliovirus?

It is a strain of the weakened poliovirus that was initially included in oral polio vaccine (OPV) and that has changed over time and behaves more like the wild or naturally occurring virus.

1. This means it can be spread more easily to people who are unvaccinated against polio and who come in contact with the stool or respiratory secretions, such as from a sneeze, of an infected person. These viruses may cause illness, including paralysis.

How is it spread?

1. Oral polio vaccine (OPV) contains an attenuated (weakened) vaccine-virus, activating an immune response in the body. When a child is immunized with OPV, the weakened vaccine-virus replicates in the intestine for a limited period, thereby developing immunity by building up antibodies.
2. During this time, the vaccine-virus is also excreted. In areas of inadequate sanitation, this excreted vaccine-virus can spread in the immediate community (and this can offer protection to other children through 'passive' immunization), before eventually dying out.

NATIONAL AFFAIRS & CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**Power of states under the Disaster Management Act to override UGC exam guidelines**

The Supreme Court has held that States are empowered under the Disaster Management Act to override University Grants Commission (UGC) exam guidelines in order to protect human lives amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

What's the issue?

UGC had on July 6 issued guidelines based on the recommendations of the R.C. Kuhad Expert Committee.

1. They provided three modes of examination – pen and paper, online and blended (both physical and online).
2. A “special chance” was also given to students unable to take the exams.

Following this, a batch of petitions were filed in the court against the direction to hold exams as per the UGC guidelines.

1. The petitioners also contended that the revised guidelines violate Article 14 on two counts — by fixing a date for the completion of exams for the entire country irrespective of the situation in different parts, and discriminating between final and first/second year students.

The judgment:

1. Universities and other institutions of higher education will have to conduct the final-year exams and “cannot” promote students on the basis of internal assessment or other criteria.
2. However, states and Union Territories, which may have postponed the exams in view of the Covid outbreak, can approach the University Grants Commission (UGC) for extension of the September 30 deadline.

Powers of states under the DM Act:

1. In case of a disaster, the priority of all authorities under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 is to immediately combat the disaster and contain it to save human life.
2. Therefore, under the DM Act, states can countermand the revised UGC guidelines of July 6 to conduct the final year and terminal semester examinations by September 30.
3. However, the powers of the States under the Disaster Management Act do not extend to promoting students on the sole basis of their internal assessment without taking exams.

Do these guidelines discriminate against final year students?

The court said the July 6 guidelines did not discriminate against final year students by compelling them to take exams while their juniors were promoted on their internal assessment marks.

1. Final year exam is an opportunity for a student to show his optimum calibre. It paves his future career both in academics and employment.

What next?

In future, if any State found it impossible to conduct the exams by September 30 and wanted to postpone them, it could apply to the UGC, which would consider the request and decide at the earliest, the court directed.

Relevance of DM Act in this pandemic:

Under the Act, the States and district authorities can frame their own rules on the basis of broad guidelines issued by the Home Ministry.

1. The legal basis of the DM Act, is Entry 23, Concurrent List of the Constitution “Social security and social insurance”.
2. Entry 29, Concurrent List “Prevention of the extension from one State to another of infectious or contagious diseases or pests affecting men, animals or plants,” can also be used for specific law making.

About the Disaster Management Act, 2005:

The stated object and purpose of the DM Act is to manage disasters, including preparation of mitigation strategies, capacity-building and more.

It came into force in India in January 2006.

1. The Act provides for “the effective management of disasters and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.”
2. The Act calls for the establishment of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), with the Prime Minister of India as chairperson.
3. The Act enjoins the Central Government to constitute a National Executive Committee (NEC) to assist the National Authority.
4. All State Governments are mandated to establish a State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA).

How does DMA empower the governments?

1. The law authorises the NDMA’s chairperson, the Prime Minister, to take decisions to deal with the pandemic, including deciding on relief for victims and special measures for the needy.
2. The state chief minister may also invoke special powers under the law for dealing with the pandemic.
3. The powers of the PM and CMs are the same under the law, except in case of Delhi, where the Lieutenant-Governor, has these powers.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Toy traders want quality control order suspended**

The toy industry in India has asked the government to suspend a Quality Control Order (QCO) issued in February, for at least a year, failing which the industry would be forced to shut shop.

What’s the issue?

The complexity of Scheme-1 of the QCO and the challenges in adhering to its September 1, 2020 timeline “will have a devastating impact” on the industry. Hence, there is a need for further suspending the order.

Need of the hour:

The government must constructively engage with all the stakeholders of the industry to formulate a comprehensive policy for domestic and overseas manufacturers based on the rules that are already in place since 2017.

Overview of the Toys (Quality Control) Order:

This relates to the regulation of toys and/or materials for use in play by children under 14 years of age, or other products as notified by the Central Government.

1. The order has been issued by DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

The Order contains several important provisions for toy safety, including:

1. Requirement for toys to conform to the latest version of a list of Indian Standards.
2. Requirement for toys to bear the Standard Mark under a licence from the Bureau as per Scheme-I of Schedule-II of Bureau of Indian Standards (Conformity Assessment) Regulations, 2018.
3. Directing the Bureau to be the certifying and enforcement authority.

Overview of the Scheme-I:

1. Under this scheme, the ISI mark is granted to the factories (who is actually producing the goods) and products by the BIS which is the national standards body of India.
2. The main objective of the BIS is to ensure that the products that are delivered to the end consumers are safe for their use and are in adherence with all the quality and safety standards set by them.
3. In India, the ISI mark is the synonym for better quality and safety.

Need for safety:

Safety and quality are fundamental concerns for parents who buy toys and other products related to children.

It is imperative that not only the industry, but government should also assume an active role in enabling its adoption by a larger section of the society.

1. The recent survey conducted by Quality Council of India shows that 67% of imported toys are not safe for the children.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**“Chunauti”- Next Generation Start-up Challenge Contest**

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has launched “Chunauti”- Next Generation Startup Challenge Contest.

Aims and Objectives:

1. To further boost startups and software products with special focus on Tier-II towns of India.
2. Identify around 300 startups working in identified areas and provide them seed fund of upto Rs. 25 Lakh and other facilities.

Under this challenge the Ministry of Electronics and IT will invite startups in the following areas of work:

1. Edu-Tech, Agri-Tech & Fin-Tech Solutions for masses.
2. Supply Chain, Logistics & Transportation Management.
3. Infrastructure & Remote monitoring.
4. Medical Healthcare, Diagnostic, Preventive & Psychological Care.
5. Jobs & Skilling, Linguistic tools & technologies.

Benefits for the selected startups:

1. The startups selected will be provided various support from the Government through Software Technology Parks of India centers across India.
2. They will get incubation facilities, mentorship, security testing facilities, access to venture capitalist funding, industry connect as well as advisories in legal, Human Resource (HR), IPR and Patent matters.
3. Besides seed fund of upto Rs. 25 Lakh, the startups will also be provided cloud credits from leading cloud service providers.
4. Each intern (start-up under pre-incubation) will be paid Rs. 10,000/- per month upto a period of 6 months.

Barn Owls (Tyto alba)

1. The barn owl is the most widespread landbird species in the world, occurring in every continent except Antarctica. They are one of the most widespread owls in the Indian Subcontinent.
2. These owls are medium-sized with long legs and wings and have a relatively shorter tail when compared to other similar sized owls.
3. Barn Owl exhibits dark eyes, and a distinct heart-shaped facial disc.
4. This owl doesn't have the characteristic 'woo-woo-woo' hoot of owls and utters a screechy 'shreeeeeeee' to protect its territory.
5. IUCN status- Least Concern.

Why in News?

The Lakshadweep Administration had embarked on the 'Pilot project on Biological Control of Rodents (Rats) by Using Barn Owls (Tyto alba) in Kavaratti Island'.

Association of Renewable Energy Agencies of States (AREAS)

6th Foundation Day of AREAS.

About AREAS:

1. AREAS was formed by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) for better coordination, interaction and sharing of best practices among the various state nodal agencies (SNAs) for renewable energy.
2. The Union Minister for MNRE is the Patron of the Association.
3. The MNRE Secretary is the ex officio President of the Association.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**Q. Write on the new rules issue by the Union Home Ministry for administration in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir**

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has notified new rules for administration in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir that specify the functions of the Lieutenant Governor (LG) and the Council of Ministers.

Overview of the new rules:**Roles and powers of LG:**

1. Police, public order, All India Services and anti-corruption, will fall under the executive functions of the LG, implying that the Chief Minister or the Council of Ministers will have no say in their functioning.
2. Proposals or matters which affect or are likely to affect the peace and tranquility of the UT or the interest of any minority community, the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes “shall essentially be submitted to the Lieutenant Governor through the Chief Secretary, under intimation to the Chief Minister, before issuing any orders.”
3. In case of difference of opinion between the LG and a Minister when no agreement could be reached even after a month, the “decision of the Lieutenant Governor shall be deemed to have been accepted by the Council of Ministers.

Role of the President:

1. In case of difference of opinion between the Lieutenant Governor and the Council with regard to any matter, the Lieutenant Governor shall refer it to the Central Government for the decision of the President and shall act according to the decision of the President.
2. The LG of J&K has been empowered to pass directions in such situations that action taken by the Council of Ministers will be suspended for as long as it takes the President of India to decide on the cases referred to her.

Role of Council of Ministers, led by the Chief Minister:

1. They will decide service matters of non-All India Services officers, proposal to impose new tax, land revenue, sale grant or lease of government property, reconstituting departments or offices and draft legislations.
2. Any matter which is likely to bring the Government of the Union territory into controversy with the Central Government or with any State Government, shall, as soon as possible, be brought to the notice of the LG and the Chief Minister by the secretary concerned through the Chief Secretary.

Role of the Central Government:

The Lieutenant Governor shall make a prior reference to the Central government with respect to proposals of the following kinds:

1. those affecting the relations of the Centre with any state government, the Supreme Court of India or any other high court;
2. proposals for the appointment of Chief Secretary and Director General of Police;
3. important cases which affect or are likely to affect the peace and tranquility of the Union Territory; and
4. cases which affect or are likely to affect the interests of any minority community, Scheduled Castes or the Backward Classes.

Background:

On August 6, 2019, Parliament read down Article 370 of the Constitution revoking the special status of J&K and bifurcated and downgraded the State into Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh; J&K with a legislative assembly.

J&K has been without a chief minister since June 2018.

1. According to requirements of the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, fresh elections will be held after the delimitation exercise is completed next year.

Implications of the new rules:

In the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, when it had special status, the chief minister was the most powerful person in the decision-making process.

With the new rules, CM has been reduced to an ornamental figure. He would not even have the power to transfer a constable of the Jammu & Kashmir Police.