

GOVERNANCE**O-SMART Scheme**

The Ocean Services, Modelling, Applications, Resources and Technology (O-SMART) Scheme was approved by the Union Cabinet in August 2018 and is implemented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Key Points

- It aims at stepping up ocean research and setting up early warning weather systems.
- It addresses ocean development activities such as services, technology, resources, observations and science and provides necessary scientific and technological background required for implementation of various aspects of Blue Economy.

Objectives:

- To generate and regularly update information on Marine Living Resources and their relationship with the physical environment in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- To periodically monitor levels of seawater pollutants for health assessment of coastal waters of India, to develop shoreline change maps for assessment of coastal erosion due to natural and anthropogenic activities.
- To develop a wide range of state-of-the-art ocean observation systems for the acquisition of real-time data from the seas around India and to cater to the testing and sea trial activities of ocean technology.
- To generate and disseminate a suite of user-oriented ocean information, advisories, warnings, data and data products for the benefit of society.
- To develop high-resolution models for ocean forecast and reanalysis systems.
- To develop algorithms for validation of satellite data for coastal research and to monitor changes in the coastal research.
- Acquisition of Coastal Research Vessels (CRVs) for coastal pollution monitoring, testing of various underwater components and technology demonstration and to support their operation and maintenance.
- To develop technologies to tap the marine bioresources, generate freshwater and ocean energy and develop underwater vehicles and technologies.
- **Establishment of Ballast water treatment facility.**
 - Ballast Water Discharge by ships is responsible for the introduction of invasive species in the oceans by taking water from one port and discharging it during the next port call.
- To carry out exploration of Polymetallic Nodules (MPN) from water depth of 5500 m in site of 75000 sq. km allotted to India by United Nations in Central Indian Ocean Basin, and to carry out investigations of gas hydrates.
- MPN, also called manganese nodules, are rock concretions formed of concentric layers of iron and manganese hydroxides around a core.
- MPN contain multiple metals like copper, nickel, cobalt, manganese, iron, lead, zinc, aluminium, silver, gold and platinum etc. in variable constitutions and are precipitate of hot fluids from upwelling hot magma from the deep interior of the oceanic crust.
- Mining for Polymetallic nodules is of strategic importance for India as there are no terrestrial sources of these metals in India.
- Exploration of polymetallic sulphides near Rodrigues Triple junction (convergence of Central Indian Ridge, the Southeast Indian Ridge, and the Southwest Indian Ridge) in 10000 sq. km of area allotted to India in International waters by International Seabed Authority.
- Submission of India's claim over continental shelf extending beyond the EEZ supported by scientific data, and the Topographic survey of EEZ of India.their employment.

COVID-19 infection in PVTGs

Six members of two Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (Bondas and Didiayis) in Odisha contracted Covid-19, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has sought a report from the state government and has termed it a "matter of grave concern".

- Also, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) from Andaman contracted Covid-19.

Key Points**Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group:**

The classification among tribes was adopted by the Government of India (GoI) after the Dhebar Commission (1960-1961) stated that within the Scheduled Tribes there existed an inequality in the rate of development.

During the 4th Five Year Plan (1969-74), a sub-category was created within Scheduled Tribes to identify groups at a lower level of development. This sub-category was called “Primitive tribal group”, which is now PVTG.

Criteria: A PVTG is a GoI classification for tribes based on their:

- Relative physical isolation,
- Stagnant or declining population,
- Low levels of literacy,
- Absence of written language,
- Pre-agricultural stage of economy, such as hunting, food gathering, shifting cultivation and terrace cultivation.

75 tribal groups have been categorized by the Ministry of Home Affairs as PVTGs.

The Ministry of **Tribal Affairs** implements the Scheme of 'Development of PVTGs' exclusively for them.

PVTGs in Odisha:

- Of the 62 tribal groups in Odisha, 13 are recognised as PVTGs - the highest in the country.
- Odisha has a population of 2.5 lakh belonging to the PVTGs.
- The PVTGs of the state have been identified as: Bonda, Birhor, Chuktia, Didayi, Dongaria Kandha, Juang, Kharia, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankirida, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora.
- Bondas and Didiayis Tribes: The Bondas and Didiayis are found in the Malkangiri district of the state, which shares its border with Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.
- The Bondas, scattered across 32 remote hilltop villages in the Eastern Ghats, are believed to have come to India as part of the first wave of migration out of Africa about 60,000 years ago.
- The Didayis - an Austro-Asiatic tribe - live in the immediate neighbourhood of the Bondas. The population of Didayis is 7,250 according to the 2011 Census. They live in the Konda Kamberu hills of Malkangiri.

Contracting Covid is a matter of grave concern: According to the 2018 newsletter of the Poverty and Human Development Monitoring Agency (PHDMA):

- **Low Health Status:** Diseases like upper respiratory problem and malaria, gastrointestinal disorders like acute diarrhoea and intestinal protozoa, micro nutrient deficiency, and skin infection are common among PVTGs.
- **Reasons:** Multiple factors like poverty, illiteracy, lack of safe drinking water, poor sanitary conditions, difficult terrain, malnutrition, poor access to maternal and child health care services, superstition, nonavailability of adequate health care services and deforestation.

Way Forward

In these testing times of Covid-19, the tribal population of both mainland India and Islands territory need proper attention. This must happen by respecting their way of living and providing ample opportunity while not interfering with their environment.

However, the role of the government lies in monitoring and providing basic facilities of food, health and water. Here, civil societies have a key role to play.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

International Day of Peace

Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on **21st September**.

- **Theme for 2020 : *Shaping Peace Together*.**

Key Points

- The United Nations (UN) General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire.

Background:

- The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly.
- In 2001, the General Assembly unanimously voted to designate the Day as a period of non-violence and cease-fire.

Other: The United Nations (UN) will celebrate its 75th anniversary on 24th October 2020.

Challenges to Global Peace:

- **Global Unrests:** Over 25 countries are facing deadly wars today. According to the World Population Review, 8 countries including Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Turkey, Somalia,

Iraq, Mexico and Libya suffered at least 1,000 deaths each (mainly civilians) through militarised attacks and battles in 2019.

- **Refugee Crisis:** According to the UN Refugee Agency, 79.5 million were displaced at the end of 2019, due to armed conflicts, persecution and other reasons.
- **Role of Global Powers:** The USA, Russia and China are required to uphold peace and international harmony being the permanent members of the UN Security Council. However, on the contrary, they have been found to fuel instability in order to achieve geopolitical hegemony.
- **Examples:**
 - The tragedy in Yemen, which the UN has declared as the world's worst humanitarian disaster, is the outcome of indiscriminate attacks by the U.S.-backed coalition of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, whose geopolitical goal is to counterbalance Iran.
 - Libya's descent into chaos is the product of the active involvement of mercenaries and weapons pumped in by Russia and the USA-allied Gulf Arab monarchies to push back Turkey's influence.
 - China's hegemonic expansionism against its neighbours and its 'new Cold War' with the U.S. have significantly raised risks of military clashes in Asia.
 - **Domestic Suppressions:** Domestic surveillance and repression with the use of technology is being used by countries to suppress dissenting voices.
 - **New Power Tussle:** The conflict and competition between the powerful countries, like the USA-China New Cold War is also going on, risking global peace.
 - **Pandemic Challenge:** Covid-19 has posed a new concern that may directly and indirectly affect the global peace through lack of access to resources, health and education, displacement etc.

Way Forward

On the International Day of Peace, the unjust structure which privileges great powers and permits their ghastly machinations should be diagnosed and challenged. Intellectuals, social movements and responsible states should prioritise struggling for an equitable world order.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT)

Recently, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has decided to use Infrastructure Investment Trust(s) (InvIT) as a vehicle for mobilising funds for constructing road infrastructure.

Key Points

Infrastructure Investment Trusts:

- InvITs are instruments that work like mutual funds. They are designed to pool small sums of money from a number of investors to invest in assets that give cash flow over a period of time. Part of this cash flow would be distributed as dividend back to investors.
- The minimum investment amount in an InvIT Initial Public Offering (IPO) is Rs 10 lakh, therefore, InvITs are suitable for high networth individuals, institutional and non-institutional investors.
- InvITs are listed on exchanges just like stocks — through IPOs.
- However, the Indian InvIT market is not yet mature and has supported the formation of 10 InvITs till date of which only two are listed.
- The InvITs listed on the stock exchange are IRB InvIT Fund and India Grid Trust.
- InvITs are regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014.

Structure of InvIT:

- Like mutual funds, they have a trustee, sponsor(s), investment manager and project manager.
- Trustee has the responsibility of inspecting the performance of an InvIT.
- Sponsor(s) are promoters of the company that set up the InvIT.
- Investment manager is entrusted with the task of supervising the assets and investments of the InvIT.
- Project manager is responsible for the execution of the project.

Need:

- In October 2017, the Centre had launched Bharatmala Pariyojana for the development of 24,800 km of roads at a total investment of Rs. 5,35,000 crore.

- In order to complete the projects, NHAI needs adequate funds and one of the options is to monetise the completed and operational National Highways assets and offer attractive schemes to private players to invest in construction of National Highways.

Benefit:

- At a time when private sector investment in the economy has declined, fund-raising by NHAI and spending on infrastructure will not only provide a fillip to the economy, but will also crowd-in private sector investment.
- NHAI's InvIT offer, which is expected to come soon, is a way for the government to tap alternative sources of financing to boost public spending in the roads and infrastructure sector.
- An InvIT also offers the company the leeway to fulfil its debt obligations quickly.
- InvIT holders also benefit from favourable tax norms, including exemption on dividend income and no capital gains tax if InvIT units are held for more than three years.

Safeguards for Investors:

- There are certain rules that the InvIT issuers have to follow designed to safeguard the investor.
- First, the sponsor has to hold a minimum 15% of the InvIT units with a lock-in period of three years.
- Second, InvITs have to distribute 90% of their net cash flows to investors.
- Lastly, the InvIT is required to invest a minimum of 80% in revenue generating infra assets.

AGRICULTURE

MSP Hike for Rabi crops

Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has marginally increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of six rabi crops for 2021-22.

- Rabi crops are agricultural crops that are sown in winter and harvested in the spring in India. Eg. wheat, barley, mustard etc.

Key Points

- MSP rates were hiked for wheat, barley, gram, masoor dal (lentil), safflower, and rapeseed and mustard.
- However, the MSP has seen a lower hike compared to 2020-21. The wheat MSP has seen an increase of just 2.6% — the lowest increase in 11 years.
- The increase in MSP is in line with the principle of fixing the MSPs at a level of at least 1.5 times of the All-India weighted average Cost of Production as announced in Union Budget 2018-19.
- The increase in MSP comes in the midst of a vehement protest by farmers, who fear that new agricultural marketing reforms will result in the phasing out of MSP and public procurement.

Issues with New Agricultural Reform

▪ **The farmers are protesting against the three Bills which includes:**

- Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020.
- Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020.
- Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

In short, the Bills aim to do away with government interference in agricultural trade by creating trading areas free of middlemen and government taxes outside the structure of Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs).

- They also aim to remove restrictions on private stock holding of agricultural produce.
- This according to farmers will give preference for corporate interests at the cost of farmers' interests and a lack of regulation in these non-APMC mandis are cause for concern for farmers.
- In the new system, companies will benefit as trading rates will not be under pressure of government procurement and they will be able to force farmers to reduce their rates.
- The absence of any regulation in non-APMC mandis is being seen as a precursor to the withdrawal of the guarantee of MSP-based procurement.
- These fears gain strength with the experience of States such as Bihar which abolished APMCs in 2006. After the abolition of mandis, farmers in Bihar on average received lower prices compared to the MSP for most crops.
- The government procurement also reduced significantly compared to other states.
- Government is relying on the market to realise better prices. However, recent data suggest limitations of market intervention in raising farm gate prices.

- For most crops where MSP-led procurement is non-existent, the decline has been sharper. Even cash crops such as cotton have seen a collapse in prices in the absence of government intervention.
- With rising input costs, farmers do not see the market providing them remunerative prices.
- The farmers also raise concern about the intent of the government to leave the price discovery mechanism on the market.
- It has time and again made ad hoc interventions, such as raising import duties on masur and a ban on onion exports.

Minimum Support Price

- The MSP is the rate at which the government buys grains from farmers.
- Reason behind the idea of MSP is to counter price volatility of agricultural commodities due to the factors like variation in their supply, lack of market integration and information asymmetry.
- **Fixation of MSP:** The MSP is fixed for 23 crops based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), Ministry of Agriculture.

Factors taken into consideration for fixing MSP include:

- Cost of cultivation,
- Demand and supply,
- Price trends in the market, both domestic and international,
- Inter-crop price parity,
- Terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture,
- A minimum of 50% as the margin over cost of production, and
- Likely implications of MSP (inflation) on consumers of that product.

The CACP also makes visits to states for on-the-spot assessment of the various constraints that farmers face in marketing their produce, or even raising the productivity levels of their crops.

- Based on all these inputs, the CACP then finalizes its recommendations/reports, which are then submitted to the government.
- The government, in turn, circulates the CACP reports to state governments and concerned Central Ministries for their comments.
- After receiving the feed-back from them, the CCEA of the Union government takes a final decision on the level of MSPs and other recommendations made by the CACP.
- **Procurement:** The Food Corporation of India (FCI), the nodal central agency of the Government of India, along with other State Agencies undertakes procurement of crops.

MSP Calculation: This MSP is usually estimated based on three types of calculation methods.

- **A2:** Under this, MSP is set 50% higher than the amount farmers spend on farming including spending on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and labour.
- **A2+FL:** It includes A2 plus an assigned value of unpaid family labour.
- **C2:** Under C2, the estimated land rent and the cost of interest on the money taken for farming are added on top of A2+FL.

The Central government had set up the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) in 2004 to address the issues of farmers in India including that of calculation of MSP.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Destination North-East-2020 Festival

The Ministry of Development of North-East Region (DoNER) has launched the logo and song for festival "Destination North East-2020".

Key Points

About the Festival:

Aim: To bring the rest of India closer to North East (NE) India.

Four-Day Event: It holds a special presentation of art and craft, textiles, ethnic products, tourism promotion etc. of the eight northeastern states.

Organisations Involved:

- **Ministry of Development of North-East Region:** It is responsible for the matters relating to the planning, execution and monitoring of development schemes and projects in the NE Region.
- **North Eastern Council (NEC):** It is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the NE Region which consists of the eight States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur,

Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. It was constituted in 1971 by an Act of Parliament.

- **NERCORMP:** North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP) is a livelihood and rural development project aimed to transform the lives of the poor and marginalized tribal families in NE India. It is a joint developmental initiative of the NEC, Ministry of DoNER and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to eradicating poverty and hunger in rural areas of developing countries. It is headquartered in Rome, Italy.

2020 Focus: The Emerging Delightful Destinations.

2020 Venue: Virtually from 27th to 30th September 2020.

The previous editions of the festival were held in Varanasi, Delhi and Chandigarh.

Importance of NE Region

- **Strategic Location:** The NE is strategically located with access to the traditional domestic market of eastern India, along with proximity to the major states in the east and adjacent countries such as Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- **Links with Southeast Asia:** With ASEAN engagement becoming a central pillar of India's foreign policy direction, NE states play an important role as the physical bridge between India and Southeast Asia.
- **Significant for India's Act East Policy:** The Act East Policy places the northeastern states on the territorial frontier of India's eastward engagement.
- **Economic Significance:** The NE has immense natural resources, accounting for around 34% of the country's water resources and almost 40% of India's hydropower potential.

❖ **Sikkim is India's first organic state.**

Tourism Potential: Northeast of India is home to many wildlife sanctuaries like Kaziranga National Park famous for the one horned rhinoceros, Manas National Park, Nameri, Orang, Dibru Saikhowa in Assam, Namdapha in Arunachal Pradesh, Balpakram in Meghalaya, Keibul Lamjao in Manipur, Intanki in Nagaland, Khangchendzonga in Sikkim.

Cultural Significance: Tribes in NE have their own culture. Popular festivals include Hornbill Festival of Nagaland, Pang Lhabsol of Sikkim, etc.

Government Initiatives for NE Region

North Eastern Region Vision 2020 document provides an overarching framework for the development of the NE Region to bring it at par with other developed regions under which different Ministries, including the Ministry of DoNER have undertaken various initiatives.

Digital North East Vision 2022 emphasises leveraging digital technologies to transform lives of people of the north east and enhance the ease of living

Infrastructure Related Initiatives:

- **Under Bharatmala Pariyojana (BMP),** roads stretches aggregating to about 5,301 km in NE have been approved for improvement.
- The North East has been kept as a priority area under RCS-UDAN.
- Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS-UDAN) has been launched to provide connectivity to unserved and underserved Airports within the country and to promote regional connectivity by making the airfare affordable through Viability Gap Funding (VGF).
- For Promoting Tourism: Under Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism, projects worth Rs.1400.03 crore have been sanctioned for the North East Region in the last five years.

Mission Purvodaya:

- Purvodaya in the steel sector is aimed at driving accelerated development of Eastern India through the establishment of an integrated steel hub.
- It is expected that out of the 300 MT capacity by 2030-31, over 200 MT can come from this region alone, driven by Industry 4.0.
- The Integrated Steel Hub, encompassing Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern Andhra Pradesh, would serve as a torchbearer for socio-economic growth of Eastern India.

The National Bamboo Mission has a special significance for the Northeast.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Public service must evolve to a level where probity becomes a way of life and honesty is a routine expectation. Comment. (250 words)

Ans.

- Probity stands for impeccable standards of morality in public life. It goes beyond financial honesty or non-corrupt behaviour. Probity means that public servants will take no undue advantage of any sort from their office.
- Honesty is being truthful and open. Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Probity and honesty in Governance seeks to fulfil the following purposes:

- Probity in Governance additionally elucidates that rather than the conventional civil service values of performance, integrity and patriotism, it's vital for civil officials to adopt as well as undertake ethical and integrity values, which includes respect for human rights, morality in public life and compassion for the downtrodden and dedication to their welfare.
- The two values preserve public confidence in Government processes, maintain integrity in public services, ensure accountability in governance, ensure compliance with processes, and seek to avoid the potential for misconduct, fraud and corruption.
- Creating credibility (Building trust): It helps a public servant to be trustworthy and get lots of respect in the career because honest people are really trusted by others.
- Building trust and confidence requires an environment where there is a premium on honesty, transparency, openness, boldness, fairness and justice.
- **Leadership:** If a leader is honest, sincere and committed to the task assigned to him, the vibes created percolate down the hierarchy cleansing the system that he controls.

How to inculcate the probity among the public servants:

Lack of probity in governance has become one of the biggest menaces to society. To inculcate probity & adherence to ethical practices among them certain strides could be taken:

- A dedicated unit to oversee violations of Code of ethics & Code of conduct by government officials be set up both at state and centre level.
- Information must be made accessible to the common public through websites.
- Mandatory declaration of assets and liabilities of government employees, accompanied by proper auditing.
- Establishment of Independent Anti-Corruption Agency
- Citizens Advisory Boards to incorporate ideas of the common public in improving governance.
- Mandatory Social Audit of all government programs, for example: Meghalaya has passed a law for social audit of government programs.
- An important requisite for ensuring probity in governance is absence of corruption. The other requirements are effective laws, rules and regulations governing every aspect of public life and, more important, an effective and fair implementation of those laws, etc
- Apart from laws and policies, the government should also focus on bringing behavioural change in government employees so that they can easily empathize with the problem of masses.

Conclusion

- Probity and honesty in governance are essential and vital requirements for an efficient and effective system of governance and for socio-economic development.
- Thus, it is an urgent need of the time that not only the public servants but the whole society adopts such values in their day to day life.

DAILY QUIZ

1. With reference to Shuchi Scheme, consider the following statements:
 1. It was initiated by the Madhya Pradesh Government.
 2. It is aimed at instilling awareness about menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls.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 Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA), consider the following statements:
 1. EPCA is constituted for taking various measures to tackle air pollution in metro cities.
 2. It can not take actions suo-moto for controlling vehicular pollution.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. Equinox means equal days and equal nights
 2. Equinoxes along with solstices signals the changing of the seasons.
 3. On the December solstice the sun is overhead at the tropic of Cancer.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) **1 and 2 only**
 - d) 1, 2 and 3
4. With reference to soil nutrients, consider the following statements:
 1. The primary macronutrients consist of Calcium, Magnesium and Sulfur.
 2. The standard ratio of primary macronutrients should be 4:2:1.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
5. With reference to 'Generation Unlimited (GenU)', consider the following statements:
 1. It is a multi-stakeholder platform to make young people career ready.
 2. It was launched by UNICEF.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