

**GOVERNANCE****DAY-NRLM Special Package for J&K and Ladakh**

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved a special package worth Rs. 520 crore in the Union Territories (UTs) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh for a period of five years under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM).

**Key Points**

- The decision is in line with Centre's aim to universalise all centrally sponsored beneficiary-oriented schemes in J&K and Ladakh in a time-bound manner.
- The package has been approved for a period of five years till the financial year 2023-24 and it has been decided to ensure funding on a demand-driven basis without linking allocation with poverty ratio during the extended period.
- Around two-third rural women from the UTs will be covered and 10.58 lakh women will get the benefit from the special package.
- The step was based on the outcomes of an evaluation pointing to the potential of the Mission to improve the quality of life of rural households and women empowerment under the changed circumstances in the UTs of J&K and Ladakh.
- Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission
- It is a centrally sponsored programme, launched by the Ministry of Rural Development in June 2011.

**Aim:**

- To eliminate rural poverty through the promotion of multiple livelihoods and improved access to financial services for the rural poor households across the country.
- To reach out to all rural poor households and impact their livelihoods.

**Functioning:**

- It involves working with community institutions through community professionals in the spirit of self-help which is a unique proposition of DAY-NRLM.
- It impacts the livelihoods through universal social mobilization by inter alia organising one-woman member from each rural poor household into Self Help Groups (SHGs), their training and capacity building, facilitating their micro-livelihoods plans, and enabling them to implement their livelihoods plans through accessing financial resources from their own institutions and the banks.

**Implementation:**

- It is implemented in a Mission mode by special purpose vehicles (autonomous state societies) with dedicated implementation support units at the national, state, district and block levels, using professional human resources in order to provide continuous and long-term handholding support to each rural poor family.

**Support Provided:**

- There were 63 lakh SHGs comprising seven crore women members in the country which had been granted Rs. 3 lakh crore in loans and the non-performing assets (NPA) amounted to only 2.3%.
- The outstanding loans were to the tune of Rs. 1 lakh crore.
- The government plans to take the scheme to 10 crore women.

**Pulse Release from Buffer Stocks**

The Union government plans to release 40,000 tonnes of tur dal from its buffer stock into the retail market in small lots, in a bid to cool down the recent hike in pulses prices.

**Key Points****Hiking Prices:**

- Major consuming centres (Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Bihar and Tamil Nadu) of urad and tur dal have seen a 20% spike in prices over the last two weeks alone.
- These states have expressed an interest in buying one lakh tonnes of pulses from the Central buffer stock at the MSP rates to sell at subsidised prices.
- At an all-India level, the average retail prices of urad have shot up almost 40% in comparison to 2019, while the average retail prices of tur dal have increased by almost 24%.

**Retail Intervention:**

- The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) has introduced retail intervention, a mechanism to use the buffer stock of the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED).
- NAFED procures pulses from farmers at Minimum Support Price (MSP) rates to moderate retail prices by supplying pulses to the States and the Union Territories.

- The States are supplied pulses either in bulk or in retail packs for supply through the ration shops of the Public Distribution System (PDS), or through milk and vegetable outlets run by the government or cooperatives.
- For such retail intervention, offer prices are fixed on the basis of MSP itself.
- This move will also help clear NAFED's existing stock to make way for procurement from this season's harvest, due to arrive in markets soon.
- Using Open Market Sale:
- Apart from the retail intervention, the DoCA has also decided to release 40,000 metric tonnes of tur from the buffer stock in Open Market Sale (OMS) Scheme in small lots so that the releases may reach the retail market at a faster pace and help in cooling off rising prices.

**Earlier Measures:**

- The Centre extended the procurement window for its Price Support Scheme (PSS) up to 90 days from the date of commencement of the scheme in each State.
- The PSS is operationalised on the State governments' request when the prices fall below the MSP.
- The Centre promised to provide one kg of pulses per month to all families with ration cards for the three months as part of a Covid-19 relief package (Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana).

**National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India**

- It is registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.
- It was set up in 1958 with the objective to promote cooperative marketing of agricultural produce to benefit the farmers.
- Agricultural farmers are the members of the General Body of NAFED, who participate in the decision-making process.

**Minimum Support Price**

- It is the rate at which the government buys grains from farmers.
- The reason behind the idea is to counter the price volatility of agricultural commodities due to the factors like variations in the supply, lack of market integration and information asymmetry.
- It is fixed on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

**Open Market Sale Scheme**

- Food Corporation of India (FCI) sells surplus stocks of wheat and rice at predetermined prices through e-auction in the open market from time to time to enhance the supply of food grains.
- It is done especially during the lean season to moderate the open market prices in the deficit regions.

**Way Forward**

- Food and nutrition security is ensured if all of the citizens of a nation have enough nutritious food available, all of them have the capacity to buy food of acceptable quality and there is no barrier on access to food.
- The right to nutritious food is a well-established principle of international human rights law. It has evolved to include an obligation for state parties to respect, protect and fulfil their citizens' right to food and nutrition security.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojna**

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched the second phase of "Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojna" for the underprivileged Thalassemic patients.

**Key Points**

- The Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation (HSCT) program was launched in 2017 and is funded by Coal India Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It will be extended for next two years from 2020.
- HSCT refers to the transplantation of stem cells from various sources (bone marrow, growth factor-stimulated peripheral blood, and umbilical cord blood) for the treatment of various diseases like autoimmune, and genetic diseases.
- **Hematopoietic Stem Cell:** It is an immature cell that can develop into all types of blood cells, including white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. Hematopoietic stem cells are found in the peripheral blood and the bone marrow. Also called blood stem cell.
- **Objective:** It aims to provide a one-time cure opportunity for Haemoglobinopathies like Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Disease for patients who have a matched family donor.

- **Eligibility:** Only patients whose monthly family income is below Rs 20,000 will be eligible for this assistance.
- The scheme has been extended to cover Aplastic Anaemia patients (lack of blood cell production in body).
- **Funding:** The CSR initiative was targeted to provide financial assistance to a total of 200 patients by providing a package cost not exceeding rupees 10 lakhs per HSCT.
- **Statistics:** It is estimated 10,000 to 12,000 children are born with thalassemia every year in India.
- Data on the prevalence of silent carriers (persons without symptoms but potential to transmit to offsprings) for various Haemoglobinopathies show that silent carriers are 2.9-4.6% for Thalassemia, while it can be as high as 40% for sickle cell anaemia especially among the tribal population.
- Haemoglobin variants like Hemoglobin E (HBE) - deformed hemoglobin- in eastern India can be as common as 3-50% which calls for more attention to these diseases.

### **Thalassemia**

It is a genetic blood disorder that causes the body to have less hemoglobin than normal. Hemoglobin enables red blood cells to carry oxygen. Thalassemia can cause anemia, leading to fatigue.

### **Sickle Cell Disease**

- It is an inherited disease caused by defects, called mutations, in the beta globin gene that helps make hemoglobin. The red blood cells become hard and sticky and look like a C-shaped farm tool called a "sickle". The sickle cells die early, which causes a constant shortage of red blood cells.
- World Sickle Cell Day 2020 was observed to increase awareness about the Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) at the national level.
- The day is recognised by the United Nations and celebrated every year on 19th June.

## **INDIAN ECONOMY**

### **India's Public debt ratio**

As per the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India's public debt ratio is projected to jump by 17 percentage points to almost 90% because of an increase in public spending due to Covid-19.

- India's public debt ratio has remained stable at about 70% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since 1991.

### **Key Points**

#### **Increase in Public Debt Ratio:**

- The increase in public spending, in response to Covid-19, and the fall in tax revenue and economic activity, will make the public debt ratio jump by 17 percentage points.
- The ratio is projected to stabilise in 2021, before slowly declining up to the end of the projection period, in 2025.
- The pattern of public debt in India is close to the norm around the world.
- This debt-to-GDP ratio is the metric comparing a country's public debt to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is often expressed as a percentage.
- By comparing what a country owes (debt) with what it produces (GDP), the debt-to-GDP ratio reliably indicates a particular country's ability to pay back its debts.
- A country with a high debt-to-GDP ratio typically has trouble paying off public debts.
- Assessment of Fiscal situation (relating to taxation, public spending, or public debt):
- India has been an important source of growth in the world since the 1991 economic liberalisation reforms.
- Real GDP growth averaged 6.5% between 1991 to 2019, and real GDP per capita was multiplied by four over that period.
- Real GDP is calculated in a way such that the goods and services are evaluated at some constant set of prices. Nominal GDP, on the other hand, is simply the value of GDP at the current prevailing prices.
- This impressive growth performance helped lift millions of people out of extreme poverty.
- The extreme poverty rate, measured as the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.90 a day at purchasing power parity (the international poverty line), fell from 45% in 1993 to 13% by 2015.

- India achieved the millennium development goal of halving poverty by 2015 (from its 1990 level).
- India has made astonishing progress in other areas. Education enrollment is nearly universal for primary school. Infant mortality rates have been halved since 2000. Access to water and sanitation, electricity, and roads has been greatly improved.

**Way Forward**

- In the near-term, additional fiscal action should be deployed as needed to support the poor and the vulnerable. This should be accompanied by a credible medium-term fiscal consolidation plan that can reinforce market confidence and structural reforms that boost India's growth potential.
- The effects of Covid-19 on health, education, poverty and nutrition render progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals even more urgent. Macroeconomic and financial stability are important necessary conditions for sustainable development.

**ENVIRONMENT AND DIVERSITY****Third Assembly of ISA**

Recently, India and France have been re-elected as the President and Co-President of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) for a term of two years at the virtual third Assembly of ISA.

- The first two assemblies were held in India in 2018 and 2019.

**Key Points**

- The Assembly approved institutionalising ISA's engagement with the private and public corporate sector through the Coalition for Sustainable Climate Action (CSCA).
- Various solar awards were conferred on countries as well as institutions.

The Visvesvaraya award recognises the countries with a maximum floating solar capacity in each of the four regions of ISA, which are:

- Asia Pacific Region.
- Africa Region.
- Europe and others Region.
- Latin America and Caribbean Region.

The Kalpana Chawla award for outstanding contribution of scientists and engineers working in the field of solar energy.

- The Diwakar award recognises organisations and institutions that have been working for the benefit of differently-abled people and have maximised the use of solar energy in the host country.
- The Assembly was presented the report prepared by the World Resources Institute (WRI) which identifies the sources of funds, opportunities and constraints, in scaling up solar investments and the contribution of ISA in assisting Member countries.
- The ISA will work with WRI to develop a roadmap for mobilisation of USD 1 trillion by 2030.
- In the wake of the global pandemic, ISA responded by setting up ISA CARES (like PM-CARES in India), an initiative dedicated to the deployment of solar energy in the healthcare sector.
- The initiative aims to solarize one primary health sector in each district of the target member countries.
- The ISA Secretariat has launched a Seventh Programme on Solarising Heating and Cooling systems.
- Demand for cooling alone outpaced solar deployment in 2017.
- Heating and cooling systems have scope to directly convert solar radiation and at higher efficiency levels.
- SAARC Development Fund's technical assistance along with the ISA Technical Assistance is proposed to be implemented jointly with the Asian Development Bank.
- The ISA has recently signed a tripartite agreement with the World Bank and the Government of India and is now actively involved in preparing a vision and implementation plan for "One Sun, One World, One Grid" Initiative to harness the power of interconnected grids for enabling energy transition to a low-carbon world.

**India's Perspective and Highlights:**

- The President of the ISA Assembly, India's Power and New and Renewable Energy Minister appreciated the Alliance Members coming together to work for combating climate change.
- He also highlighted various activities and programmes initiated by ISA since the 2nd Assembly like the development of a pipeline of more than USD 5 billion, aggregated demand for more than 270,000 solar pumps across 22 countries, etc.

**France's Role:**

- France has committed 1.5 billion Euros for financing solar projects in ISA member states up until 2022.
- The first project under the Solar Risk Mitigation Initiative (SRMI) is being launched in Mozambique with the support of France and the European Union (EU).
- SRMI will help mobilise billions in private investment to finance more than 10 GWs of solar projects.
- In the frame of the ISA's Solar Technology Application Resource Centre (Star-C) programme, the French National Institute for Solar Energy (INES) will launch a specific program for the small island states of the Pacific.

**International Solar Alliance**

- It 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.
- **Objective:** To collectively address key common challenges to the scaling up of solar energy in ISA member countries.
- Members: Till now, 87 countries have signed the Framework Agreement of the ISA and of these 67 have deposited their instruments of ratification.
- Nicaragua, a Central American country is the 87th and the latest country to sign the agreement.
- 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 2021-22.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

**Pakistan Re-elected to the UNHRC**

- Pakistan is currently serving on the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) since 1st January, 2018. With its re-election, Pakistan will continue as a member for another three-year term commencing on 1st January, 2021
- A total of Fifteen countries were elected to the 47-nation council. Russia and Cuba were elected unopposed. Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Nepal and China were elected from the Asia-Pacific region.

**Key Points**

- Pakistan has been re-elected despite opposition from activist groups over its abysmal human rights records. This is the fifth time that Pakistan has been elected to the UNHRC.
- According to the British Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report titled 'Human Rights and Democracy', there were serious human rights concerns and violations in Pakistan in 2019, including restrictions on civic space and freedom of expression, intolerance and direct and open discrimination towards minorities.

**Concerns:**

- Countries with Dubious Record: With a number of countries with questionable rights records being elected, the current system of entry to UNHRC is in serious need of reform.
- The election of states such as China and Russia "damages the reputation of the HRC, its standing within the international human rights committee and beyond".
- Non-competitive Elections: Problem of election without opposition.
- For example, the Eastern European group had two available seats but only two countries were nominated to fill those positions, meaning there was no competition for the spots.
- Except for the Asia-Pacific contest, the election of 15 members to the 47-member Human Rights Council was decided in advance because all the other regional groups had unopposed states.

**The Other View:**

- Electing nations with dubious human rights records has some positives.
- There is a silver lining to repressive countries being elected to the council – their position as the supposed guardian of human rights makes it far more difficult for them to hide their own human rights abuses.

**United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**

- It was established in 2006.
- Headquarter: Geneva, Switzerland
- **Aim:** Promoting and protecting human rights around the globe, as well as investigating alleged human rights violations.

- **Features:** The UNHRC has 47 members elected for staggered three-year terms on a regional group basis from 5 groups.
- **Membership:** To become a member, a country must receive the votes of at least 96 of the 191 states of the UN General Assembly (an absolute majority).
- According to Resolution 60/251, which created the council, members are elected directly by secret ballot by the majority of the UN General Assembly. Membership has to be equally distributed geographically.
- **Five regional groups for membership:** Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Western Europe and Eastern Europe.
- The members are elected for a period of three years, with a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- **Sessions:** The UNHRC holds regular sessions three times a year, in March, June, and September.
- The council also carries out the Universal Periodic Review of all UN member states, which allows civil society groups to bring accusations of human rights violations in member states to the attention of the UN.

#### Way Forward

- The USA withdrew from the UNHRC in 2018 citing its ineffectiveness and bias. For India it is a testing time as Pakistan got re-elected despite dubious status regarding human rights.
- However, India's commitment towards respecting institutions of global governance mandates to have a critical voice against some events instead of quitting the membership without reasons backed by principles.

#### IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

#### Madhuca diplostemon : Rediscovered in Kerala

Recently, Madhuca diplostemon tree has been rediscovered after a gap of more than 180 years from a sacred grove in Kollam district, Kerala.



#### Key Points

- The tree is locally known as Kavilippa in Malayalam.
- It has been identified by the scientists at the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI) at Palode, Kerala.
- The threatened species of the Western Ghats was believed to be extinct.
- This is the second time a tree of this species has ever been located and only one mature tree has been found so far, which makes this remarkable rediscovery extremely valuable from a scientific, environmental and conservation point of view.
- In 1835, Robert Wight, a surgeon-botanist with the East India Company, found the first specimen.
- Since its original collection, specimens of the tree were never collected again, neither from its locality nor elsewhere, and botanical explorations in Eastern and Western Ghats failed to locate the species.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has included it in the endangered species list.
- However, since there is only one specimen left in a single locality, it is eligible to be categorised as '**Critically Endangered**'.

- The JNTBGRI is planning to undertake the ex-situ conservation of this species through the institute's species recovery programme.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Urbanization has long been associated with human development and progress but it has been observed that urban setting can also lead to significant inequalities and health problems. Discuss the statement .(250 words)**

**Ans.**

Urbanization refers to the mass movement of populations from rural to urban settings and the consequent physical changes to urban settings. In 2019, the United Nations estimated that more than half the world's population now lives in urban areas and by 2041, this figure will increase to 6 billion people.

- Over 34% of India's current population lives in urban areas (UN World Urbanisation Prospects Report 2018). It has expanded rapidly as an increasing number of people migrate to towns and cities in search of economic opportunity.

**Urbanisation is associated with human development and progress**

- Urbanization has the potential to augment economic activity, provide employment opportunities and enhance access to basic services.
- Throughout history, cities have been the main centres of learning, culture and innovation. It is not surprising that the world's most urban countries tend to be the richest and have the highest human development.
- Ongoing rapid urbanisation has the potential to improve the well-being of societies.
- Although only around half the world's people live in cities, they generate more than 80 percent of Global Domestic Product (GDP).
- Cities are also younger: home to relatively more young and working-age adults than rural areas, making them pivotal places to capture demographic dividends.
- However, urbanization can turn cities into places of deprivation, inequality and exclusion.

**Issues associated with urbanization**

- **Poor nutritional health:** Urbanization has a major negative impact on the nutritional health of poor populations. The urban people sometimes lack balanced diets and this leads to malnourishment.
- **Obesity:** People in urbanized areas of developing countries are vulnerable to obesity due to lack of physical space, continually sitting in workplaces, and excessive energy intake and low energy expenditure.
- **Urban Crimes:** Crime rates in urban areas are rising especially human trafficking, sexual assault, child labour etc.
- **Proliferation of Slums:** Due to poor infrastructure and rising cost of living in urban areas, the poor people are forced to live in slums. The number of slums have been rising from the past few years. The largest slum of Asia, Dharavi is located in Mumbai, India.
- **Pollution:** Pollution is another major contributor to poor health in urban environments. For instance, the World Health Organization estimated that 6.5 million people died (11.6% of all global deaths) as a consequence of indoor and outdoor air pollution and nearly 90% of air-pollution-related deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Waste generation:** Due to rising migration and population in urban areas, waste generated has been increasing exponentially which is posing a serious health problem.

**Way forward**

- Although urbanization has become an irreversible phenomenon, we must tackle the root causes of the problem, such as improving the socio-economic situation of the urban poor.
- Some examples of policies and practices that should be considered include
- Policies addressing urban environmental issues, such as planned urban space and taxes on the use of vehicles to reduce use or to encourage vehicles that use less fuel as well as encourage bicycle use, walking, and other forms of human transportation;
- Greater cooperative planning between rural and urban regions to improve food security e.g., subsidies for farmers providing locally produced, unprocessed and low cost food to urban centers.
- Social protection and universal health coverage to reduce wealth disparity among urban dwellers; including introduction of programs and services for health,
- For example by establishing primary healthcare clinics accessible and affordable for all including those living in urban slums

**Conclusion**

Until the conditions in rural areas improve, populations will continue to migrate to urban settings. The governments and development agencies should concentrate on adapting to the challenges of urbanization, while seeking to reduce unplanned urbanization.

**DAILY QUIZ**

1. With reference to Hologram Imaging, consider the following statements:

1. These are three-dimensional images.
2. They are generated by interference and diffraction of laser beams.
3. It can be used to detect viruses and antibodies.

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**

2. Consider the following statements:

1. The habitat of one-horned rhinoceros is restricted to North-East India only.
2. The one-horned rhinoceros is listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.
3. The National Rhino Conservation Strategy was launched in 2005 to conserve the greater one-horned rhinoceros.

Which of the statements given above is/ are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) **2 only**
- d) 1, 2 and 3

3. With reference to Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Livelihoods Mission, which of the following is/are correct?

1. It provides for organising one-woman members from each rural poor household into Self Help Groups.
2. It is a Central Sector Scheme.
3. It is implemented by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) **1 only**
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 2 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

4. With reference to Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS), consider the following statements:

1. It is the selling of foodgrains by Government agencies at predetermined prices in the open market.
2. It is done by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED).

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 the Madhuca Diplostemon, recently in news, consider the following statements:

1. It is a species of non-flowering plant which has been listed as critically endangered in the IUCN Red List.
2. The tree species was long believed to be extinct and has been rediscovered after a gap of 184 years.
3. The tree was discovered by the Forest Research Institute.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) **2 only**
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3