

**GOVERNANCE****National Legal Services Day**

The National Legal Services Day is celebrated on 9th November every year to spread awareness for ensuring reasonable fair and justice procedure for all citizens.

**Key Points**

- National Legal Services Day (NLSD) was first started by the Supreme Court of India in 1995 to provide help and support to poor and weaker sections of the society.
- Free legal services are provided in matters before Civil, Criminal and Revenue Courts, Tribunals or any other authority exercising judicial or quasi judicial functions.

**In line with Constitutional Provisions:**

- Article 39A of the Constitution of India provides that State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disability.
- Articles 14 and 22(1) also make it obligatory for the State to ensure equality before law and a legal system which promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity to all.

**Objectives of Legal Services Authorities are:**

- Provide free legal aid and advice.
- Spread legal awareness.
- Organise lok adalats.
- Promote settlements of disputes through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanisms. Various kinds of ADR mechanisms are Arbitration, Conciliation, Judicial settlement including settlement through Lok Adalat, or Mediation.
- Provide compensation to victims of crime.

**Legal Services Institutions for providing Free Legal Services**

- National Level : National Legal Services Authority. The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) was constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief.
- State Level : State Legal Services Authority. It is headed by the Chief Justice of the State High Court who is its Patron-in-Chief.
- District Level : District Legal Services Authority. The District Judge of the District is its ex-officio Chairman.
- Taluka/Sub-Division Level : Taluka/ Sub-Divisional Legal Services Committee. It is headed by a senior Civil Judge.
- High Court : High Court Legal Services Committee
- Supreme Court : Supreme Court Legal Services Committee

**Way Forward**

- It can be noted that the role played by NALSA and its networks is very much relevant to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal-16, which seeks to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".

**INDIAN ECONOMY****Four Years of Demonetisation**

8th November 2020 marked the four year anniversary of demonetisation, when Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes were withdrawn from the system in 2016.

- Demonetisation: It is the act of stripping a currency unit of its status as legal tender. It occurs whenever there is a change of national currency and the current form or forms of money is pulled from circulation and retired, often to be replaced with new notes or coins.

**Key Points****Objectives of Demonetisation:**

- To discourage the use of high-denomination notes for illegal transactions and thus curb the widespread use of black money.
- To encourage digitisation of commercial transactions, formalise the economy and so, boost government tax revenues.

- The formalisation of the economy means bringing companies under the regulatory regime of government and subject to laws related to manufacturing and income tax.

**Operation Clean Money:**

- It was launched by the Income Tax Department (CBDT) for e-verification of large cash deposits made during the period from 9th November to 30th December 2016.
- The programme was launched on 31st January 2017 and entered into the second phase in May 2017.
- It aimed to verify cash transaction status (exchange/savings of banned notes) of taxpayers during the demonetisation period and to take tax enforcement action if transactions do not match the tax status.

**Impact of the Move:**

- Currency with public stood at Rs. 17.97 lakh crore on 4th November 2016 and declined to Rs 7.8 lakh crore in January 2017 after demonetisation.
- Currency with Public: As per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) definition, currency with public is arrived at after deducting cash with banks from total currency in circulation.
- Currency in Circulation: It refers to cash or currency within a country that is physically used to conduct transactions between consumers and businesses.
- Demands fell, businesses faced a crisis and gross domestic product (GDP) growth declined nearly 1.5%, with many small units and shops being shut down and it also created a liquidity shortage.
- Liquidity shortages or crises arise when financial institutions and industrial companies scramble for, and cannot find the cash they require to meet their most urgent needs or undertake their most valuable projects.

**Current Trends:**

- Currency with Public: On 23rd October 2020, the currency with the public stood at a record high of Rs. 26.19 lakh crore, up 45.7% from November 2016.
- The pace of rise in currency with the public has been very sharp over the last 10 months as it has risen from Rs. 21.79 lakh crore as on 3rd January 2020 to the current number in October 2020.
- The hike was mainly driven by a rush for cash by the public between March and May amidst the stringent lockdowns to tackle the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- It shows that the cash in the system has been steadily rising, even though the government and the RBI had pushed for a less-cash society, digitisation of payments and slapped restrictions on the use of cash in various transactions.
- Digitisation: According to an RBI study on digital payments, although digital payments have been growing gradually in recent years, both in value and volume terms across countries, currency in circulation to GDP ratio has increased in consonance with the overall economic growth.
- Tax Revenues: Along with demonetisation, the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act 2016 and Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016 encouraged compliance such that the number of income tax returns and the number of income tax filers grew at a healthy rate in 2017 and 2018.
- Counterfeit Currency: In the year 2015-16, more than 4 lakh fake notes of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 were captured. This number reduced to 45,400 fake notes of Rs. 500 and Rs. 2,000 in 2018-19. However, the number of fake notes among the new design notes of Rs. 500 more than doubled with an increase of 121% whereas those of Rs. 2000 increased by 21.9% over the previous year during 2018-19, according to the annual report of RBI.
- Terrorism: It was believed that stopping the high-value currency from circulating will restrict funds used for terrorist activities which will gradually decrease the terrorist activities in the country. But, on the contrary, the number of such incidences rose in the years 2016, 2017, and 2018, compared to 2015.
- While 728 people died in terrorist activities in 2015; the number of casualties rose to 905, 812, and 940 in such activities in 2016, 2017, and 2018, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) data.

**Way Forward**

- Demonetisation was an expeditious move to boldly counter the black money and parallel economy (illegal economy, such as money laundering, smuggling, etc.) threat with visible impact on how the government's policies are perceived in international circles of economic power.
- This move by the government achieved larger significance for a globally connected India as it showed boldness in tackling an issue which has remained a thorn in the growth success story of this generation.

**ENVIRONMENT AND DIVERSITY****Petition for Declaring ESA Unconstitutional**

Recently, a Kerala-based NGO for farmers has moved the Supreme Court (SC) to declare the draft notification on the Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) unconstitutional.

- It has sought a direction to the government to not implement the Madhav Gadgil and Kasturirangan committees' reports on the conservation of the Western Ghats.

**Key Points****Background:**

- The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), also known as Gadgil Committee, and the Kasturirangan Committee, a High-Level Working Group, were constituted to conserve and protect the biodiversity of Western Ghats while allowing for sustainable and inclusive development of the region.
- They recommended that identified geographical areas falling in the six States of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu should be declared as ESA.
- A draft notification related to the same was issued in 2018 mentioning the areas to be notified in the ESA.

**Issues Highlighted by the Petition:**

- The draft notification would declare 123 agricultural villages in Kerala as ESA converting the semi-urban villages in the region into forests with no facilities and roads. It will affect 22 lakh people and cripple the economy of Kerala.
- The Centre had wrongly branded people who had been residing in the Western Ghats area, as the "destroyers of the biodiversity and agents of ecological damage."
- Apart from that, it suggested that ESA in Kerala should be restricted to reserved forests and protected areas.

**Gadgil Committee:**

- It recommended that all of the Western Ghats should be declared as the ESA with only limited development allowed in graded zones.
- It classified the Western Ghats into ESA 1, 2 and 3 of which ESA-1 is a high priority zone where almost all of the developmental activities (mining, thermal power plants, etc) should be restricted.
- It also recommended the constitution of Western Ghats Ecology Authority (WGEA), as a statutory authority under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) with the powers under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- It was criticised for being more environment-friendly and not in tune with the ground realities.

**Kasturirangan Committee:**

- It sought to balance the development and environment protection in contrast to the system proposed by the Gadgil report.

**The committee's major recommendations were:**

- Instead of the total area of Western Ghats, only 37% of the total area to be brought under ESA.
- A complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in ESA.
- No thermal power projects to be allowed and hydropower projects to be allowed only after detailed study.
- Red industries (highly polluting industries) to be strictly banned.
- Exclusion of inhabited regions and plantations from the purview of ESAs making it a pro-farmer approach.

**Ecologically Sensitive Areas**

- Eco-Sensitive Zones or Ecologically Fragile Areas are located within 10 km of Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

- ESAs are notified by the MoEFCC under Environment (Protection) Act 1986.
- Aim: To regulate certain activities around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries so as to minimise the negative impacts on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.

#### **Way Forward**

- The matter pertains to the debate of 'Development versus Conservation', which highlights that destruction in the name of development should not be encouraged and sustainable development should be given priority.
- A proper analysis based on scientific study followed by consensus among various stakeholders by addressing respective concerns is required to solve the differences in a timely manner.
- Delays in implementation will only accentuate degrading of the prized natural resources of the country hence, with a holistic view of threats and demands on the forest land, products and services, devising strategies must be developed to address them.

### **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

#### **Impact of US Election Results on India**

**Joseph Robinette Biden Jr.** has defeated Donald Trump to become the 46th US President.

Biden's running mate Kamala Devi Harris has become the first woman and first Indian- and African-American Vice President of the country. Biden and Harris will be sworn into office on 20th January 2021.

- The US has a Presidential System, whereas India has the Parliamentary System of Government.
- There are several ways in which the US economy, its health and the policy choices of its government affect India. Both the countries recently had 2+2 dialogue.

#### **US Presidential System**

- The US President is both the head of the State and head of the Government.
- The law making is done by the legislature (called the Congress in the US), but the President can veto any law.
- S/he has a fixed tenure of four years and completes it even if her/his party does not have a majority in the Congress.
- The President and the Vice President are chosen by 'electors' through a process called the Electoral College.
- The presidential candidate of each of the political parties, chooses a vice presidential running mate. Voters vote on the two—presidential and vice presidential candidates—as a team.
- The President can be removed for conviction of treason, bribery, or other high crimes or misdemeanor.

#### **Indian Parliamentary System**

- There is a President who is the formal Head of the state of India and the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers, which run the government at the national level.
- The Constitution of India vests the executive power of the Union formally in the President. In reality, the President exercises these powers through the Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister.
- The Prime Minister has the support of majority in the Lok Sabha.
- The President is elected for a period of five years. S/he is elected indirectly. This means that the President is elected not by the ordinary citizens but by the elected MLAs and MPs.
- The President can be removed only for 'violation of the Constitution' (impeachment procedure).

#### **Key Points**

- Economic Relations: Under Biden administration, India's trade with the US could recover from the dip since 2017-18.
- Trade Surplus: A recent analysis by experts of CARE Ratings (a credit rating agency) shows that over the past 20 years, India has always had a trade surplus (exports exceeding imports) with the US.
- The trade surplus has widened from USD 5.2 billion in 2001-02 to USD 17.3 billion in 2019-20. Trade surplus had peaked at USD 21.2 billion in 2017-18 and has moderated to some extent.

- In 2019-20, India exported goods worth USD 53 billion to the US - that's roughly 17% of all Indian exports that year and imported goods worth USD 35.7 billion in return - that's roughly 7.5% of all Indian imports.
- Trade in Services: India accounts for nearly 5% of USA's services imports from the World.

**Investment:**

- The US is the fifth-biggest source for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI - investment in the physical assets inside India) into India. Only Mauritius, Singapore, Netherlands, and Japan have invested more FDI since 2000.
- The US also accounts for one-third of all Foreign Portfolio Investments (that is, investment in financial assets) into India.
- H1-B Visa Issue: How a US President looks at the H1-B visa issue, affects the prospects of Indian youth far more than the youth of any other country.
- Under President Trump, who severely curtailed the visa regime, owing to his policy of "America First", India had suffered the most.
- H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows American companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.
- US' Generalized System of Preference: India's exclusion from the US' Generalized System of Preference (GSP) could come up for reconsideration under Biden.
- In 2019, President Donald Trump had terminated India's designation as a beneficiary developing nation under the GSP trade programme after determining that it has not assured the US that it will provide "equitable and reasonable access" to its markets.
- India was the largest beneficiary of the programme in 2017 with USD 5.7 billion in imports to the US given duty-free status.
- GSP is designed to promote economic development by allowing duty-free entry for thousands of products from designated beneficiary countries.
- Other Issues: Other points of contention between India and US - such as the tricky issue of data localisation or capping prices of medicines and medical devices - have a chance of getting towards a resolution.
- Further, under the Trump administration, the US sanctions on Iran severely limited India's sourcing of cheap crude oil.
- On China, it is more likely that a Biden administration will help India against China, instead of clubbing the two together.
- Paris Climate Accord: Biden has promised to rejoin the Paris Climate Accord, and this may help countries such as India in dealing with the massive challenges - both technical and financial - on this front.

**Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights in India:**

- Although some US Congressmen and women had raised red flags on the human rights situation following the revoking of J&K's special status under Article 370 and passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act alongside the proposed nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC), the Trump administration had not taken any actions beyond making some perfunctory statements.
- According to the Biden campaign's policy paper, Biden has been "disappointed by the measures that the Government of India has taken with the implementation and aftermath of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam and the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act into law".

**Way Forward**

- India should be prepared to hold its own in tough conversations on sensitive issues. A Biden presidency may see a renewed push towards a rules-based trading system across the world - instead of outright ad-hocism as was the case under Trump - as well as a move away from the protectionist approach that has been getting strong across the world.
- Combined with the control of Covid infections and the economic recovery, the US could yet again provide a growth impulse to the global economy that countries such as India need to boost their exports and grow.

**INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE****Warli Art**

Artists in Hyderabad are using traditional Warli art (Maharashtra) form not just to beautify Hyderabad, but also to create awareness on important issues.

**Key Points**

- Warli is a traditional art form of Maharashtra.
- Its roots can be traced to as early as the 10th century A.D.
- These paintings are distinctive with their vivid contrast expressions.
- These paintings are mainly dominated by basic geometric shapes like circles, triangles and squares.
- These geometric shapes stand as a symbol of natural elements in our environment.
- For example, the circles represent the sun and moon, the triangles represent the mountains and the squares are considered as the central motifs of the painting.
- People and animals are represented by two inverted triangles joined together, where the upper triangle is the torso and the lower triangle is the pelvis.
- The central theme of the paintings are scenes portraying huntin, fishing, farming, festival and dances, trees and animals are used to surround the central theme.
- Warli art form is being used by many artists to beautify cities and spread awareness through wall paintings.
- It is also being used to beautify bags, bed sheets and many other items.
- Warli is the vivid expression of daily and social events of the Warli tribe of Maharashtra, used by them to embellish the walls of village houses.

**Warli Tribe**

- They are an indigenous tribe or Adivasis, living in the Mountainous as well as coastal areas of Maharashtra-Gujarat border and surrounding areas.
- They speak an unwritten Varli language which belongs to the southern zone of the Indo-Aryan languages.

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM****Dobra Chanti bridge**

Recently, the Uttarakhand Chief Minister has inaugurated Dobra-Chanthi suspension bridge in Tehri-Garhwal district.

**Key points**

- The 440-metre long Dobra Chanti bridge is India's longest motorable single lane suspension bridge.
- Built over Tehri Lake, it will cut travel time between Tehri and Pratapnagar districts from 5.5 to 1.5 hours.

**Benefits of the bridge**

- Better connectivity within the region.
- Boost tourism potential.
- Gateway to development in the region.
- Local employment promotion.

**Tehri dam**

- Tehri Dam is the highest dam in India and fourth highest dam in the world.
- It is around 260.5 metre high and 592 metre long. It is part of the Tehri Dam & Hydro Power Project (the multi-purpose river valley project) taken up for construction on River Bhagirathi to tap its vast potential for irrigation and hydro-electric purposes.
- It is located in the Tehri district of Uttarakhand.

**River Bhagirathi**

- The river stream originates in the Garhwal Himalaya. The river after reaching Devprayag meets another head stream, the Alaknanda, forming river Ganga.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. What do you understand by scheduled tribes? Examine the dilemma related to the development of the tribes in India.**

Ans:

Scheduled Tribes, as a term, was introduced as a part of Government of India Act, 1935 to give legal recognition to list of tribes marked for special treatment by the state, which is still practised as evident in affirmative actions provided under Indian Constitution. In general, the scheduled tribes are described by the following characteristics:

- Communities that are very old and did not practise a religion with a written text.
- They did not have a political form of the normal kind.
- They did not have sharp class divisions, were not part of the caste system and were neither Hindu nor peasants.

**Tribes can be classified as:**

- Having Permanent traits like region (middle India, North-East), language (Austic, Tibeto-Burman etc.), physical characteristics (Mongloid, Aryan etc.), ecological habitat.
- Acquired Characteristics like mode of living, the extent of incorporation into Hindu Society.

**Dilemma related to their Development in India**

- Tribe-Caste Distinction: Tribal community is less stratified while absorption into the mainstream is creating new class, caste-based division. There is also the erosion of community sense of ownership of resources.
- Traditional Culture Vs New Values: By way of Sanskritization, modernisation, a traditional cultural system of tribals is eroding like languages, dialect. This is challenging their identity leading to resistance and opposition among them example demand for a separate state by Nagas.
- Development Vs Rights: Economic Development of the nation many times leads to their exploitation, especially in forested and mineral belt regions. These challenges affect their means of livelihood and their ethnicity leading to displacement and challenges of rehabilitation, for example- Narmada Bachao Andolan.
- Human Development Vs Traditional Systems: Providing modern education, health facilities may at times challenge the orthodoxy resulting in resistance. This, in turn, stems from lack of harmony between newer means and their traditional systems, example low vaccine coverage due to superstitious among tribals.

**Resolving dilemma**

- Making them part of the democratic process and decision makings like PESA Act, Special Powers to Scheduled and Tribal Areas.
- Making them part of the developmental process, example Forest Rights Act for managing forest-based resources.
- Human Development congruous to their traditional systems like Eklavya Model Schools.
- Upholding their rights and preventing their exploitation like Land Rehabilitation Act, Mines and Minerals Act etc.

**DAILY QUIZ**

1. With reference to Warli Art, consider the following statements:

1. Its origin can be traced back to the palaeolithic age.
2. Its paintings are mainly dominated by basic geometric shapes.

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 National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), consider the following statements:

1. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief of NALSA.
2. Free legal services to poor and weaker sections of the society are provided in Civil matters only.

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. With reference to Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA), consider the following statements:

1. These are ecologically fragile areas which are located within 10 km of protected areas.
2. ESAs are notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

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. Consider the following statements about Blue Macaw:

- 1. The Blue Macaw is a parrot native to tropical forests in Africa.
- 2. It is listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.
- 3. The Blue Macaw has been recently released in the Hengrabari Reserve Forest.

Which of the given statements given above is/are correct?

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

5. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Tehri Dam is the highest dam in India.
- 2. Dobra Chanti bridge is India's longest motorable single lane suspension bridge.

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