

GOVERNANCE**Demand For Autonomy in Assam**

There has been a demand for implementation of Article 244A for the creation of an autonomous State within Assam.

Key Points**Background:**

- The appeal to the Centre has been for the creation of an autonomous State for the Karbi Anglong region.
- This has been a demand since 1986.
- The districts are currently governed by two autonomous councils Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hills.

Definition of Scheduled and Tribal Areas:

The areas inhabited by the socially and educationally backward 'Aboriginals' are called Scheduled Areas.

Administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas:

There are two schedules (5th and 6th) of the Indian Constitution which entail the details about the control and management of the Scheduled and Tribal Areas.

Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution:

- The provisions regarding the administration and control of Scheduled and Tribal Areas of any state except the four states (Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram) are mentioned under this schedule.
- At present, 10 States namely Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana have Fifth Schedule Areas.

Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution

- This schedule deals with the administration and control of the scheduled and tribal areas of the four states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram.
- Scheduled and Tribal Areas are dealt with two articles:

Article 244:

- This article deals with the administration of the Scheduled and Tribal Areas.
- It defines Scheduled Areas as the areas defined so by the President of India and are mentioned in the fifth schedule of the Constitution.

Article 244A:

Formation of an autonomous state comprising certain tribal areas in Assam and creation of local legislature or Council of Ministers or both therefore.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**India-Mongolia Relations**

Recently, India and Mongolia have reviewed bilateral cooperation in hydrocarbons and steel sectors.

**Key Points**

- India reiterated its commitment to timely completion of the Mongol Refinery Project, the country's 1st oil refinery.

- The greenfield Mongol Refinery Project is being built under a Line of Credit from the Government of India.
- It is expected to cut some of Mongolia's fuel import dependence.
- The Project came in the backdrop of Mongolia, which has large uranium deposits signing an agreement for civil nuclear cooperation with India in 2009 and China unfolding its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- India is opposed to the BRI, which seeks to invest about USD 8 trillion in infrastructure projects across Asia, Europe and Africa, as it says the initiative lures countries into debt traps and does not respect sovereignty or address environmental concerns.
- India welcomed the keenness of Mongolian companies in supplying coking coal to Indian steel industry. According to a recent report, India will overtake China as the largest importer of coking coal by 2025.
- Further, India looks forward to substantial partnerships with Mongolian companies in the areas of minerals, coal and steel.
- India expressed its willingness to further share its expertise in the oil and gas sector including capacity building in accordance with the developmental priorities of Mongolia.

India-Mongolia

Historical Relations:

- India and Mongolia have interacted through Buddhism throughout history.

Diplomatic Relations:

- India, the first country outside the former Soviet bloc of nations to open diplomatic relations with Mongolia in 1955, has upgraded ties with Mongolia to a strategic partnership.
- In 2015, Mongolia witnessed the first ever visit by the Prime Minister of India (a part of India's Act East policy).

International Cooperation:

- Mongolia has publicly reiterated its support for India's membership to the permanent seat of the expanded United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- India has played an important role in getting Mongolia membership to key international forums, including the United Nations (UN), despite strong opposition from China and Taiwan. India also championed the inclusion of Mongolia in the Non-Aligned Movement.
- In a reciprocal gesture, Mongolia co-sponsored a 1972 UN resolution with India and Bhutan for the recognition of the newly liberated Bangladesh.
- Other Forums of which both the countries are members: Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), World Trade Organisation (WTO).
- India is a member whereas Mongolia is an observer state at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Economic Cooperation:

- India - Mongolia bilateral trade was USD 38.3 million in 2019, down from USD 52.6 million in 2018.

Defence Cooperation:

- Joint defence exercises code-named Nomadic Elephant.
- India is also an active participant in an annual week-long joint training exercise called the Khaan Quest, hosted by Mongolia.
- Cooperation over Environmental Issues:
- Part of the Bishkek Declaration (snow leopard).

Cultural Relations:

- The Ministry of Culture (India) has taken up the project of reprinting 108 volumes of Mongolian Kanjur under the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM).

Other Possible Areas of Cooperation:

- Solar energy is abundant and cooperation is solicited especially as India has emerged as the leader by way of International Solar Alliance and its very own ambitious alternate and renewable energy projects.
- Mongolia's mining sector including copper and Uranium hold exceptional cooperation possibilities.

- In the area of cooperatives, India has the capacity to share its expertise for the vastly dispersed farmers and milkmen in Mongolia.

Way Forward

Mongolia's strategic position at the cross junction of Central Asia, Northeast Asia, far East, China and Russia attracts major powers towards it. India should consider Mongolia as a green zone of economic development that absorbs hi-tech features and production skills in a modernization process.

To preserve and promote the common heritage of Indo-Mongolian culture is important. This should serve as the basis for nurturing and pursuing future common interests.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Seventh Trade Policy Review of India at the WTO**

Recently, the final session of India's seventh Trade Policy Review (TPR) concluded at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

- The TPR is an important mechanism under the WTO's monitoring function in which member countries' trade and related policies are examined by the WTO with an aim to contribute towards improved adherence to WTO rules.
- India's last TPR took place in 2015.

Key Points**Appreciation for India:**

- Introduction of Goods & Services Tax in 2016.
- India's efforts in the implementation of WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement.
- Role played by India in furthering "Ease of Doing Business" in the country.
- India's improved ranking in "Trading across Borders" indicator under the Ease of Doing Business Report.
- Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), aims to speed up customs procedures and make trade easier, faster, and cheaper.
- The steps taken by India for liberalizing its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) regime and India's National Intellectual Property Rights Policy, 2016.

Concerns for India:

- India's trade policy remained largely unchanged since the previous review.
- India continues to rely on trade policy instruments such as the tariff, export taxes, minimum import prices, import and export restrictions, and licensing, WTO said.
- These are used to manage domestic demand and supply requirements, protect the economy from wide domestic price fluctuations, and ensure conservation and proper utilization of natural resources.
- As a result, frequent changes are made to tariff rates and other trade policy instruments, which create uncertainty for traders.

India's Request:

- The ongoing pandemic has again brought to the fore, the importance of food and livelihood security and urged for a permanent solution to Public Stock Holding (PSH) for food security.

Public Stockholding (PSH)

- It is a policy tool used by governments to procure, stockpile and distribute food when needed.
- Currently, public distribution programmes of developing countries are included under trade-distorting Amber Box measures that attract reduction commitments of WTO.
- India with the group of developing countries is demanding that the programmes for food security purposes be exempted from subsidy reduction commitments of WTO.
- India has repeatedly demanded a permanent solution for public stockholding issues.

Trade Policy Review Mechanism

- The Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM) was an early result of the Uruguay Round.
- It is the main transparency instrument of the WTO, affording opportunities for a process of collective evaluation of the trade policies and practices of individual members.

Objectives:

- Facilitating the smooth functioning of the multilateral trading system by enhancing the transparency of Members' trade policies.
- To examine the impact of a Member's trade policies and practices on the multilateral trading system.

Mechanism:

- The reviews take place in the Trade Policy Review Body which is actually the WTO General Council — comprising the WTO's full membership — operating under special rules and procedures.

Function:

The trade policy review allows members to put the overall trade and economic policies of a country under the scanner.

The trade policies of developing countries are taken up for review every four years while developed ones face similar scrutiny every two years.

The mandate of the TPRM was broadened to cover services trade and intellectual property.

All WTO Members are subject to review under the TPRM.

BIODIVERSITY & ENVIRONMENT**Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of the Ecosystem Services Project**

Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of the Ecosystem Services (NCAVES) India Forum-2021 is being organised by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) in virtual format.

- The MoSPI has taken up several initiatives under the project “Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (NCAVES)” which aims to advance the theory and practice of ecosystem accounting in India.

Key Points**About the Project:**

- The NCAVES Project, funded by the European Union, has been jointly implemented by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD).
- India is one of the five countries taking part in this project - the other countries being Brazil, China, South Africa and Mexico.
- In India, the NCAVES project is being implemented by the MoSPI in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) under the Department of Space.

Natural Capital Accounting (NCA):

- It is an umbrella term covering efforts to make use of an accounting framework to provide a systematic way to measure and report on stocks and flows of natural capital.
- Natural capital is another term for the stock of renewable and non-renewable resources that combine to yield a flow of benefits to people.
- NCA covers accounting for individual environmental assets or resources, both biotic and abiotic (such as water, minerals, energy, timber, fish), as well as accounting for ecosystem assets (e.g. forests; wetlands), biodiversity and ecosystem services, in both physical and monetary terms.
- Just like the compilation of national accounts of a country is guided by the System of National Accounts (SNA), for natural capital accounting, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) is taken.
- The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) provides a framework for measuring the link between the environment and the economy.
- SEEA-Central Framework was adopted in February 2012 as an international statistical standard by the UN Statistical Commission.
- The SEEA accounts bring into direct focus the relationship between the environment and economy not revealed through traditional measures of economic activity, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Ecosystem Services:

- As a part of an ecosystem, humans derive lots of benefits from the biotic and abiotic components. These benefits are collectively termed as ecosystem services.

Ecosystem services are classified into four types:

- Provisioning Services: This includes the products/raw materials or energy outputs like food, water, medicines and other resources from ecosystems.

- **Regulating Services:** This includes the services which regulate the ecological balance. For example, forests purify and regulate air quality, prevent soil erosion, and control greenhouse gases etc.
- **Supporting Services:** These form the basis for other services. They provide habitat for different life forms, retain biodiversity, nutrient cycling, and other services for supporting life on the earth.
- **Cultural Services:** It includes recreational, aesthetic, cultural and spiritual services, etc. Most natural elements such as landscapes, mountains, caves, are used as a place for cultural and artistic purposes.

Benefits:

- The participation in the project has helped MoSPI commence the compilation of the Environment Accounts as per the UN-SEEA framework and release environmental accounts in its publication “EnviStats India” on an annual basis from 2018.
- Several of these accounts are closely related to the social and economic attributes, making them a useful tool for the Policy.
- Another tool under the NCAVES project is the development of the India-EVL Tool which is essentially a look-up tool giving the values of various ecosystem services in the different States of the country.
- Ecosystem accounting can produce information on the extent of ecosystems, their condition based on selected indicators, and the flow of ecosystem services.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Rastriya Kamdhenu Aayog

Recently, the Rastriya Kamdhenu Aayog has announced ‘Kamdhenu Gau-Vigyan Prachar-Prasar Exam’ with an aim to “infuse curiosity” among people about the importance of cows, and to “sensitise and educate” them about the bovine species.

Key Points

- Rastriya Kamdhenu Aayog is an agency under the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying) established for the protection of cows.
- It has been constituted to organize animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and to take steps for preserving and improving breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle.

There are 50 well-defined breeds of cattle and 17 breeds of buffaloes in the country.

- It is a high-powered permanent body to formulate policies and to provide directions for the implementation of schemes related to cattle so as to lay more emphasis on livelihood generation for small & marginal farmers, women and youth entrepreneurs.

It functions as an integral part of Rashtriya Gokul Mission.

Rashtriya Gokul Mission was initiated by Government of India in December 2014 with the aim of development and conservation of indigenous bovine breeds, genetic upgradation of bovine population and enhancing milk production and productivity of bovines thereby making milk production more remunerative to the farmers.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. In India it is said that the wealth hierarchy mimics the caste hierarchy. In the light of this statement establish the relationship between caste and economic inequality in India and highlight the initiatives taken to address the caste inequality. (150 words)

Ans:

Caste hierarchy is one of the major reasons for this perpetual difference in socio-economic status in India. In most of the surveys it has been found that economic inequality in India is mostly along the caste lines for instance according to a recent paper by the World Inequality Database, India’s upper caste households earned nearly 47% more than the national average annual household income in 2012. Besides, India has been ranked 129 among 158 countries in the 2020 Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index.

Relationship between caste and socio-economic inequality in India

- **Linkage Between Caste & Educational Backwardness:** The literacy rate for SCs is around 66% which is less than the national average of 74%. This disadvantage of education leads to their economic deprivation.

- Linkage Between Caste & Employability: Due to low education, lower castes are stuck in low salaried employment as agricultural labourers or low-skill labourers in the non-agricultural sector.
- Linkage Between Caste & Land Ownership: Upper castes are also major land owning classes in India. Being landless, lower castes have to resort to manual wage employment for their livelihood.
- Linkage Between Caste & Entrepreneurship: The NSSO data of 2011-12 shows that Dalits are least likely to start their own enterprises and most likely to work as labourers for others, with Scheduled Castes (SC) having the lowest relative share in the self-employed category and the highest share in the casual labourer category.

Policy measures designed to address caste inequality

Constitutional measures: In the Directive principles of the state policy and the Fundamental rights provisions have been made to equality in social order.

- Article 15 prohibits the discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- Article 16 ensures equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.
- Article 38 promotes welfare of the people by securing a social order permeated by justice- social, economic and political- and to minimise inequalities in income, status, facilities and opportunities
- Article 46 requires the State to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Legislative measures: They aim to prevent the commission of offences of atrocities against the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes so that they could be secured and could improve their socio-economic status.

- The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989
- The Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955
- The 'Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act 2013'

Economic measures: Various agencies have been established to provide financial assistance to lower caste population to address prevailing economic inequalities:

- National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation- to promote prosperity among Scheduled Castes by improving flow of financial assistance and through skill development & other innovative initiatives.
- National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation for economic upliftment of safai karamcharis who mostly from lower castes.
- Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes to promote young entrepreneurs.
- Standup India scheme and Credit Enhancement Guarantee Scheme for Scheduled Castes.

Conclusion

Thus it is necessary to address the caste inequality if India aspires to end extreme poverty and attain the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

DAILY QUIZ

1. Consider the following statements about the Caracal wild cat:

1. In India, the presence of these cats is restricted to Madhya Pradesh.
2. They are listed as endangered in the IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) **Neither 1 nor 2**

2. Consider the following statements:

1. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
2. The Codex Alimentarius Commission is responsible for the implementation of the food standards of FAO and WHO.
3. The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) is the initiative of FAO.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

3. Consider the following statements with reference to spectrum allocation:

1. Publicly available assets like spectrum are owned by the Union government only.
2. The sold frequencies of the spectrum are allocated for limited time 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

4. With reference to digital service tax (DST), consider the following statements:

1. India is the only country that imposes digital service tax.
2. In India 2% digital service tax is levied on trade and services by non-resident e-commerce operators.

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. Consider the following statements:

1. Part XXI of the Indian Constitution deals with the temporary, transitional and special provisions.
2. This part of the constitution formed the basis of Special Status of J&K.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) **Both 1 and 2**
- d) Neither 1 and 2



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