

GOVERNANCE**Second Edition of India Innovation Index**

NITI Aayog, along with the Institute for Competitiveness released the second edition of the India Innovation Index.

The first edition of the index was launched in October 2019.

Key Points

- The India Innovation Index 2020 examines the innovation capabilities and performance of the states and union territories.
- Toppers in 'Major States' category: (1) Karnataka; (2) Maharashtra; (3) Tamil Nadu
- Four southern states—Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Kerala—occupied the top five spots under the 'Major States' category this year.
- Overall, Delhi retained its first rank, while Chandigarh landed in the second place this year.
- Under the 'North-Eastern/Hill States' category: Himachal Pradesh moved up from the second position to emerge as the top ranker this year.

Parameters:

- The innovation inputs were measured through five enabler parameters, and the output through two performance parameters.
- Enabler parameters: 'Human Capital', 'Investment', 'Knowledge Workers', 'Business Environment', 'Safety and Legal Environment'
- Performance parameters: 'Knowledge Output' and 'Knowledge Diffusion'

Reason for Karnataka's rank:

- Karnataka's rank is attributable to its substantive number of venture capital deals, registered geographical indicators and information and communications technology exports.
- Karnataka's high FDI inflow has also enhanced the innovation capabilities of the state.

INDIAN ECONOMY**SC Upholds Validity of IBC Amendment Act, 2020**

Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) has upheld the constitutional validity of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Key Points**Background:**

- In its August 2019 order, the SC had upheld the government decision to grant home-buyers the status of financial creditors.
- **Financial creditor:** It means any person to whom a 'financial debt' is owed and includes a person to whom such debt has been legally assigned or transferred to.
- Subsequently, the government introduced the IBC (Amendment) Act, 2020, that mandated a threshold of at least 10% of home-buyers (or allottees) in a project or 100 of the total allottees for initiating insolvency proceedings against the real estate developer.
- It means that a single home-buyer is barred from approaching the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) under Section 7 of the IBC to initiate insolvency proceedings against the real estate developer/builder.
- Section 3 of the Amendment Act allows home-buyers to seek the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against builders only when 100 allottees or at least 10% of allottees make a joint application to NCLT.
- A 30-day deadline was given for existing applicants to find the requisite number of supporters to meet the threshold of 100, else their plea pending in the tribunal even before the commencement of the 2020 Act would be deemed as withdrawn.
- This was done to prevent real estate projects from being stalled by few disappointed home-buyers/investors.

SC's Ruling:**Threshold:**

- SC said that insisting on a threshold in regard to these categories of creditors would stop indiscriminate litigation.
- The court agreed with the legislature that having a single allottee approach the tribunal would be risky, considering that a corporate insolvency resolution may also entail a complete overhaul or replacement of the developer's company management.

- Such an initiative by a lone allottee would derail the plans of other allottees, who still had faith in the existing developer or were pursuing other legal remedies.
- The amendment reflects an attempt at shielding corporate debtors (Real Estate Developers) from what it considers would be either for frivolous or avoidable applications.
- Consensus of Creditors:
- The amendment is likely to ensure that the filing of the application is preceded by a consensus at least by a minuscule percentage of similarly placed creditors.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

The IBC was enacted in 2016.

Objective:

- To streamline and speed up the resolution process of failed businesses.
- To consolidate provisions of the existing legislative framework to form a common forum for debtors and creditors of all classes to resolve insolvency.
- To stipulate that the resolution process of a stressed company will have to be completed in a maximum of 270 days.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

5th India – Singapore Defence Ministers’ Dialogue

The 5th Defence Ministers’ Dialogue (DMD) between India and Singapore was successfully held recently through a video conference.



Key Points

At this 5th DMD, both Ministers witnessed the signing of the Implementing Agreement on Submarine Rescue Support and Cooperation between the two Navies.

The Ministers further welcomed the implementing agreement on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) cooperation in August 2020 for the two Armed Forces to have closer operational collaboration in response to disasters.

Recently, the Indian Navy and Singapore Navy successfully conducted the 27th edition of Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) and also participated in the second edition of the Singapore-India-Thailand Maritime Exercise (SITMEX); both held in November 2020.

Indian Defence Minister reaffirmed ASEAN centrality in the regional security architecture and pledged India’s support to all endeavours of the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM)-Plus.

The cyber agencies of both armed forces have also stepped up engagements.

INDIAN POLITY

Supreme Court Directive on Quota in Promotions

Recently, the Supreme Court asked the Attorney General to compile the various issues being raised by States with regard to the application of a Constitution Bench judgment of 2006 in **M. Nagaraj case**.

The directive is based on a plea by the Centre to refer to a seven-judge Bench the question whether creamy layer should apply or not to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe community while providing them reservation in government promotions.

The court in M. Nagaraj case had upheld the application of creamy layer principle to members of the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe communities in promotions.

Key Points

Creamy Layer:

- The term ‘Creamy layer’ was first mentioned in the Supreme Court’s landmark judgment in the **Indra Sawhney case (1992)**.

- This term is used to describe some members of a backward class who are socially, economically as well as educationally advanced as compared to the rest of the members of that community.

M. Nagaraj Case (2006):

Reversed the stance in the Indra Sawhney case: In this case applying the creamy layer concept in SC/ST reservation in promotions, the Supreme court reversed its earlier stance in the Indra Sawhney case (1992), in which it had excluded the creamy layer concept on SCs/STs (that was applicable on OBCs).

Directives to the states: The five-judges Bench in Nagaraj case upheld the constitutional validity of all 77th, 81st, 82nd, and 85th constitutional amendments enabling reservation of SC/ST communities in promotions, but made certain directives for the states.

Reservation in Promotions is not a Fundamental Right:

Reaffirming its stand in Nagaraj case, the Supreme Court in 2020 ruled that reservation in the matter of promotions in public posts is not a fundamental right, and a state cannot be compelled to offer the quota if it chooses not to.

Current Demand by the Centre: The Centre asked the Court to review its stance of introducing the concept of creamy layer in SC/ST promotions on various issues:

Could deprive backward classes from reservation: The government believes that the 'creamy layer' will become a trick to deprive the backward classes of the benefit of reservation.

Redundancy of proving backwardness again: It is presumed that once they are added in the Presidential List under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India, there is no question of proving backwardness of the SCs and STs all over again.

The said List cannot be altered by anybody except Parliament under Articles 341 and 342- defining who will be considered as SCs or STs in any state or Union Territory.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ratle Hydro Power Project

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the investment of Rs.5281.94 crore for 850 MW Ratle Hydro Electric (HE) Project.

Key takeaways

- It will be located on river Chenab, in Kishtwar district of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It will be implemented by a new Joint Venture Company (JVC) to be incorporated between National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) and Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Ltd (JKSPDC) with equity contribution of 51% and 49% respectively.
- The Ratle Hydro Electric Project shall be commissioned within a span of 60 months.
- The Power generated from the Project will help in providing balancing of Grid and will improve the power supply position.
- Further, Union Territory of J&K will be benefitted by getting free power worth Rs. 5289 crore and through levy of Water Usage Charges worth Rs.9581 crore from Ratle Hydro Electric Project, during project life cycle of 40 years.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Open-RAN Architecture

Recently, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Chairman said that use of **Open-RAN** (Radio Access Network) and software defined telecom networks will open new opportunities for Indian entities to enter into the network equipment market.

Key Points

- Open-RAN is not a technology, but rather an ongoing shift in mobile network architecture that allows networks to be built using subcomponents from a variety of vendors.
- O-RAN has an open, multi-vendor architecture for deploying mobile networks, as opposed to the single-vendor proprietary architecture.
- O-RAN uses software to make hardware manufactured by different companies work together.
- The key concept of Open RAN is "opening" the protocols and interfaces between the various subcomponents (radios, hardware and software) in the RAN.

Radio Access Network (RAN):

- It is the part of a telecommunications system that connects individual devices to other parts of a network through radio connections.
- A RAN resides between user equipment, such as a mobile phone, a computer or any remotely controlled machine, and provides the connection with its core network.

- As a technical matter this is what the industry refers to as a disaggregated RAN.

Functioning of Open RAN:

- It is the interface between the RU, DU and the CU that are the main focus of Open RAN.
- By opening and standardizing these interfaces (among others in the network), and incentivizing implementation of the same, networks can be deployed with a more modular design without being dependent upon a single vendor.
- Making these changes can also allow the DU and CU to be run as virtualized software functions on vendor-neutral hardware.

Advantage of O-RAN:

Innovation and Options:

An open environment expands the ecosystem, and with more vendors providing the building blocks, there is more innovation and more options for the Operators. They can also add new services.

New Opportunities:

- It will open new opportunities for Indian entities to enter into the network equipment market.
- Cost Saving:
- The benefits of this approach also include increased network agility and flexibility, and cost savings.
- It's expected to make 5G more flexible and cost efficient.

BIODIVERSITY & ENVIRONMENT

Dragon Fruit

Dragon fruit was recently in news because the Gujarat government has decided to rename it as 'kamalam'.

Important value additions

- Dragon fruit is the fruit of a species of wild cactus indigenous to South and Central America, where it is called pitaya or pitahaya.
- The fruit's flesh is usually white or red — although there is a less common yellow pitaya too — and is studded with tiny seeds rather like the kiwifruit.
- Largest Dragon fruit producer and exporter: Vietnam
- The Vietnamese call it thanh long, which translates to “dragon's eyes”, believed to be the origin of its common English name.
- Dragon fruit is also cultivated in Thailand, Taiwan, China, Australia, Israel, and Sri Lanka.
- It was brought to India in the 1990s, and is grown in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- It grows in all kinds of soil, and does not require much water.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Bandipur Tiger Reserve

A stranded wild elephant was rescued in Nugu reservoir, close to Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka. According to the Tiger census 2018, Karnataka has the second highest number of tigers in the country after Madhya Pradesh.

Key Points

Establishment: It was established in 1973 under Project Tiger. In 1985, by including adjacent areas from Venugopala Wildlife Park, it was enlarged and named as Bandipur National Park.

Location: It is situated in two contiguous districts (Mysore and Chamara Nagar) of Karnataka and is located at the tri-junction area of the States Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It forms a part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

Ecological Diversity: It lies in one of the richest biodiversity areas of the country. It is surrounded by

- Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (Tamil Nadu) in the South,
- Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala) in the South-west &
- The Kabini Reservoir separates the Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserve on the North-west.

Biodiversity: It is endowed with rich floral and faunal diversity and is recognized as one of the Mega Biodiversity Areas in the country.

- The Bandipur along with Nagarhole, Mudumalai, Sathyamangalam & Wayanad constitutes the single largest Wild population of Tigers in the world.

- This Landscape is also home to the single largest Asian Elephant population in the world and is part of the Mysore Elephant Reserve (MER).
- Rivers and the Highest Point: The park is located between the Kabini river in the north and the Moyar river in the south. The Nugu river runs through the park. The highest point in the park is on a hill called Himavad Gopalaswamy Betta.

Other Tiger Reserves in Karnataka:

- Bhadra Tiger Reserve
- Nagarhole Tiger Reserve
- Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve
- Biligiriranganatha Swamy Temple(BRT) Tiger Reserve
- Besides, Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary has been proposed to be made a tiger reserve.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. "Education is not an injunction, it is an effective and pervasive tool for all-round development of an individual and social transformation". Examine the New Education Policy, 2020 (NEP, 2020) in light of the above statement. (UPSC GS-4 Mains 2020)

Ans:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been recently announced by the Government of India. NEP 2020 is novel in many ways that can help develop an individual and social transformation.

It recognizes the importance of formative years; it envisages making education more inclusive and aimed at transforming the Indian education system to meet the needs of the 21st Century.

NEP's Vision of Individual & Social Transformation

- Recognizing the Importance of Formative years: In adopting a 5+3+3+4 model for school education starting at age 3, the policy acknowledges the formative years' primacy from ages 3 to 8 in shaping the child's future.
- Encouraging Vulnerable Sections of Society: Another laudable aspect of the scheme is vocational courses with an internship. This may encourage the vulnerable sections of society to send their children to school.
- Also, it would help in the realization of the goal of the Skill India Mission.
- Making Education More Inclusive: The NEP proposes extending the Right to Education (RTE) to all children up to the age of 18.
- Further, the policy seeks to leverage the huge potential of online pedagogy and learning methodologies to increase gross enrollment in higher education.
- Moreover, technological solutions should be utilized for creating greater access to the socially and economically disadvantaged groups.
- Ending Hindi vs. English Debate: Most crucially, NEP, once and for all, buries the strident Hindi versus English language debate.
- It emphasizes making the mother tongue, the local language, or the regional language the medium of instruction at least till Grade 5, which is considered the best medium of teaching.
- This will integrate culture, language, and traditions with the learning so that children can assimilate it in an integrative manner.
- Departure from Silos Mentality: Another key aspect of school education in the new policy is the breaking of the strict division of arts, commerce, and science streams in high school.
- This can lay the foundation for a multi-disciplinary approach in high education.
- This will help change the present scenario where students are under societal pressure to pursue certain streams that may not be as per their choice.
- **Education & Social Justice:** NEP recognizes education as the most effective way for social justice. Thus, the NEP calls for an investment of about six percent of GDP jointly by the Center and the States.

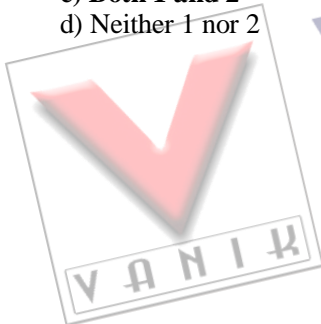
Conclusion

The new National Education Policy 2020 is novel. It aims to make the education system holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, aligned to the needs of the 21st century and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

DAILY QUIZ

1. 'Financial Stability Report', which outlines the risks to financial stability as well as the resilience of the financial system in the contemporary context, is released by –

- a) Ministry of Finance b) Ministry of Commerce c) **Reserve Bank of India** d) None of the above
2. Consider the following with respect to Faunas of Himalayas
1. Wild Asses are found in Eastern Himalayas.
 2. Red Pandas are found in Western Himalayas.
 3. Elephants are found in the foothills of Himalayas.
- Choose the INCORRECT statement/s
- a) **1 and 2**
b) 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3
d) 1, 2 and 3
3. In recent time Guchchi mushroom, which is one of the costliest mushrooms in the world, has been sought for Geographical indication (GI). Guchchi mushroom are grown in
- a) Tamil Nadu b) Kerala c) Meghalaya d) **Jammu and Kashmir**
4. 'Talamaddale', which is variant of Yakshagana theater, is widely practiced in which of the following states?
- a) Maharashtra
b) Tamil Nadu
c) **Karnataka**
d) Andhra Pradesh
5. Which of the following statements is/are true regarding 'Kalaripayattu'?
1. It is an Indian martial art and fighting style that originated in Kerala.
 2. It includes strikes, kicks, grappling, preset forms, weaponry and healing methods.
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
- a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) **Both 1 and 2**
d) Neither 1 nor 2



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