

**GOVERNANCE**

**“Skill training on Gender Sensitisation and Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) at the workplace” launched**

“Skill training on Gender Sensitisation and Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) at the workplace” was recently launched.

Ministry: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

**Key Points**

- Implementation Agency: Management and Entrepreneurship and Professional Skill Council (MEPSC)
- It is a six-month project.
- It will be implemented in 15 districts across 3 states of Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab to train 1800 trainees and 240 training professionals.

**Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) rolled out**

Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) was recently rolled out.

Ministry: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship



**Key Points**

- The fellows under MGNF will acquire academic expertise and technical competency in understanding the overall skill ecosystem along with being attached to District Skill Committees (DSCs).
- It will help them manage the skill development planning at the district level through the mechanism of formulating District Skill Development Plans (DSDPs).
- The first pilot MGNF which had 69 fellows working across 69 districts was successful.
- The Ministry is now expanding MGNF to all remaining districts in India.
- The Ministry has sought academic partnership with only the IIMs.

**INDIAN ECONOMY**

**Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020**

Recently, the Parliament has passed the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020. The Bill seeks to provide greater autonomy in decision-making to 12 major ports in the country and professionalise their governance by setting up boards.

- **India has 12 major ports** - Deendayal (erstwhile Kandla), Mumbai, JNPT, Marmugao, New Mangalore, Cochin, Chennai, Kamarajar (earlier Ennore), V O Chidambarnar, Visakhapatnam, Paradip and Kolkata (including Haldia).

**Key Points**

**Board of Major Port Authority:**

- About: The Bill provides for the creation of a Board of Major Port Authority for each major port. These Boards will replace the existing Port Trusts.
- Under the 1963 Act, all major ports are managed by the respective Board of Port Trusts that have members appointed by the central government.

**Composition:**

- Provision has been made for inclusion of representatives of State Government in which the Major Port is situated, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Defence and Customs, Department of Revenue as Members in the Board.

- It will also include a Government Nominee Member and a Member representing the employees of the Major Port Authority.

**Powers:**

- The Bill allows the Board to use its property, assets and funds as deemed fit for the development of the major port.
- It will also have the powers to fix reference tariffs for various port services.
- Further, PPP (Public Private Partnership) operators will be free to fix tariff- based on market conditions.
- Provisions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) & development of infrastructure by the Port Authority have been introduced.

**Aims:**

- Decentralization: Decentralizing decision making and to infuse professionalism in governance of major ports.
- Trade and Commerce: To promote the expansion of port infrastructure and facilitate trade and commerce.
- Decision Making: It imparts faster and transparent decision making benefiting the stakeholders and better project execution capability.
- Reorienting Models: Reorienting the governance model in central ports to landlord port model in line with the successful global practice.

**Significance:**

- This Bill is going to create a level-playing field not just between major and private ports but also between major port terminals and PPP terminals.
- Within major ports, PPP terminal players, too, have had to take tariff approvals from the TAMP. The Bill, however, eliminates taking approval from the body.
- Due to this, investment in PPP is expected to go up at major ports in the coming years.

**Way Forward**

- Though the new Bill addresses big hurdles that major ports have been facing, service quality and marketing are lacking at these ports as compared to private ones.
- Creation of a mechanism is not enough. Under the proposed landlord port model, the board that is created must use the autonomy granted to it. The board has to operate with freedom and take decisions to improve service quality, efficiency, land usage, asset-monetisation, tariff setting and dispute resolution, among other issues.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****One of the strongest flares reported from a supermassive black hole, BL Lacertae**

Indian Astronomers have reported one of the strongest flares from a supermassive black hole called BL Lacertae.

**Key Points**

- Feeding supermassive black holes have complicated emission mechanisms.
- They emit jets of charged particles traveling nearly at the speed of light.
- They are one of the most luminous and energetic objects in the Universe.
- BL Lacertae blazar is 10 million light-years away.
- It can be observed with the help of a relatively small telescope.
- The whole Earth Blazar Telescope (WEBT) had predicted the flares.

**Significance:** (1) It can help trace the mass of the black hole and the source of this emission; (2) It can provide a lead to probe into mysteries and trace events at different stages of evolution of the Universe.

**DEFENCE AND SECURITY****Arjun Main Battle Tank (Mk-1A)**

India Prime Minister handed over the indigenously developed Arjun Main Battle Tank (MK-1A) to the Indian Army at a ceremony in Chennai.

**Key Points**

- The army will get 118 units of the Tank.
- These are indigenously designed.
- The Arjun tanks stand out for their 'Fin Stabilised Armour Piercing Discarding Sabot (FSAPDS)' ammunition and 120-mm calibre rifled gun.
- It also has a computer-controlled integrated fire control system with stabilised sighting that works in all lighting conditions.

- The secondary weapons include machine guns for anti-personnel and anti-aircraft and ground targets.
- The Mk-1A version has 14 major upgrades on the earlier version.
- However, the biggest achievement with the latest version is 54.3% indigenous content against the 41% in the earlier model.

**Do you know?**

- The MK-1A project was initiated by DRDO in 1972.
- Combat Vehicles Research and Development Establishment (CVRDE) was its lead laboratory.
- Mass production began in 1996 at the Indian Ordnance Factory's production facility in Avadi, Tamil Nadu.

**GOVERNMENT SCHEMES**

**SANKALP (Skills Acquisition And Knowledge Awareness For Livelihood Promotion)**

'Transforming skilling through strategic partnerships under SANKALP' function was recently held. Ministry: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)



**Key Points**

- SANKALP (Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion) is a World Bank loan assisted programme
- Objective: To strengthen the district skill administration and the District Skill Committees (DSCs).
- It is a two-year academic programme.
- It comes with an in-built component of on-ground practical experience with the district administration.
- It will also support the Training of Trainer (ToT) system in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode.
- MSDE has instituted the “Awards for Excellence in District Skill Development Planning (DSDP Awards)” under SANKALP in 2018.

**ODISHA DEVELOPMENTS**

**Andhra-Odisha border dispute**

Andhra Pradesh recently held panchayat elections in three villages in the Kotia cluster, which is at the centre of a dispute between Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

- A day after Andhra notified the panchayat elections here, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated projects worth Rs 18 crore.
- The Odisha government moved the Supreme Court challenging the conduct of elections by AP government.

**The Villages**

- Tribal Dominated: These villages, with a population of nearly 5,000, are located on a remote hilltop on the inter-state border and are inhabited by Kondh tribals.
- Left-wing extremism: The region, once a Maoist hotbed which still reports sporadic incidents of violence.
- Rich Resources: These villages are also rich in mineral resources like gold, platinum, manganese, bauxite, graphite and limestone.

**Brief History of the Dispute**

- Prior to April 1, 1936, villages under Kotia panchayat were part of Jeypore Estate.
- In the Constitution of Orrisa Order, 1936, published in the Gazette of India, the Government of India demarcated Odisha from the erstwhile Madras Presidency (that included present day Andhra Pradesh)
- In 1942, the Madras government contested the boundary and ordered re-demarcation of the two states.
- In a joint survey of Odisha, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, seven villages of Kotia gram panchayat were recorded as revenue villages and revenue was collected by the Odisha government, but the exercise left out the 21 villages now under dispute.
- When the state of Andhra Pradesh was created in 1955, the villages were not surveyed by the Andhra Pradesh government

**What is the political status of people residing in these disputed villages?**

- This is the first time Andhra has held panchayat polls in any of these villages.
- But the villages participate in Assembly and Lok Sabha elections for both states. They are registered as voters for Salur Assembly and Araku Lok Sabha seats of Andhra, and Pottangi Assembly and Koraput Lok Sabha seats of Odisha.
- The villagers enjoy benefits from both states under various schemes.
- Odisha constructed a gram panchayat office, a village agricultural centre, a boarding school, hostel, implemented MGNREGA, and distributed BPL cards to over 800 families and job cards to 1800 families.
- The Andhra Pradesh government has built roads, supplied electricity and provided rations to BPL families

**CURRENT STATUS**

In the early 1980s, Odisha filed a case in the Supreme Court demanding right and possession of jurisdiction over the 21 villages.

In 2006 however, the court ruled that since disputes belonging to the state boundaries are not within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, the matter can only be resolved by Parliament and passed a permanent injunction on the disputed area.

**BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT**

**Thar Desert**

The Pakistan Army is holding a month-long exercise code-named ‘Jidar-ul-Hadeed’ in the Thar Desert. The aim is to prepare for conflict in extreme desert environments.

- A multinational naval exercise hosted by Pakistan, Aman-2021, has also begun in the Arabian Sea. 45 countries, including the USA, Russia, China and Turkey, will be participating in the exercise.

**Key Points**

**Name:**

- The name, Thar is derived from thul, the general term for the region’s sand ridges.

**Location:**

- It is located partly in Rajasthan state, northwestern India, and partly in Punjab and Sindh provinces, eastern Pakistan.

**About the Area:**

- The Thar Desert is an arid region that covers over 2,00,000 sq km. It forms a natural boundary along the border between India and Pakistan.
- The surface consists of aeolian (wind-deposited) sand that has accumulated over the past 1.8 million years.
- The desert presents an undulating surface, with high and low sand dunes separated by sandy plains and low barren hills, or bhakars, which rise abruptly from the surrounding plains.
- The dunes are in continual motion and take on varying shapes and sizes.
- Barchan, also spelled Barkhan, crescent-shaped sand dune produced by the action of wind predominately from one direction. One of the commonest types of dunes, it occurs in sandy deserts all over the world.

**Surrounding Areas:**

- It is bordered by the irrigated Indus River plain to the west, the Punjab Plain to the north and northeast, the Aravalli Range to the southeast, and the Rann of Kachchh to the south.

**Climate:**

- The subtropical desert climate there results from persistent high pressure and subsidence at that latitude.
- The prevailing southwest monsoon winds that bring rain to much of the subcontinent in summer tend to bypass the Thar to the east.

**Saline Lakes:**

- Several playas (saline lake beds), locally known as dhands, are scattered throughout the region.

**Flora and Fauna:**

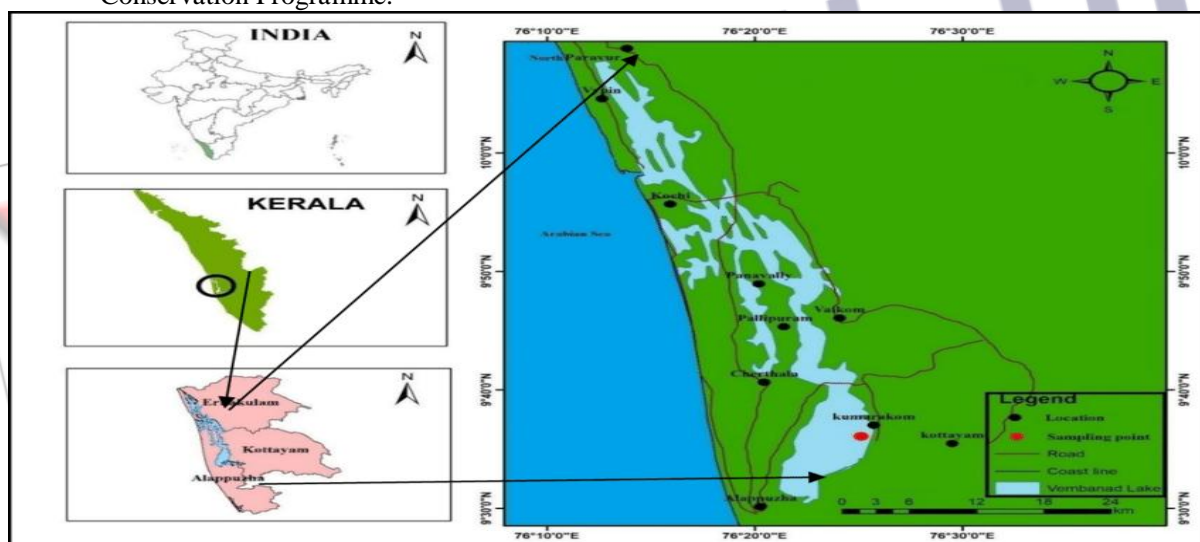
- The region produces herbaceous plants like cactus, neem, khejri, acacia nilotica among others. All these plants can accommodate themselves to high or low temperatures and difficult climatic conditions.
- The desert also houses the residents of the wild like the leopard, the Asiatic wild cat (*Felis silvestris ornata*), the chousingha (*Tetracerus quadricornis*), the chinkara (*Gazella bennettii*), the Bengal desert fox (*Vulpes bengalensis*), the Blackbuck (antelope) and several species of reptiles.

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**

**Lake In News: Vembanad Lake**

Preliminary steps have been initiated to demolish the illegally constructed villas on Nediyaathuruthu island in Vembanad Lake.

- Vembanad is the longest lake in India and the largest lake in the state of Kerala.
- It is the second-largest Ramsar site in India only after the Sundarbans in West Bengal.
- Kochi Port is built around Willingdon and Vallarpadam Islands on this lake.
- The Government of India has identified the Vembanad wetland under the National Wetlands Conservation Programme.



**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns** What are the salient features of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan launched by the Government of India for water conservation and water security? (UPSC GS-3 Mains 2020)

**Ans:**

Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) is a time-bound and mission-mode water conservation campaign, launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in 2019.

It is a campaign for water conservation and water security in India's most water-stressed districts through a collaborative effort of various ministries of the Government of India and state governments.

**Salient Features of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan**

- Jal Shakti Abhiyan focuses on integrated demand and supply-side management of water at the local level, including the creation of local infrastructure for source sustainability using rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse.

**It majorly focuses on five aspects viz.:**

- Water conservation and rainwater harvesting
- Renovation of traditional and other water bodies/tanks
- Reuse and recharge structures

- Watershed development
- Intensive afforestation

The conservation efforts will be supplemented by initiatives like developing block and district water conservation plans and 'Krishi Vigyan Kendra melas' to promote efficient water use for irrigation and better crop choices.

- Through Jal Shakti Abhiyan, the government plans to run water conservation, similar to the cleanliness drive i.e the Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan.
- Thus, it aims at making water conservation a Jan Andolan through asset creation and extensive communication.

### Conclusion

Jal Shakti Abhiyan signifies that the rising water emergency is making India listen to alarm bells and consequently a strong political commitment coming into place.

### DAILY QUIZ

1. Which of the following crops are covered under Operation Greens?

1. Tomato
2. Oilseeds
3. Onion
4. Potato

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 2 and 3 only
- b) 3 and 4 only
- c) **1, 3 and 4**
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Thar Desert is surrounded by the Aravalli Range to the southeast and the Rann of Kachchh in the south.
2. Barchan is a crescent-shaped sand dune produced by the action of wind predominately from one direction.

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 the Bhimbetka Caves, consider the following statements:

1. It exhibits the earliest traces of human life in India.
2. The Bhimbetka caves is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
3. It is located in the foothills of the Vindhya Mountains.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

4. Which of the following best describes 'Dickinsonia'?

- a) It is the rare species of frog endemic to Eastern Ghats.
- b) It is an asteroid that is seen revolving between the orbit of Earth and Moon.
- c) It is a rare herbal species found in lower himalayas used for the treatment of snake bite.
- d) **It is a fossil of the earliest known living animal discovered from the Bhimbetka rock shelters.**

5. Consider the following statements regarding 'Arbitration Council of India (ACI)?

1. Article 51 of the Indian Constitution provides the basis for setting up of ACI.
2. All the appointments of arbitrators will be made by the institution designated by the Supreme Court.

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