

GOVERNANCE**Sandes: an instant messaging platform**

The National Informatics Centre (NIC) has launched an instant messaging platform called Sandes on the lines of WhatsApp.

- NIC is under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. It provides network backbone and e-Governance support to the Central Government, State Governments and UT Administrations.

Key Points**Sandes App:**

- It is a Government Instant Messaging System (GIMS) that can be used for official or casual use by any Government employee or public user having a valid Mobile No./Email ID.

Features:

- It offers features such as group making, broadcast message, message forwarding and emojis.
- Although there is no option to transfer the chat history between two platforms, the chats on GIMS can be backed up to a users' email.
- The user will have to re-register as a new user in case they wish to change their registered Email Id or phone number on the App.
- It allows a user to mark a message as confidential, which will allow the recipient to be made aware the message should not be shared with others.

Significance:**Ensures Secure Communication:**

- The Computer Emergency Response Team (Cert-In) and the Ministry of Home Affairs in April, 2020 had issued an advisory to all government employees to avoid using platforms like Zoom for official communication over safety and privacy concerns.

Promoting Indigenous Products:

- The launch of the App is also a part of the government strategy to push for use of India-made software so as to build an ecosystem of indigenously developed products.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Securities Appellate Tribunal**

Recently, the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) stayed the order passed by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) that had put a one-year ban on a retail company Chairperson and some other promoters from the securities market.

Key Points

- SAT is a statutory body established under the provisions of Section 15K of the SEBI Act, 1992.

Location: Mumbai.

Composition: SAT consists of a Presiding Officer and Two other members.

The Presiding officer of SAT shall be appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India or his nominee.

Powers: It has the same powers as vested in a civil court. Further, if any person feels aggrieved by SAT's decision or order can appeal to the Supreme Court.

Functions:

- To hear and dispose of appeals against orders passed by the SEBI or by an adjudicating officer under the SEBI Act, 1992.
- To hear and dispose of appeals against orders passed by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).
- To hear and dispose of appeals against orders passed by the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE**Khwaja Monuddin Chishti**

Recently a 'Chadar' was offered on behalf of Prime Minister at the Ajmer Sharif Dargah of Sufi Saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti on the occasion of 809th Urs.

The Urs festival is an annual festival held at Ajmer in Rajasthan which commemorates the death anniversary of Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti.

Key Points**About Sufism:**

- Sufism is a mystical form of Islam, a school of practice that focuses on the spiritual search for God and shuns materialism.
- It is a form of Islamic mysticism which stresses on asceticism. There is a lot of emphasis on devotion towards God.

- In Sufism, self discipline is considered an essential condition to gain knowledge of God by sense of perception.
- Unlike orthodox Muslims which emphasise on external conduct, the Sufis lay stress on inner purity.
- Sufis believe service to humanity is tantamount to service to God.

Etymology:

- The term 'Sufi' is probably derived from the Arabic 'suf' word which means 'one who wears wool'. This is because woollen clothes were generally associated with ascetics. Another possible origin of the word is 'safa' which means purity in Arabic.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti:

- Moinuddin Hasan Chishti was born in Sijistan (modern-day Sistan) in Iran in 1141-42 CE.
- After Muizuddin Muhammad bin Sam of Ghor had already defeated Prithviraj Chauhan in the Second Battle of Tarain (1192) and established his rule in Delhi, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti started living and preaching in Ajmer.
- His instructive discourses, full of spiritual insights, soon drew the local populace as well as kings and nobles and peasants and the poor from far and wide.
- His shrine in Ajmer has been visited by rulers like Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Sher Shah Suri, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb.

Chishti Order (Chishtiya):

- Chishtiya Order was founded in India by Khwaja Moin-Uddin Chishti.
- It emphasised the doctrine of the unity of being with God (waḥdat al-wujūd) and members of the order were also pacifists.
- They rejected all material goods as distractions from the contemplation of God.
- They abstained from connection with the secular state.
- Recitation of the names of God, both aloud and silently (dhikr jahrī, dhikr khafī), formed the cornerstone of Chishtī practice.
- The Chishty teachings were carried forward and popularized by disciples of Khwaja Moin-Uddin Chishti like Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Fareeduddin Ganj-e-Shakar, Nizam uddin Auliya and Naseeruddin Charagh.

Other Major Sufi Orders:**Suhrawardi Order:**

- It was founded by Sheikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi Maqtul.
- The Suhrawardis, unlike the Chishtis, accepted maintenance grants from the Sultans.

Naqshbandi Order:

- It was founded by the Khwaja Baha-ul-din Naqsh band.
- In India, this order was established by Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi.
- From the beginning, the mystics of this Order stressed on the observance of the Shariat.

Qadiriyya Order:

- It was popular in Punjab.
- Sheikh Abdul Qadir of Badaun founded it in the 14th century.
- They were supporters of the Mughals under Akbar.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**New York Convention**

Recently, Cairn Energy has filed a case, in accordance with the New York Convention, in the USA district court to enforce a USD 1.2 billion arbitration award it won in a tax dispute against India.

Key Points

- The Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards, also known as the "New York Arbitration Convention" or the "New York Convention", is one of the key instruments in international arbitration.
- Arbitration is a procedure in which a dispute is submitted, by agreement of the parties, to one or more arbitrators (an independent person/body) who make a binding decision on the dispute.
- It applies to the recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitral awards and the referral by a court to arbitration.
- The Convention was adopted by the United Nations (UN) following a diplomatic conference held in May and June 1958 at the UN Headquarters in New York, and entered into force on 7th June, 1959.

Parties to Convention:

- The Convention has 166 state parties (Countries).
- India is a party to the Convention.

Aim:

- The Convention's principal aim is that foreign and non-domestic arbitral awards should not be discriminated against by courts asked to enforce them.
- It obliges Contracting States to ensure foreign awards are recognised and generally capable of enforcement in their jurisdiction in the same way as domestic awards.
- To require courts of Contracting States to uphold valid arbitration agreements and stay court proceedings in respect of matters which the parties have agreed should be resolved by arbitration.
- By signing up to the Convention, a state agrees that its courts will respect and enforce parties' agreements to arbitrate, and to recognise and enforce any resulting arbitral award in its jurisdiction subject to only very limited grounds for refusal.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

World Trade Organisation

Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was appointed as Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the leading international trade body.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the first African official and the first woman to hold the position.

Key Points

- The WTO is the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which was created in 1947.
- The Uruguay Round (1986-94) of the GATT led to the WTO's creation. WTO began operations on 1st January, 1995.
- The Agreement Establishing the WTO, commonly known as the "Marrakesh Agreement", was signed in Marrakesh, Morocco in 1994.

About:

- WTO is an international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.
- Main difference between GATT and WTO was that GATT mostly dealt with trade in goods, the WTO and its agreements could not only cover goods but also trade in services and other intellectual properties like trade creations, designs, and inventions.
- Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

Members:

- The WTO has 164 members (including European Union) and 23 observer governments (like Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Libya etc).
- India is a founder member of the 1947 GATT and its successor, the WTO.

Governing Structure:

Structures of WTO



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Mahabahu-Brahmaputra to be launched

Indian Prime Minister will launch the 'Mahabahu-Brahmaputra' in Assam on 18th February 2021.

Key Points

The launch of Mahabahu-Brahmaputra will be marked by the following:

- The Ro-Pax vessel operations between Neamati-Majuli Island, North Guwahati-South Guwahati, and Dhubri-Hatsingimari;
- Shilanyas of Inland Water Transport (IWT) Terminal at Jogighopa
- Various tourist jetties on River Brahmaputra
- Launch of digital solutions for Ease-of-Doing-Business.

Aim: Providing seamless connectivity to the Eastern parts of India.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**Oil & Gas Projects In Tamil Nadu**

Indian Prime Minister laid down the foundation of key projects of the oil & gas sector in Tamil Nadu on 17th February 2021.

Key Points

- The Ramanathapuram – Thoothukudi natural gas pipeline shall be inaugurated.
- This pipeline is a section of the Ennore- Thiruvallur- Bengaluru- Puducherry- Nagapattinam- Madurai- Tuticorin Natural Gas Pipeline.
- Benefits: It will help utilise gas from ONGC Gas fields and deliver natural gas as feedstock to industries and other commercial customers.
- Gasoline Desulphurisation Unit shall be inaugurated at Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited, Manali.
- It will produce low sulfur (less than 8 ppm) environment-friendly gasoline, help reduce emissions and contribute towards a cleaner environment.

BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT**Species in news: Leatherback Sea Turtle**

Some conservationists are worried about the fate of the Giant Leatherback turtles.

NITI Aayog has laid down proposals for tourism and port development in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Key Points

NITI Aayog's tourism vision includes a proposal for a mega-shipment port at Galathea Bay on Great Nicobar Island.

Also, the Little Andaman plan proposes phased growth of tourism on this untouched island, which may lead to the de-reservation of over 200 sq km of rainforests and also of about 140 sq km of the Onge Tribal Reserve.

Leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

- It is the largest of the seven species of sea turtles.
- Other species are: Olive Ridley turtle, Green turtle, Hawksbill turtle, Loggerhead turtle, Leatherback turtle
- Except the Loggerhead, the remaining four species nest along the Indian coast.
- It is found in all oceans except the Arctic and the Antarctic.
- Within the Indian Ocean, they nest only in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- It is the only living species in the genus *Dermochelys* and family *Dermochelyidae*.
- It can easily be differentiated from other modern sea turtles by its lack of a bony shell.
- They are listed in Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

**Do you know?**

- The Ministry of Environment has released National Marine Turtle Action Plan in which A&N Islands are given prominent importance.
- According to the plan, India has identified all its important sea turtle nesting habitats as 'Important Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas'.
- These areas have been included in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) – 1.
- South Bay and West Bay on Little Andaman and Galathea on Great Nicobar, are mentioned as "Important Marine Turtle Habitats in India"

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**Maharaja Suheldev**

The Prime Minister has laid the foundation stone of a Maharaja Suheldev memorial and the development work of Chittaura lake in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich district.

Key Points**About Maharaja Suheldev:**

- He was the erstwhile ruler of Shravasti in Uttar Pradesh's (UP) Bahraich district, who ruled in the 11th century.
- He is known in history for waging guerrilla warfare against Mahmud Ghazni's large army.
- Suheldev was deeply moved by the loot and destruction of the magnificent Somnath temple by invader Mahmud Ghazni that he decided to gather heads of different communities like Tharu and Banjara as well as small kings to block the invasion.
- His army defeated and killed Ghazi Salar Masud, the nephew of Mahmud Ghazni, at Bahraich.
- Raja Suheldev finds mention in 'Mirat-i-Masudi', a 17th century Persian-language historical account.
- 'Mirat-i-Masudi' is the biography of Salar Masud, written by Abd-ur-Rahman Chishti during the reign of the Mughal emperor Jahangir (1605–1627).
- In local folklore, Suheldev is said to be a Rajbhar.
- He is popular as a caste icon among the Rajbhars (OBC) and the Pasis (second largest Dalit caste in UP), both of whom have been competing for his legacy and are predominantly found in central and eastern UP.

Chittaura Lake:

- The Chittaura Jheel is located in the Bahraich District near the village Chittaur in Uttar Pradesh.
- Teri Nadi, a small river originates from this lake which is a home to many migratory birds.
- Being a Hindu pilgrimage site, many fairs are held near this lake during Kartik Purnima and Vasant Panchami.
- There is an ashram where Muni Ashtwarka used to live and this site also witnessed the epic fight between Ghazi Salar Masud and Raja Suheldev in the year 1033.
- There is a temple complex with the statue of Raja Suheldev and temple dedicated to Goddess Durga situated here.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns What teachings of Buddha are most relevant today and why? Discuss. (UPSC GS-4 Mains 2020)

Ans:

The main goal of Buddhism philosophy is to eliminate suffering and unhappiness. As the world increasingly grows interdependent and is beset by conflicts, Buddha's philosophies will only grow more relevant.

Conceptual Framework of Buddhist Thought & Its Relevance

- The essence of Buddha's teaching is contained in the Four Noble Truths. These Four Noble truths set out the path for an individual's enlightenment. These four noble truths are as follows:

The truth of dukkha: According to Buddha all sources of happiness are transient, any feeling of happiness is accompanied by dissatisfaction.

- Thus, there is a need to look for happiness in external things rather than in our internal feelings and attitudes.
- This doctrine of Buddhism is relevant in the light of increasing materialism and consumerism in society.

The truth of the origin of the dukkha: The origin of dukkha is traced to craving conditioned by ignorance.

- Ignorance implies a misunderstanding of the self and reality.
- This can find relevance in developed countries ignoring climate change and its impact, which will affect whole humankind in the medium to long term.

The truth of the cessation of dukkha: Cessation of dukkha is the objective of Buddhist spiritual practices.

- Buddhism lays down special emphasis on meditation, which is an activity of training the mind and helping to develop more beneficial attitudes toward life.
- Meditation can help people to deal with increasing mental disorders in the age of smartphones and lead to moral and mental self-improvement.

The truth of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha: The fourth noble path is the way to end dukkha. It is called the eightfold path.

- It consists of: Right Understanding; Right Thought; Right Speech; Right Action; Right Livelihood; Right Effort; Right mindfulness; and right concentration.
- Right Speech envisages abstaining from telling lies and speaking deceitfully. This can be applied to tackle increasing hate speech and growing intolerance in society.
- Right livelihood implies that one should follow righteous means of earning wealth. This finds relevance in growing inequalities and corruption in the economic sphere.
- Right effort can lead to self-discipline, honesty, altruism, and compassion, which can tackle ongoing social decay.

Conclusion

The relevance to Buddhism can be traced from the words of Dalai Lama who stated that the 20th century was a century of war and violence, it was the work of humanity to ensure the 21st century goes on the way of peace and dialogue.

DAILY QUIZ

1. Consider the following statements about the major Sufi orders:

1. The Chishti order rejected all material goods and abstained from connection with the secular state.
2. The Suhrawardi order did not accept the maintenance grants from the Sultans.
3. The Naqshbandi order was popular in Punjab and supported the Mughals under Akbar.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

2. Consider the following statements about Raja Suheldev:

1. He ruled in present day Gujarat and was a contemporary of Muhammad of Ghor.
2. Mirat-i-Masudi is the biography of Raja Suheldev written by Salar Masud.

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

3. With reference to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), consider the following statements:

1. All the members of the United Nations Organisation hold the membership of WTO too.
2. The WTO was established with the signing of the Marrakesh Agreement.

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:

1. Coelacanth is an extinct species under IUCN Red List.
2. The only species of coelacanth lives near the Comoros Islands off the east coast of Africa.

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 regarding Sandes App?

1. It is launched by the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
2. It is an instant messaging platform used only by Government employees.

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