

GOVERNANCE**Merchant Digitization Summit 2021**

Recently, the Government of India, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), and UN-based Better Than Cash Alliance hosted Merchant Digitization Summit 2021: Towards Atma Nirbhar (Self Reliance) Bharat.

- The Summit brought together leaders from the public and private sectors to accelerate responsible digitization of merchants in India's North-Eastern and Himalayan regions, and Aspirational districts.

Key Points**Highlights of the Summit:**

- Empowering women merchants who play critical roles in their communities is one of the priorities to help achieve the mission of Digital India.
- The National Language Translation Mission can be used to disseminate digital payments information, privacy clauses and consent in local languages for trust and empowerment.
- Identified opportunities to address the challenges of connectivity, access to smartphones, and digital literacy for merchants at the last mile.
- Along with the increased focus on 'Make in India' through Atmanirbhar Bharat Scheme, responsible digitization must more strongly include rural networks such as Self Help Groups and community enablers.
- This will lead to creation of the local digital ecosystems to help millions of merchants join the formal economy, access credit, and grow their business.
- From an average of 2-3 billion digital transactions monthly, India has set an ambitious target for 1 billion digital transactions per day.
- Person to Merchant (P2M) digital payment transactions will scale to 10-12 billion transactions every month to contribute to India's digital economy.

Related Recent initiatives:

- Digital Payments Index.
- Payments Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF) scheme.
- Relaxations in Merchant Discount Rate.

Better Than Cash Alliance (BTCA):

About: BTCA is a partnership of governments, companies, and international organizations that accelerates the transition from cash to responsible digital payments to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Foundation: It was launched by the United Nations Capital Development Fund, the United States Agency for International Development, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Citigroup, the Ford Foundation, the Omidyar Network, and Visa Inc.

- It is based at the United Nations.
- It was created in 2012.
- Members: The Alliance has 75 members which are committed to digitizing payments in order to boost efficiency, transparency, women's economic participation and financial inclusion, helping build economies that are digital and inclusive.
- Members do not want to abolish physical cash but rather want to provide responsible digital payment options that are "better than cash".
- India became a member of the Better Than Cash Alliance in 2015 to digitize payments to achieve financial inclusion and to share success stories from Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, the world's largest financial inclusion program.

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI):

FICCI is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation established in 1927.

It is the largest and oldest apex business organisation in India whose history is closely interwoven with India's struggle for independence, its industrialization, and its emergence as one of the most rapidly growing global economies.

INDIAN ECONOMY**Maritime India Summit 2021**

'Maritime India Summit 2021' is being organised by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

Key Points**Focus Area:**

- To further the port-led development along the 7,516-km long coastline.
- India will invest USD 82 billion in port projects by 2035 (under Sagarmala Programme), raise the share of clean renewable energy sources in the maritime sector, develop waterways and boost tourism around lighthouses.
- India aims to operationalise 23 waterways by 2030.
- Through the focus areas of upgradation of infrastructure, India aims to strengthen the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Current Status of Indian Ports:

- India has 12 major ports and several minor ports along its West and East coast.
- Capacity of major ports have increased from 870 million tonnes in 2014 to 1550 million tonnes in 2021.
- Indian ports have measures such as: Direct port Delivery, Direct Port Entry and an upgraded Port Community System (PCS) for easy data flow that has helped in reduced waiting time for inbound and outbound cargo.

Significance:

- It will help in growth of the maritime sector and promote India as a leading Blue Economy of the world.
- Further the Maritime India Vision 2030.

Other Initiatives for Port Development:

- The Sagar-Manthan: Mercantile Marine Domain Awareness Centre has also been launched.
- It is an information system for enhancing maritime safety, search and rescue capabilities, security and marine environment protection.
- Ship repair clusters will be developed along both coasts by 2022.
- Domestic ship recycling industry will also be promoted to create 'Wealth from Waste'.
- India has enacted Recycling of Ships Act, 2019 and agreed to the Hong Kong International Convention.
- India aims to increase usage of renewable energy to more than 60% of total energy by 2030 across Indian ports.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Exercise Desert Flag-VI: UAE

For the first time, the Indian Air Force (IAF) is participating in the Exercise Desert Flag-VI, hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Air Force.



Key Points

About: Ex Desert Flag is an annual multinational large force employment warfare exercise hosted by the UAE Air Force.

Aim: To provide operational exposure to the participating forces while training them to undertake simulated air combat operations in a controlled environment.

Exercise Desert Flag-VI:

Duration: It is about a three week long exercise scheduled from 3rd - 27th March 2021 at Al-Dhafra air base, UAE.

Participants: The air forces of the UAE, India, United States of America, France, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Bahrain.

India's Participation: The IAF is participating with six Su-30 MKI, two C-17 Globemasters and one IL-78 tanker aircraft.

Joint Military Exercises with the UAE:

With the UAE, India has In-UAE BILAT (bilateral naval exercise) as well as Desert Eagle-II (bilateral air force exercise).

Recent Engagements:

- India participated in the NAVDEX 21 (Naval Defence Exhibition) and IDEX 21 (International Defence Exhibition).
- The exhibitions showcase the latest technologies and innovation in the global defence sector, support the growth of UAE's defence industry, and forge new relationships between major international companies.
- Examples of Other Multinational Exercises:

Pitch Black: Biennial, multilateral air combat training exercise of Australia.

Red Flag: Multilateral air exercise of USA.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**Swachhta Saarthi Fellowship: Waste to Wealth Mission**

The Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India under its "Waste to Wealth" Mission launched the "Swachhta Saarthi Fellowship".

Key Points**About the Swachhta Saarthi Fellowship:**

Objectives: To recognize students, community workers/self-help groups, and municipal/sanitary workers who are engaged in tackling the enormous challenge of waste management, scientifically and sustainably.

Three Categories of Awards under the Fellowships:

Category-A: Open to School students from 9th to 12th standards engaged in waste management community work.

Category-B: Open to College students (UG, PG, Research students) engaged in waste management community work.

Category-C: Open to Citizens working in the community and through SHGs, municipal or sanitary workers working beyond specifications of their job requirements/descriptions.

Waste to Wealth Mission:

- This mission will identify, develop, and deploy technologies to treat waste to generate energy, recycle materials, and extract worth.
- The Waste to Wealth Mission is one of the nine national missions of the Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC).

The mission will assist and augment the Swachh Bharat and Smart Cities projects to create circular economic models that are financially viable for waste management to streamline waste handling in the country.

AGRICULTURE**Purple Revolution Under Aroma Mission**

Around 500 farmers across villages in Doda district in Jammu had their incomes quadrupled after shifting from maize to lavender cultivation which is being called purple revolution. It was possible due to initiatives taken under Aroma Mission.

Key Points

- Purple Revolution (Under Aroma Mission):

About:

- First-time farmers were given free lavender saplings and those who have cultivated lavender before were charged Rs. 5-6 per sapling.

Aim:

To support domestic aromatic crop based agro economy by moving from imported aromatic oils to homegrown varieties.

Products:

- Main product is Lavender oil which sells for at least Rs. 10,000 per litre
- Lavender water, which separates from lavender oil, is used to make incense sticks.
- Hydrosol, which is formed after distillation from the flowers, is used to make soaps and room fresheners.

Main Agencies Involved:

- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, Jammu (IIIM Jammu), the two bodies are mainly responsible for making purple revolution under the Aroma Mission a success.

Significance:

- Apart from being in sync with government policy of doubling farm incomes by 2022, lavender cultivation also provided employment to the district's women farmers thus gave impetus to inclusive growth.

Aroma Mission:

Objectives: The CSIR Aroma Mission is envisaged to bring transformative change in the aroma sector through desired interventions in the areas of agriculture, processing and product development for fuelling the growth of aroma industry and rural employment.

- The mission will promote the cultivation of aromatic crops for essential oils that are in great demand by the aroma industry.
- It is expected to enable Indian farmers and aroma industry to become global leaders in the production and export of some other essential oils on the pattern of menthol mint.
- It aims to provide substantial benefits to the farmers in achieving higher profits, utilization of waste lands and protection of their crops from wild and grazing animals.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**Global Bio-India-2021**

Recently, the Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare inaugurated the second edition of Global Bio-India-2021 in New Delhi through virtual mode.

- It showcases the strength and opportunities of India's biotechnology sector at national level and to the global community.
- The minister unveiled the "National Biotech Strategy" and also inaugurated the Virtual Exhibition of Global Bio-India at the occasion.

Key Points

- It is a mega international congregation of Biotechnology, with stakeholders including international bodies, regulatory bodies, Central and State Ministries, SMEs, large industries, bioclusters, research institutes, investors, and the startup ecosystem.

Aim:

- It aims at facilitating the recognition of India as an emerging Innovation Hub and the bio-manufacturing hub globally.
- India was ranked 48th in the Global Innovation Index Report 2020.

Objectives:

- Bio- Partnering, Policy Discussions, CEO's plans for India and connecting Indian Biotech ecosystem with international ecosystem and creating platforms for new idea evaluation and investments.
- Showcase and identify key biotechnological innovations, products, services, technologies from national and international companies, start-ups and research institutes.
- Attracting major contract projects from international companies as well as major global venture funding into India.
- According to the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report 2020, India is now ranked 1st among South-Asian countries compared to 6th rank in 2014.

Organisers:

- Co-organised by the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology along with its Public Sector Undertaking Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) in partnership with industry association Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE) and Invest India.
- ABLE is a not-for-profit pan-India forum that represents the Indian Biotechnology Sector.

ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY**NDC Synthesis Report: UNFCCC**

The UNFCCC, in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Synthesis Report, has called for more ambitious climate action plans by the countries in order to achieve the Paris Agreement target of containing global temperature rise to 2°C (ideally 1.5°C) by the end of the century.

- The report was sought ahead of the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the UNFCCC which is scheduled to take place from 1st-12th November 2021, in Glasgow, UK.
- NDCs are at the heart of the Paris Agreement and embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Each NDC reflects the country's ambition, taking into account its domestic circumstances and capabilities.

Key Points

- The NDC Synthesis Report covers submissions up to 31st December 2020 and includes new or updated NDCs by 75 Parties, which represent approximately 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Findings:**Good Performers:**

- The United Kingdom and the European Union are the only regions among 18 of the world's biggest emitters that have significantly increased their greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets.

Under Performers:

- Sixteen of the world's biggest emitters have not increased their emission reduction targets substantially or at all.

Adaptation Action and Economic Diversification:

- More countries reported on mitigation co-benefits of adaptation action and economic diversification plans.
- Adaptation actions and economic diversification plans with mitigation co-benefits include climate-smart agriculture, adapting coastal ecosystems, increasing the share of renewable sources in energy generation, carbon dioxide capture and storage, fuel switch and fuel price reforms in the transport sector, and moving to a circular economy for better waste management.

Need for the Update:

- The current levels of climate ambition are very far from putting us on a pathway that will meet our Paris Agreement goals.
- While a majority of countries increased their individual levels of ambition to reduce emissions, their combined impact will help achieve only a 1% reduction by 2030 compared to 2010 levels.
- Global emissions, however, need to reduce by 45% in order to meet the 1.5°C goal, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**Black-Browed Babbler Rediscovered**

Recently, a Black-Browed Babbler (*Malacocincla perspicillata*) was rediscovered in southeastern Kalimantan, the part of Borneo that is administered by Indonesia.

**Key Points**

- In the 1840s, a mystery bird was caught on an expedition to the East Indies. It was named as black-browed babbler.
- The species was never seen in the wild again, and a stuffed specimen featuring a bright yellow glass eye was the only proof of its existence.

- No Asian bird has been missing for as long as Indonesia's Black-browed Babbler. It has been missing for the last 170 years.
- This bird is often called 'the biggest enigma in Indonesian ornithology'.

About:

- It has a strong bill, chocolate colouring and distinctive black eye-stripe, its iris is of striking maroon colour.
- It has brown wings and a black stripe across its brow.

Significance:

- Discoveries like this give hope that it's possible to find other species that have been lost to science for decades or longer.
- More than 150 species of birds around the world are considered "lost" with no confirmed sightings in the past decade.
- Protection Status: **IUCN Red List: Data Deficient**

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar made it possible to think of an end to, if not a beginning for, the profound inequities of caste in India. Comment.

Ans:

In the pre-independence era, the question of the oppression of Dalits as a problem for thought was raised by many leaders like Jyotiba Phule, E.V. Ramasamy. However, it was due to the efforts of B. R Ambedkar, the Dalit issue transformed into nationwide social movement activism. He not only gave a voice to the voiceless people of India but also a political identity.

Contribution of Ambedkar in Awakening Dalit Consciousness:

Father of the Dalit Consciousness: His political and literary contribution to the awakening of the Dalit Consciousness is immense and he is universally accepted as the father of the Dalit Consciousness.

Ambedkar launched full-fledged movements for Dalit rights during the 1930s.

He demanded public drinking water sources open to all and right for all castes to enter temples.

He openly condemned Hindu Scriptures advocating discrimination and arranged symbolic demonstrations to enter the Kalaram Temple in Nashik.

Provided Political Rights to Dalits: He adopted various means to safeguard Dalit rights.

He was a delegate at the Round Table Conference in London, where he asked for a separate electorate for Dalits.

In 1932, the Poona Pact was signed between Dr. Ambedkar and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya to ensure reservation of seats for the untouchable class in the Provincial legislatures, within the general electorate.

Being the chairman of the drafting committee of Indian Constitution, Dr B.R. Ambedkar provided certain constitutional provisions to protect the rights of Dalits in social, economic, educational, employment, and political fields, in the form of positive discriminations or preferential treatments or reservation policy.

Provided Dalits With Political Identity: According to Ambedkar what British imperialism was to India, Hindu imperialism was to the untouchables. He linked nationalism with the social and political aspirations of the untouchables.

In 1936, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labor Party which later transformed into the All India Scheduled Castes Federation.

He saw that the Dalit movement lacked philosophical justification. So he wrote about the French revolution ideas of fraternity, liberty and equality.

He encouraged the Dalits to embrace Buddhism to liberate their own selves from Hindu subjugation.

Conclusion

The Dalit movement in India is a legacy of the multiple streams of Ambedkar's efforts to bring equality and to make systemic changes to the social order.

DAILY QUIZ

1. Consider the following statements about Exercise Desert Flag-VI:

1. It is an annual multinational warfare exercise of the UAE.
2. Indian Air Force is participating in the exercise for the first time in 2021.

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. With reference to Waste to Wealth Mission, consider the following statements:

1. The mission is undertaken by the Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC).
2. The mission will assist and augment the Smart Cities projects to create a circular economic model.

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. Consider the following statements regarding black-browed Babbler:

1. It is a bird recently rediscovered in Kalimantan, Indonesia.
2. It is listed as critically endangered in the IUCN Red List.

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. Better Than Cash Alliance (BTCA) is a partnership of governments that focuses on abolishing physical cash and providing responsible digital payment options.
2. India became a member of the Better Than Cash Alliance in 2015.

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. With reference to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), consider the following statements:

1. The secretariat of UNFCCC is located in Germany.
2. The UNFCCC is the parent treaty of the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement.
3. The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty which replaced the Kyoto Protocol.

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**