

GOVERNANCE**Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin**

Due to adverse impact of Covid-19, only 5.4% of the sanctioned houses under the central government's flagship rural housing scheme, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin, have reached completion for the year 2020-2021.

Key Points

- **Launch:** To achieve the objective of "Housing for All" by 2022, the erstwhile rural housing scheme Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) was restructured to Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) w.e.f 1st April, 2016.
- **Ministry Involved:** Ministry of Rural development.
- **Aim:** To provide a pucca house with basic amenities to all rural families, who are homeless or living in kutcha or dilapidated houses by the end of March 2022.
- To help rural people Below the Poverty Line (BPL) in construction of dwelling units and upgradation of existing unserviceable kutcha houses by providing assistance in the form of a full grant.
- **Beneficiaries:** People belonging to SCs/STs, freed bonded labourers and non-SC/ST categories, widows or next-of-kin of defence personnel killed in action, ex servicemen and retired members of the paramilitary forces, disabled persons and minorities.
- **Selection of Beneficiaries:** Through a three stage validation - Socio Economic Caste Census 2011, Gram Sabha, and geo-tagging.
- **Cost Sharing:** The cost of unit assistance is shared between Central and State Governments in the ratio 60:40 in plain areas and 90:10 for North Eastern and hilly states.

Features:

- The minimum size of the house has been increased to 25 sq.mt (from 20sq.mt) with a hygienic cooking space.
- The unit assistance has been increased from Rs. 70,000 to Rs. 1.20 lakh in plain and from Rs. 75,000 to Rs. 1.30 lakh in hilly states.
- The assistance for construction of toilets shall be leveraged through convergence with Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G), MGNREGS or any other dedicated source of funding.
- Convergence for piped drinking water, electricity connection, LPG gas connection etc. different Government programmes are also to be attempted.

Performance of the Scheme:

- Only 55% of the construction target has been completed.
- Of the 2.28 crore houses to be built for the rural poor, less than 1.27 crore had been built by January 2021.
- Money has been sanctioned to almost 85% of beneficiaries.
- This scheme has helped in employment generation. Many states provided employment to their migrant labourers during lock down.

INDIAN AGRICULTURE**Revival of Millet Cultivation**

An International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) supported initiative to revive Kodo and Kutki Millets cultivation, started in the year 2013-14 in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh, has given new life to the forgotten crops.

- IFAD is a specialized agency of the United Nations and was one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference.
- Founded in 1977, IFAD focuses on rural poverty reduction, working with poor rural populations in developing countries to eliminate poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.

Key Points**About the Project:****Beginning:**

- The project was started with 1,497 women-farmers from 40 villages – mostly from the Gonda and Baiga tribes – growing these two minor millets (Kodo and Kutki) on 749 acres.
- **Seed and Training:**
- The identified farmers were supplied good-quality seeds and trained by scientists from the Jawaharlal Nehru Agricultural University in Jabalpur and the local Krishi Vigyan Kendra – on

field preparation, line-sowing (as opposed to conventional broadcasting by hand) and application of compost, zinc, bavistin fungicide and other specific plant protection chemicals.

Self Help Groups:

- A federation of the farmers' self-help groups undertook procurement of the produce and also its mechanical de-hulling (the traditional manual pounding process to remove husk from the grain was time-consuming).

Impact:

- Helped in increasing the number of farmers growing kodo-kutki in the project area to 14,301 in 2019-20.
- Helped in increasing the acreage to 14,876 acres.
- Helped in meeting nutritional goals (fighting malnourishment among children).
- Helped in reviving millet cultivation (crop yields are 1.5-2 times higher than before).

Need for Reviving Millet Cultivation:

- **Nutritional Security:** Millets are less expensive and nutritionally superior to wheat & rice owing to their high protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals like iron content.
- Millets are also rich in calcium and magnesium.
- **Climate Resilient:** They are also harder and drought-resistant crops, which has to do with their short growing season (70-100 days, as against 120-150 days for paddy/wheat) and lower water requirement (350-500 mm versus 600-1,200 mm).
- **Economic Security:** As low investment is needed for production of millets, these can prove to be a sustainable income source for farmers.

Indian Initiatives:

- **Promoting Millets:** The Union Agriculture Ministry, in April 2018, declared millets as "Nutri-Cereals", considering their "high nutritive value" and also "anti-diabetic properties".
- 2018 was also observed as 'National Year of Millets'.
- **Increase in MSP:** The government has hiked the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Millets, which came as a big price incentive for farmers.
- **Input Support:** The government has introduced provision of seed kits and inputs to farmers, building value chains through Farmer Producer Organisations and supporting the marketability of millets.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process

External Affairs Minister of India attended the 9th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

He called for a "double peace" which means peace within Afghanistan and peace around Afghanistan and also said India supports the Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN).

Key Points

The Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP):

- It was founded in November, 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey.
- It provides a platform for sincere and results-oriented regional cooperation by placing Afghanistan at its center, in recognition of the fact that a secure and stable Afghanistan is vital to the prosperity of the Heart of Asia region.
- This platform was established to address the shared challenges and interests of Afghanistan and its neighbors and regional partners.
- The Heart of Asia comprises 15 participating countries, 17 supporting countries, and 12 supporting regional and international organizations.

India is a participating country.

- Since its inception the process has become a cardinal element in regional cooperation and has created a platform for Afghanistan's near and extended neighbors, international supporters and organizations to engage in constructive dialogue and to address the existing and emerging regional challenges through regional cooperation with Afghanistan at its core.

Intra-Afghan Negotiations (IAN):

- It refers to the talks between the Afghan government and Taliban insurgents with the goal of bringing an end to nearly two decades of a conflict that has laid waste to the country and killed tens of thousands of combatants and civilians.

- The participants of intra-Afghan negotiations will discuss the date and modalities of a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, including agreement over the future political roadmap of Afghanistan.
- The negotiations will cover a variety of issues, including the rights of women, free speech, and changes to the country's constitution.
- The talks would also lay out the fate of tens of thousands of Taliban fighters as well as the heavily armed militias belonging to Afghanistan's warlords who have amassed wealth and power since the Taliban were ousted from power in 2001.

Regional Connectivity Initiatives:

- During the conference, the Afghanistan President appreciated the number of regional connectivity initiatives including the Chabahar port project, as well as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline.

India's Stand:

- India believes any peace process must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled, has to respect the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and preserve the progress made in the establishment of a democratic Islamic Republic in Afghanistan.
- The interests of minorities, women and vulnerable sections of society must be preserved and the issue of violence across the country and its neighbourhood has to be effectively addressed.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) scheme**

The Central government plans to issue a 14-digit identification number to every plot of land in India within a year.

Key takeaways

- It will subsequently integrate its land records database with revenue court records and bank records, and Aadhaar numbers on a voluntary basis.
- The Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) scheme has been launched in 10 States in 2021
- It will be rolled out across India by March 2022
- It is being described as "the Aadhaar for land" — a number that would uniquely identify every surveyed parcel of land and prevent land fraud, especially in rural India
- The identification will be based on the longitude and latitude of the land parcel, and is dependent on detailed surveys and geo-referenced cadastral maps.
- This is the next step in the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP), which began in 2008 and has been extended several times as its scope grew.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**Asteroid Apophis**

Recently, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has ruled out the possibility of the dreaded asteroid Apophis causing any damage to the Earth for the next 100 years.

Key Points

- **Size:** Apophis is a near-Earth asteroid with a relatively large size (about 335 meters wide).
- **Name & Discovery:** Named after the ancient Egyptian god of chaos and darkness, it was discovered in 2004, after which NASA had said that it was one of the asteroids that posed the greatest threat to Earth.
- Apophis was predicted to come threateningly close to us in the years 2029 and 2036, but NASA later ruled these events out.
- However, there were still fears about a possible collision in 2068.

Near Earth Flight:

Recently, the asteroid flew past Earth on 5th March 2021, coming within 17 million km of our planet. During this approach, scientists used radar observations to study in detail the asteroid's orbit around the sun.

ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY**Nacaduba Sinhala Ramaswamii Sadasivan**

A group of lepidopterists have found a new butterfly species in India.



Key Points

- The species is named *Nacaduba sinhala ramaswamii* Sadasivan,
- It was discovered in the Agasthyamalais in the Western Ghats
- The new taxon of Lycaenid butterflies belongs to the *Nacaduba* genus.
- Line Blues are small butterflies belonging to the subfamily Lycaenidae.
- Their distribution ranges from India and Sri Lanka to the whole of south-eastern Asia, Australia and Samoa.
- It is the first time that a butterfly species was discovered by an all-Indian research team from the Western Ghats.

Do you know?

Lepidopterology is a branch of entomology concerning the scientific study of moths and the three superfamilies of butterflies.

Someone who studies in this field is a lepidopterist or an aurelian.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR

Recently, Special Forces of India and the USA conducted the joint military exercise ‘VAJRA PRAHAR 2021’ in Himachal Pradesh.

Earlier, India and the USA navy had carried out a two-day Passage Exercise (PASSEX) in the eastern Indian Ocean Region.

Key Points

- The joint exercise by the Special Forces of both the countries is conducted alternatively between India and the United States.
- Special Forces are the units of a country's armed forces that undertake covert, counterterrorist, and other specialized operations.
- This is the 11th edition of the exercise conducted at Special Forces Training School located at Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.
- The 10th edition of VAJRA PRAHAR was held in 2019 at Seattle, USA.

Aim:

- To share the best practices and experiences in areas such as joint mission planning and operational tactics as also to improve interoperability between the Special Forces of both nations.
- Other Exercises of India with the USA:
- Exercise Yudh Abhyas (Army).

Cope India (Air Force).

- Red Flag (USA's multilateral air exercise).
- Malabar Exercise (trilateral naval exercise of India, USA and Japan).

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns The Socio-Religious reformers of the 19-20th century aimed at modernization rather than westernization. Discuss. (250 words)

Ans:

From the early 19th century, debates and discussion about social customs and practices took a new character due to the development of new forms of communication.

- Various reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishawarchandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayananda Saraswati persuaded people to give up degraded age-old traditions like Sati, child marriage, polygamy, female infanticide etc. by adopting a new way of life.
- They were keen to spread knowledge of modernization in the country and bring about greater freedom and equality for women and “lower caste” people.

Westernisation vs Modernisation

- In simple terms, Westernization is a process of imitation of culture and values of western countries by non-western countries.
- On the other hand, Modernization has a wider connotation. Adopting the modern style or modern ways and ideas of thinking, living, etc is ‘Modernization’. Modernization is a change or modification which offers the promise of the preservation of the past.

19-20th century socio-religious reforms aimed at modernisation rather than westernisation

- The aim of these reformers was never to replace the local culture of India with the western culture. Rather they simply assimilated some western values which they saw as desirable for the development of the society such as humanism.
- They emphasised more on the interpretation of scriptures and simplification of rituals rather than outrightly imitating westernisation.
- Swami Vivekananda sought to bring reform through reinterpretations of the Vedas in the context of the changing world. He stressed on the ideal of social service and selfless action.
- Similarly, Raja Rammohun Roy had great respect for the western way of thinking, yet gave utmost respect and importance to Vedas and Upanishads.
- Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar used the ancient texts to suggest that widows could remarry. His suggestions were adopted by British officials, and a law was passed in 1856 permitting widow remarriage.
- Such thinkers were against certain social evils like Sati, idolatry, polytheism, untouchability etc but they believed in the essence of scriptures as a persuasive truth and not that was not compatible with the modern notions of equality and dignity of all individuals.
- In India, social reform did not ordinarily mean a reorganisation of the structuring of society at large, as it did in the West, for the benefit of underprivileged social and economic classes. Instead, it meant the infusion into the existing social structure of the new ways of life and thought; the society would be preserved, while its members would be transformed.

Conclusion

- In the evolution of modern India the reform movements of the 19-20th century have made very significant contributions. They stood for the democratization of society, removal of superstition and abhorrent customs, spread of enlightenment and the development of a rational and modern outlook.
- By the end of the 20th century, women themselves were actively working for reform. They wrote books, edited magazines, founded schools and training centres and set up a women’s association.
- These women, later on, joined various kinds of nationalist and socialist movements and contributed immensely in the freedom struggle.

DAILY QUIZ

1. Consider the following pairs:

- | | Exercise | Country |
|----|------------------|--------------|
| 1. | Vajra Prahar | India-USA |
| 2. | Shakti Exercise | India-UK |
| 3. | Yudh Abhyas | India-USA |
| 4. | Nomadic Elephant | India- Korea |

Which of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 2, 3 and 4
- 1, 2 and 3

2. Consider the following statements:

- The Companies Act, 2013 regulates incorporation, responsibilities and dissolution of a company.

- b) The rights of the minority shareholders of a private company are protected under the Companies Act, 2013.

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. Which of the following statements is/are correct about Millet:
1. It is a drought-resistant crop referred to as Superfood.
 2. India does not grow any indigenous variety of millet crop.
 3. Millet crops contain high calcium and protein content.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 only
c) **1 and 3 only**
d) 1, 2 and 3
4. Consider the following statements:

1. Trojans are the asteroid found in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.
2. The Near-Earth Asteroids (NEA) shares the orbit with Earth.

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 International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), consider the following statements:

1. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
2. IFAD works with poor rural populations in developing countries to eliminate poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.

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