

**GOVERNANCE****India & E-Commerce**

India with its efficient, quick and reliable logistics network, e-commerce platforms have nudged consumer behaviour patterns from an offline to an online shopping mode.

**About**

- E-commerce emerged as an enabler in ensuring the availability of essentials to the masses.
- E-commerce is going to be increasingly important in the future of retail shopping in India and the world over.
- The utility was also made evident during the pandemic when the world came to a standstill.
- The trend will continue to grow with the government's impetus on digital literacy, also supported by the increasing penetration of internet and smartphone users.

**Importance of E-Commerce:**

- Small businesses employing an exceptionally large number of workers need to use e-commerce more and more to augment their sales.
- These businesses compete against cheap imported goods while they face many disadvantages that unfairly dilutes their competitiveness.
- E-commerce provides them with the means to access a much bigger market without having to overly invest in marketing.
- This should include more and more foreign markets.
- Consumers, have benefited enormously from e-commerce. Also, the harmonious working of online and offline retailers is essential.
- With GST and the drive towards digitisation, more small traders need to be enabled to make the transition and take advantage of the expanding opportunities.

**Way Ahead:**

- Need for a comprehensive FDI policy on trade that takes care of the needs of all the stakeholders: Producers, consumers, service providers in the supply chain and small traders.
- The policies that have evolved over time need a relook to balance the interests of all in a win-win policy at a time when rapid expansion of the retail, organised retail as well e-commerce sector in India in coming years will create huge opportunities for all.
- Public policies need to provide an enabling environment and a level-playing field to promote and nurture competition and protect the interests of all.

Public policy on e-commerce needs to place an equal premium on the views and interests of all the stakeholders in the ecosystem to strengthen our domestic businesses and create many more jobs and livelihood opportunities in the country to fulfil the dreams of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATION****Boao Forum For Asia 2021**

The opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2021 was recently held in Boao, south China's Hainan Province. The BFA, this year, is celebrating its 20th Anniversary.

**Key Points****About: BFA Annual Conference 2021:**

- The forum witnessed more than 2500 participants coming from more than 60 countries. This year's theme is 'A World in Change: Join Hands to Strengthen Global Governance and Advance Belt and Road Cooperation'.
- The main agenda is to strengthen mutual understanding in the post-pandemic era, create additional incentives for overall socio-economic growth and effective global governance.
- An annual report on Asian Economy was released on the occasion which highlighted the importance of Asian economies which have fared well despite the ongoing pandemic.
- In terms of purchasing power parity, Asia's share in the global economic aggregate in 2020 reached 47.3%, up 0.9 percentage points from 2019.
- It showed that the economic integration of all Asian economies is accelerating.
- Signing of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) has been injecting strong momentum into regional and global economic growth. India is not a part of RCEP.

**About Boao Forum:**

- The Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) is an international not for profit organization which was jointly initiated by 26 member states in 2001, the members have now increased to 29. Its annual conference is held in Boao, Hainan province of China on a regular basis.
- India is also a member of the BFA.
- The establishment of BFA is modelled on the lines of the World Economic Forum which bases its annual meeting in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland. Thus earning the name of **‘Davos of the East’**.
- The founding purpose of BFA was to promote economic integration in Asia. Its mission now is to pool positive energy for the development of Asia and the world.
- The forum has not only played a unique role in pooling consensus and putting forward valuable "Boao proposals," but also engaged countries in addressing global issues and promoting world development and prosperity.
- Its five focal areas include technology innovation, health, education, culture and media in response to the new economy.

### **SOCIAL ISSUE**

#### **Gender Bias and Inclusion In Advertising In India**

Recently, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (GDI) released a report titled “Gender Bias and Inclusion In Advertising In India”. The research has shown that while ads in India are superior to global benchmarks insofar as girls and women have parity of representation in terms of screen and speaking time, their portrayal is problematic as they further gender stereotypes.

#### **Key Points**

**About Gender and Prominence:** While girls and women have a strong presence in Indian advertising, they are mostly reinforcing traditional gender roles by selling domestic and beauty products to female consumers.

**Impact:** This is problematic because of the intergenerational transfer of norms to children, including a lack of empowering role models for men undertaking domestic work in the home and women working in the paid workforce.

#### **About: Stereotyping Physical and Mental Capability:**

- **Decision Making:** Male characters are more likely to be shown making decisions about their future than female characters (7.3% compared with 4.8%), the latter are twice as likely to be shown making household decisions than male characters (4.9% compared with 2.0%).
- **Colourism:** Two-thirds of female characters (66.9%) in Indian ads have light or medium-light skin tones—a higher percentage than male characters (52.1%).
- This is problematic because this advances the discriminatory notion that light skin tones are more attractive.
- **Objectification:** Female characters are nine times more likely to be shown as “stunning/very attractive” than male characters (5.9% compared with 0.6%).
- Female characters are also invariably thin, but male characters appear with a variety of body sizes in Indian advertising.

**Impact:** Sexual objectification has serious consequences in the real world. The more girls and women internalize the idea that their primary value comes from being a sex object, the higher their rates of depression, body hatred and shame, eating disorders, and a host of other personal impacts.

#### **Gender Equality in India:**

- Gender equality in India has made gains as a result of legislative and policy measures, social-protection schemes for girls and adolescents and gender sensitive budgets over past years.
- Some Indian Initiatives Related to Girls: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme, Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG), Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, etc.
- India has attained gender parity in primary enrolment and boosted female literacy from 54% (2001) to 66% (2011).
- India ranks 108th out of 153 countries in the global gender inequality index in 2020, an increase since 2015 when it was ranked 130th out of 155 countries.
- India is among one of the few countries where under-5 mortality rates among girls is higher than boys.

- Gender-based discrimination and normalization of violence continues to be a challenge. Many women face overlapping social, emotional, physical, economic, cultural and caste related deprivations.
- Adolescent girls face vulnerabilities, including poor nutritional status, increased burden of care, early marriage and early pregnancy, and issues related to reproductive health and empowerment while 56% are anemic.

**Way Forward:**

Misrepresentation and harmful stereotypes of women in advertising have a significant impact on women and young girls—and how they view themselves and their value to society. While female representation dominates in Indian ads, they are still marginalised by colorism, hypersexualisation, and without careers or aspirations outside of the home.

**AGRICULTURE****Subsidy Policy for Urea Produced from Coal Gasification**

The Cabinet has approved an exclusive subsidy policy for urea produced through coal gasification by Talcher Fertilizers Limited (TFL). Urea is a widely used fertiliser in India.

**Key Points****About the TFL Urea Project:**

- Capacity and Location: TFL is setting up the 1.27 million tonne per annum capacity urea plant based on coal gasification technology in Odisha with an estimated investment of Rs. 13,277 crore.
- This will be the only plant to produce the nitrogenous soil nutrient (urea) through coal gasification route.
- Talcher Fertilizers Ltd. (TFL) is a Joint Venture Company of four PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings) namely Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers (RCF), GAIL (India) Ltd. (GAIL), Coal India Ltd. (CIL) and Fertilizer Corporation of India Ltd. (FCIL).

**Expected Benefits:**

- The project will improve availability of fertilizer to farmers thereby boosting development of eastern region and will save transport subsidy for supply of urea in eastern part of the country.
- It would assist in reducing Urea imports to the tune of 12.7 LMT (Lakh Metric Tonnes) per annum leading to savings in foreign exchange.
- It will also give a boost to the 'Make in India' initiative and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' campaign and would help development of infrastructure like roads, railways etc.
- It will also provide new business opportunities in the form of ancillary industries in the catchment area of the project.

**Coal Gasification:**

- Coal gasification is the process of converting coal into synthesis gas (also called syngas), which is a mixture of hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).
- The syngas can be used in a variety of applications such as in the production of electricity and making chemical products, such as fertilisers.
- The hydrogen obtained from coal gasification can be used for various purposes such as making ammonia, powering a hydrogen economy.
- The ammonia is reacted with the carbon dioxide to produce urea melt.
- In-situ gasification of coal—or Underground Coal Gasification (UCG)—is the technique of converting coal into gas while it is still in the seam and then extracting it through wells.
- India has set the target that by 2030 it will gasify 100 million tonne of coal under four major projects with an overall investment of Rs. 20,000 crore.

**Fertilizer Consumption in India:**

- India's fertiliser consumption in FY20 was about 61 million tonne — of which 55% was urea—and is estimated to have increased by 5 million tonne in FY21.
- Since non-urea (MoP, DAP, complex) varieties cost higher, many farmers prefer to use more urea than actually needed.
- The government has taken a number of measures to reduce urea consumption. It introduced neem-coated urea to reduce illegal diversion of urea for non-agricultural uses. It also stepped up the promotion of organic and zero-budget farming.

- Subsidy on Urea: The Centre pays subsidy on urea to fertiliser manufacturers on the basis of cost of production at each plant and the units are required to sell the fertiliser at the government-set Maximum Retail Price (MRP).
- Subsidy on Non-Urea Fertilisers: The MRPs of non-urea fertilisers are decontrolled or fixed by the companies. The Centre, however, pays a flat per-tonne subsidy on these nutrients to ensure they are priced at “reasonable levels”.
- Examples of non-urea fertilisers: Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP), Muriate of Potash (MOP)

**IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM****1.National Civil Service Day**

Every year, 21st April is celebrated as the Civil Services Day by the Government of India.

**Key Points****About:**

- It is celebrated as an occasion for the civil servants to rededicate themselves to the causes of citizens and renew their commitments to public service and excellence in work.
- The date is chosen to commemorate the day when the first Home Minister of Independent India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel addressed the probationers of Administrative Services Officers in 1947 at Metcalf House, Delhi.
- He referred to civil servants as the ‘Steel Frame of India’.

**Civil Services Day Function:**

- The first function on civil services day was held in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi in 2006.
- On this day, the Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Public Administration are presented to Districts/Implementing Units for implementation of Priority programme and innovation categories.

**Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel:**

- He was born on 31st October, 1875 in Nadiad, Gujarat.
- National Unity Day is celebrated every year to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
- He played an important role in the integration of many Indian princely states to make an Indian federation.
- Women of Bardoli bestowed the title ‘Sardar’ on Vallabhbhai Patel, which means ‘a Chief or a Leader’.
- He is also remembered as the ‘Patron saint of India’s civil servants’ as he established the modern all-India services system.

**2.Earth Day 2021**

Every year, 22nd April is celebrated as Earth Day to raise public awareness about the environment and inspire people to save and protect it. The theme for the year 2021 ‘Restore Our Earth’ examines natural processes, emerging green technologies and innovative thinking that can restore the world’s ecosystems.

**Key Points****Background:**

- Earth Day was first observed in 1970, when 20 million took to the streets to protest against environmental degradation on the call of US Senator Gaylord Nelson.
- The event was triggered by the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, as well as other issues such as smog and polluted rivers.
- In 2009, the United Nations designated 22nd April as ‘International Mother Earth Day’.

**About:**

- Earth Day is now globally coordinated by EARTHDAY.ORG, which is a non profit organisation. It was formerly known as Earth Day Network.
- It aims to “build the world’s largest environmental movement to drive transformative change for people and the planet.”
- It recognizes a collective responsibility, as called for in the 1992 Rio Declaration (Earth Summit), to promote harmony with nature and the Earth to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations of humanity.
- The landmark Paris Agreement, which brings almost 200 countries together in setting a common target to reduce global greenhouse emissions, was also signed on Earth Day 2016.

**Other Important Days:**

- 22nd March: World Water Day
- 22nd April: Earth Day
- 22nd May : World Biodiversity Day
- 5th June: World Environment Day

**3.Global Youth Mobilization Initiative**

- Recently, an initiative called the 'Global Youth Mobilization' has been launched for youths in communities impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A Global Youth Summit (GYS), to be held virtually on 23rd-25th April 2021, marks the starting point for young people to get involved in the mobilization.
- The GYS aims to offer young people aged 14-30 new insights, skills and contacts, as well as a platform to engage with their peers, leaders and policy makers.

**Key Points**

- **About:** It is a movement of young people taking action to improve their lives now and in a post-Covid-19 world.
- **Aim:** To address the negative impact of the pandemic on young people and support them to build back better.
- **Organisations Involved:** It is supported by the world's six largest youth organisations, World Health Organization (WHO), and United Nations (UN) Foundation.
- **Need:** There are an estimated 1.2 billion young people impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic response measures. Disruptions to education, employment, services and social support have changed the future of an entire generation.
- **Funding:** With support from the Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund, Global Youth Mobilization will support and scale-up youth-led solutions and youth engagement programs across the world. The Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund was established by the WHO with the help of the UN Foundation and the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation.

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE****Q. Explain the term probity and its relevance to civil services in India. (250 words)****Ans:**

Probity and its synonyms honesty, honor, and integrity all mean uprightness of character or action, with some slight differences in emphasis. It stands for impeccable standards of morality in public life. It is the quality or condition of having strong moral principles, integrity, good character, honesty, decency.

**Body****Relevance of Probity in Civil services:**

- Probity for civil servants elucidates that a civil servant should not only adhere to the conventional civil services values like performance, integrity, and patriotism. She/He shall also uphold the ethical and integrity values like respect for human rights, morality in public life, and compassion for the downtrodden and dedication to their welfare.
- It helps in building trust and confidence, which is required for the formation of an environment where there is a premium on honesty, transparency, openness, boldness, fairness and justice.
- It prevents unethical practices like misconduct, fraud, favouritism, criminalization of governance, self-centred functionaries and corruption in governance.
- It ensures public interest and cooperation in governance for participatory governance. It will bring the lost public trust back and help in achieving the inclusive growth.

**Conclusion**

- Probity and honesty in governance are essential and vital requirements for an efficient and effective system of governance and for socio-economic development. Thus, it is an urgent need of the time that not only the public servants but the whole society adopts such values in their day to day life.
- India needs to work on reforms and frame policies to prepare the economy for facing global competition. This can be done by easing land acquisition, reforming labour laws and bridging infrastructure deficit.

**DAILY QUIZ****Q. Consider the following statements regarding Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS):**

1. It will create a robust startup ecosystem, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns of India.

2. It was launched by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1&2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2**

Q.2 Which of the following Sea does not border Germany on its northern side?

- a) Dead Sea
- b) Mediterranean
- c) SeaBaltic sea**
- d) Both (a) and (b)

Q.3 Consider the following statements.

- 1. A part of the coronavirus's spike protein is called the fusion peptide.
- 2. This compound varies among coronaviruses. Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only**
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

4. World Press Freedom Index is released by which of the following?

- a) Doctors without borders
- b) Amnesty International
- c) World Economic Forum
- d) Reporters without borders**

5. Consider the following statements regarding Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

- 1. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is an inter-governmental forum for Pacific Rim member economies that promotes free trade throughout the Asia-Pacific region.
- 2. APEC is recognized as one of the highest-level multilateral blocs and oldest forums in the Asia-Pacific region.
- 3. China, Russia and India are the members of APEC.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1,2,3
- b) 1,2**
- c) 1,3,4
- d) Neither 1 nor 2