

GOVERNANCE**DBT for Mid Day Meal Scheme**

The Ministry of Education has approved the proposal to provide monetary assistance to students through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of the cooking cost component of the Mid-Day-Meal (MDM) Scheme, to all eligible children.

Key Points**Implications of DBT for MDM Scheme:**

- With schools closed for months due to Covid-19, this move will give a fillip to the Midday Meal programme.
- This is in addition to the Government of India's announcement of distribution of free-of-cost food grains at Rs. 5/kg per person per month to nearly 80 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY).
- It will help safeguard the nutritional levels of children and aid in protecting their immunity during the challenging pandemic times.
- This one time special welfare measure will benefit about 11.8 crore children studying in class I to VIII in the 11.20 lakh Government and Government aided schools across the country.
- The central government will provide additional funds of about Rs. 1200 crore to state governments and UT administrations for this purpose.

About Mid-Day-Meal Scheme:

- **Launch:** It is a centrally sponsored scheme which was launched in 1995. It is considered as the world's largest school feeding programme aimed to attain the goal of universalization of primary education.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Education.
- **Aim:** To address hunger and malnutrition, increase enrolment and attendance in school, improve socialisation among castes, provide employment at grassroot level especially to women.
- **Provisions:**
 1. Provides cooked meals to every child within the age group of six to fourteen years studying in classes I to VIII who enrolls and attends the school.
 2. Cooked meal having nutritional standards of 450 calories and 12 gm of protein for primary (I-V class) and 700 calories and 20 gm protein for upper primary (VI-VIII class).
 3. If the Mid-Day Meal is not provided in school on any school day due to non-availability of food grains or any other reason, the State Government shall pay food security allowance by 15th of the succeeding month.
 4. **Beneficiaries:** All children in government and aided schools and madrasas supported under Samagra Shiksha.

Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme

- **Aim:** It has been visioned as an aid for simpler/faster flow of information and funds to the beneficiaries and to reduce the fraud in the delivery system.
- **Implementation:** It is a mission or an initiative by the government of India started on 1st January 2013 as a way to reform the government delivery system. Central Plan Scheme Monitoring System (CPSMS), the earlier version of the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), of the Office of Controller General of Accounts, was chosen to act as the common platform for routing of the Direct Benefit Transfer.
- **Components of DBT:** Primary components in the implementation of DBT schemes include Beneficiary Account Validation System, a robust payment and reconciliation platform integrated with RBI, NPCI, Public & Private Sector Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Cooperative Banks (core banking solutions of banks, settlement systems of RBI, Aadhaar Payment Bridge of NPCI) etc.
- **Other Schemes involving DBT:** Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, National Food Security Mission, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, PM KISAN, Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin, Atal Pension Yojana, National AYUSH Mission.

INDIAN ECONOMY**43rd GST Council Meeting**

Recently, the 43rd Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council meeting was held. This was the first meeting of the GST Council in the financial year 2021-22. The council's last meeting was held in October 2020.

GST Council

- It is a constitutional body (Article 279A) for making recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to Goods and Services Tax.
- The GST Council is chaired by the Union Finance Minister and other members are the Union State Minister of Revenue or Finance and Ministers in-charge of Finance or Taxation of all the States.
- It is considered as a federal body where both the centre and the states get due representation.

Key Points

- **Ad Hoc Exemptions for Covid-Related Equipment:**The GST Council decided to exempt the import of many such items.
- The exemption has been extended to August 2021.
- Exemptions will be granted to the import of relief items even if they have been purchased as long as they are meant for donations to state governments. Earlier, Integrated Goods & Services Tax (IGST) exemption was granted only free of cost imports.
- With the rising cases of Black Fungus, a particular medicine required for it — amphotericin-B — has also been included in the exemption list (for tax-free imports).
- It also proposed to set-up a Group of Ministers (GoM) committee to look into further exemptions that can be provided on account of the Covid-19 relief measure.

GST Amnesty Scheme:

- It has been recommended for reducing late fees. Taxpayers can file pending returns, avail benefits of the scheme, with reduced late fees. It will provide relief to small taxpayers who constitute 89% of GST payers.
- Late fees have also been rationalised. The maximum amount of late fee has been reduced and it will come into effect from future tax periods. This will provide long-term relief for small GST taxpayers.

GST Compensation Cess (States' Dues):

- Same formula as in 2020 will be adopted this year too. The rough estimate is that the Centre will have to borrow Rs 1.58 lakh crore, which will be passed on to states as back-to-back loans.
- A special session of the GST Council will be held to discuss extending paying compensation to states beyond 2022.

Advance Payment to Vaccine Manufacturers:

- Rs. 4,500 crore rupees were paid to two vaccine manufacturers as advance payment.
- The country is engaging with suppliers and manufacturers including from Japan, and Europe for vaccines.

Annual Return Filing:

- Annual return filing has been simplified. The Council has recommended amending the Central Goods & Services Tax (CGST) Act 2017 to allow for self-certification of reconciliation statements, instead of getting it certified by Chartered Accountants.
- The Annual Return filing will continue to be optional for 2020-21 for small taxpayers, having a turnover of less than two crore rupees while reconciliation statements for 2020-21 will be furnished only by those taxpayers whose turnover is five crore rupees or more.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**Non Aligned Movement: Health Ministers' Meet**

Recently, the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare virtually participated in a meeting with Ministers of Health of the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) Countries.

Key Points**India's Stand at the Meeting:**

- **Vaccine Maitri Initiative:** Despite its own needs, during the Covid-19 pandemic, India ensured supply of medicines to 123 partner countries including 59 NAM nations.
- **Efforts to 'Universal Health Coverage':**
 1. Universal health coverage is defined as ensuring that all people have access to needed health services (including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation) of sufficient quality to be effective while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship.
 2. Ayushman Bharat aims at providing free health assurance to over 500 million underprivileged people, making it the world's largest health assurance scheme.

3. It adopts a two-pronged approach: Firstly, the creation of health and wellness centres to bring health care closer to homes. Secondly, the formulation of a Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) to protect poor and vulnerable families against financial risk arising out of catastrophic health episodes.
4. Full immunization coverage is increasing at a rapid pace with a greater emphasis on village-based micro-plans that is aimed at enhancing coverage to 90% in a year.

About Non-Aligned Movement:

- **Background:** It was formed during the Cold War (1945-1991) as an organisation of States that did not seek to formally align themselves with either the USA (Capitalism) or the Soviet Union (Socialism) but sought to remain independent or neutral.
- **Foundation:**
 1. Six years after the Bandung Conference in 1955, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries was founded on a wider geographical basis at the First Summit Conference of Belgrade, which was held in September 1961.
 2. It was held under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Sukarno of Indonesia.
- **Purpose:** The purpose of the organisation was enumerated in the Havana Declaration of 1979 to ensure "the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign subjugation.
- **Members and Observers:**
 1. It had 120 members as of April 2018 comprising 53 countries from Africa, 39 from Asia, 26 from Latin America and the Caribbean and 2 from Europe.
 2. There are 17 countries and 10 international organisations that are Observers at NAM.
- **Headquarters:**
 1. NAM does not have a formal constitution or permanent secretariat, and its administration is non-hierarchical and rotational.
 2. Decisions are made by consensus, which requires substantial agreement, but not unanimity.
- **Last Summit:** In 2020, the meeting was convened at the initiative of President Ilham Aliyev (present chairman until 2022) of Azerbaijan, in his capacity as chair of the Non Aligned Movement.

INDIAN GEOGRAPHY

Cyclone Yaas

Recently, cyclone Yaas made landfall south of Balasore in Odisha. Earlier, another cyclonic storm named 'Cyclone Tauktae' had affected the Indian states of Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, along with two Union Territories: Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep.

Key Points

About:

- The cyclone has been named Yaas by Oman. The word Yaas has originated from the Persian language and means 'Jasmin' in English.
- Typically, tropical cyclones in the North Indian Ocean region (Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea) develop during the pre-monsoon (April to June) and post-monsoon (October to December) periods. May-June and October-November are known to produce cyclones of severe intensity that affect the Indian coasts.

Classification:

- It has been classified as a very severe cyclone.
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) classifies cyclones on the basis of the maximum sustained surface wind speed (MSW) they generate. The cyclones are classified as severe (MSW of 48-63 knots), very severe (MSW of 64-89 knots), extremely severe (MSW of 90-119 knots) and super cyclonic storm (MSW of 120 knots or more).

Areas Affected: It affected the bordering regions of West Bengal and Odisha and weakened into a cyclonic storm, leaving behind a trail of destruction on the eastern coast.

Bay of Bengal Getting Warmer:

- The Bay of Bengal, where cyclone Yaas has formed, is at least two degrees warmer than what is normal for this time of the year.
- The north Bay of Bengal is exceptionally warm with temperatures up to 32 degrees.

Tropical Cyclones:

- A tropical cyclone is an intense circular storm that originates over warm tropical oceans and is characterized by low atmospheric pressure, high winds, and heavy rain.
- A characteristic feature of tropical cyclones is the eye, a central region of clear skies, warm temperatures, and low atmospheric pressure.
- Storms of this type are called hurricanes in the North Atlantic and eastern Pacific and typhoons in SouthEast Asia and China. They are called tropical cyclones in the southwest Pacific and Indian Ocean region and Willy-willies in north-western Australia.
- Storms rotate counterclockwise in the northern hemisphere and clockwise in the southern hemisphere.
- The conditions favourable for the formation and intensification of tropical storms are:
 1. Large sea surface with temperature higher than 27° C.
 2. Presence of the Coriolis force.
 3. Small variations in the vertical wind speed.
 4. A pre-existing weak low- pressure area or low-level-cyclonic circulation.
 5. Upper divergence above the sea level system.

Naming of Tropical Cyclones:

- According to WMO (World Meteorological Organization) guidelines, countries in every region are supposed to give names for cyclones.
- The North Indian Ocean Region covers tropical cyclones formed over Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
- The 13 members, which come under the region, are Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Yemen.
- IMD, one of the six Regional Specialised Meteorological Centres (RSMC) in the world, is mandated to issue advisories and name tropical cyclones in the north Indian Ocean Region. It is an agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY

Jayanti: New Species of Cricket

Recently, a new species of Cricket named 'Indimimus jayanti' was found in the Kurra caves of Chhattisgarh. The new species was named after Professor Jayant Biswas, one of the leading cave explorers in the country.

Key Points

About the New Spider Cricket:

- The new species of cricket has been identified under the genus Arachnomimus Saussure, 1897.
- Jayanti has led to the new subgenus 'Indimimus'.
- Males of the new Jayanti subgenus cannot produce sound and their females don't have ears.

About the New Subgenus:

- The newly discovered subgenus, Indimimus, is different from the two subgenera, Arachnomimus and Euarachnomimus, because of the male genitalia structure.
- Insects have a lock-and-key model genitalia structure which is unique to each subgenus.

Arachnomimus Saussure, 1897:

- Arachnomimus is the genus name given by Swiss Entomologist Henri Louis Frédéric de Saussure in 1878 to crickets that resembled spiders.
- Crickets of this group are commonly called spider crickets because of their smaller body size and long legs.

Significance of the Discovery:

- It can help in designing hearing aids for humans.
- The new species may be communicating by beating their abdomen or any other body part on the cave walls.
- Vibrational communication is one of the softest but fastest modes of signal transmission. Vibrational communication can be regarded as an interaction between the physical properties of the environment and insect's anatomy and physiology and resulting behavior. Further studies on their skills of vibrational communication may help in designing hearing aids for humans which can capture quietest signals and amplify to an audible hearing range.

- With the discovery of Jayanti from India, the genus Arachnomimus is now known from 12 species. Distribution of these species is very wide, ranging from Brazil to Malaysia.
- In India, the diversity of spider crickets is still unexplored. Given India is home to four biodiversity hotspots, and all the hotspots have unexplored caves, there is significant scope for many more discoveries.

About Crickets:

- Cricket, any of approximately 2,400 species of leaping insects that are worldwide in distribution and known for the musical chirping of the male.
- They have mainly cylindrical bodies, round heads, and long antennae. Behind the head is a smooth, robust pronotum.
- Crickets are noticeable for their loud calls, especially at night. Male crickets produce this sound by rubbing their wings against each other to attract females.
- The females listen to these calls using ears located on their legs and approach the males for mating and reproduction.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Yellow Fungus

After black and white fungus, the recent case of yellow fungus has become a cause for concern.

Key Points

About:

- Yellow fungus, also called mucor septic, initially develops by the presence of moulds (a type of fungi) in the environment. It may be present with unnecessary fatigue, rashes, burning sensation on skin etc. Humidity levels below 30-40% can promote the growth of fungus.
- It may not start from the lungs but it invades internal organs of the body and affects the entire functioning.

Potential Causes:

- Prolonged use of steroids, contaminated environment, uncontrolled diabetes, unhygienic habits, lesser immunity, comorbidities.
- The treatment for Covid-19 includes steroids and immunosuppressants that leave the body with weak immunity.

Symptoms:

- Weight loss, reduced appetite, lethargy are the common symptoms of yellow fungus infection.
- If not detected in time, symptoms can become more severe including pus leakage, sunken eyes, organ failure, slow healing of wounds and necrosis (cells in the living tissues die prematurely).

Treatment: Till now the only known treatment for yellow fungus is Amphotericin B injection, which is an antifungal drug also being used to treat black fungus.

Prevention: Maintaining hygiene, not consuming stale food, keeping the humidity in the room in check, etc.

Black Fungus Mucormycosis, previously known as zygomycosis and sometimes termed as black fungus, is generally spread by breathing in, eating food contaminated by, or getting spores of molds of the Mucorales type in an open wound.

White Fungus White Fungus or Candidiasis is a fungal infection caused by a yeast (a type of fungus) called Candida.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite some recent examples to validate your answer.

Ans:

Introduction

- A federal government is one in which powers are divided between the national government and the regional governments by the Constitution itself.
- The Constitution of India provides for a federal system of government. However, the Indian model of federalism is significantly different from that of the American model (referred to as the epitome of federal polity).

- Indian federalism has a strong unitary bias, but due to unique socio-economic and political conditions, it has evolved to assume the various features of cooperative, competitive, and confrontational federalism.

Body

Cooperative Federalism: It envisages that the Centre and states share a horizontal relationship, where they “cooperate” in the formulation and implementation of national policies. This can be reflected in the recent steps taken by the Central Government.

- With the rollout of the GST and the formation of the GST Council, both the Centre and states government are having a say in implementing the one country-one tax system.
- The union government has abolished the Planning Commission and replaced it with NITI Aayog. One of the mandates of the NITI Aayog is to develop competitive federalism.

Competitive Federalism: It envisages the competition between the states.

- The SDG India Index, Aspirational Districts Programme, Swachh Bharat Ranking, Ease of Doing Business Ranking incorporates a sense of competition amongst the states for funds from the central government.

Confrontational Federalism: It is a result of central government transgressing into the powers of the state government.

- The unilateral revocation of the special status conferred on Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) under Article 370 of the Constitution has been criticized by many experts as against the spirit of federalism.
- Many constitutional experts have criticized the central government's decision of using a concurrent List to make laws on state list subjects. For example, The union government has passed three farm laws despite agriculture being the state list subject. This has led to massive farmers' protests. Under the recent NIA amendment Act, the central government may direct the NIA to investigate such cases as if the offense has been committed in India.
- The role of the governor as an agent of the central government (in Maharashtra & Karnataka) whereby governors act in a partisan way, generally against the state government whose views are not in concurrence with the party in power at union level.
- Also, there are many river-water sharing disputes amongst the states. For example Cauvery river disputes, Mahadayi river dispute.

Conclusion

In *SR Bommai vs Union of India* (1994), the Supreme Court held federalism a part of the basic structure of the Constitution. However, due to the strong unitary bias and particularly the way it has evolved over the years, many constitutional experts describe Indian federalism as, “federation without federalism”, “a Union of Unequal States” or “Quasi-Federal In Nature”.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. With reference to OSIRIS-REx (Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security, Regolith Explorer), consider the following statements:

1. It is a NASA asteroid-study and sample-return mission.
2. It is the third planetary science mission selected in the New Frontiers program, after Juno and New Horizons.
3. Bennu was chosen as the target of study because the availability of liquid water on its surface.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The leatherback sea turtle is the largest of all living turtles.
2. Globally, leatherback sea turtle status according to IUCN is listed as Critically Endangered (CR).

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

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

Q3. A Grant Agreement from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the World Bank for “Ecosystem Service Improvement Project” was signed between India and the World Bank few years ago. The project focusses on :

1. Promoting use of bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides
2. Deregulation of the use of bio-control agents to increase their acceptability and usage in traditional communities
3. Assessment of Economic value of forests for determining a reasonable rehabilitation package for displaced communities in future public projects
4. Improving the livelihoods of forest dependent communities

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

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

Q4. In India, the design of water supply systems has been done using BIS 1172: 1993. As per this standard what is the average consumption of water in rural areas?

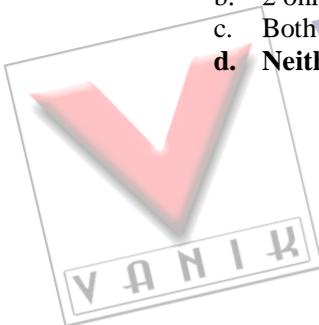
- a. 150 litres per head per day
- b. 150 to 200 litres per head per day
- c. **Less than 150 litres per head per day**
- d. Above 200 litres per head per day

Q5. What is the difference between Generic drugs and brand-name medicines?

1. Generic drugs use an alternative cheaper Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) for making the same medicine.
2. Generic drugs are not subject to any regulatory constraints.

Which of the above given statements is/are correct?

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



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