

GOVERNANCE**Women in Military**

Two women officers have been selected to undergo helicopter pilot training for the first time in the Army Aviation Corps. They will join front-line flying duties on completion of their training in July 2022. Till now, women officers were assigned only ground duties in the Army Aviation Corps.

Army Aviation Corps

- Raised in November 1986, it operates the Dhruv advanced light helicopter, Chetak, Cheetahs and Cheetal helicopters.
- It carries out an important role in supporting the army's deployment in high altitude areas, including the Siachen Glacier.

Key Points**Deployment in the Armed Forces:**

- The Army, Air Force and Navy began inducting women as short-service commission (SSC) officers in 1992. This was the first time when women were allowed to join the military outside the medical stream.
- One of the turning points for women in the military came in 2015 when Indian Air Force (IAF) decided to induct them into the fighter stream.
- In 2020, the Supreme Court (SC) ordered the central government to grant permanent commission (PC) to women officers in the Army's non-combat support units on par with their male counterparts.
- 1. The SC had rejected the government's stand of women officers' physiological limitations as being based on "sex stereotypes" and "gender discrimination against women".
- 2. Women officers have been granted PC in the Indian Army in all the ten branches where women are inducted for SSC.
- 3. Women are now eligible to occupy all the command appointments, at par with male officers, which would open avenues for further promotions to higher ranks for them.
- In early 2021, the Indian Navy deployed four women officers on warships after a gap of almost 25 years. India's only aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and fleet tanker INS Shakti are the warships that have been assigned their first women crews since the late 1990s.
- In May 2021, the Army inducted the first batch of women into the Corps of Military Police, the first time that women joined the military in the non-officer cadre. However, Women are still not allowed in combat arms like Infantry and Armored Corps.

Increment in Numbers:

- It has increased almost three-fold over the last six years, with more avenues being opened to them at a steady pace.
- There are 9,118 women currently serving the army, navy and air force.
- According to 2019 figures, women comprise only 3.8% of the world's second-largest army - compared to 13% of the air force and 6% of the navy.

Significance:

- **Gender is not a Hindrance:** As long as an applicant is qualified for a position, one's gender is arbitrary. In modern high technology battlefield technical expertise and decision-making skills are increasingly more valuable than simple brute strength.
- **Military Readiness:** Allowing a mixed gender force keeps the military strong. The armed forces are severely troubled by falling retention and recruitment rates. This can be addressed by allowing women in the combat role.
- **Effectiveness:** The blanket restriction for women limits the ability of commanders in theater to pick the most capable person for the job.
- **Tradition:** Training will be required to facilitate the integration of women into combat units. Cultures change over time and the masculine subculture can evolve too.
- **Global Scenario:** When women officially became eligible for combat positions in the American military in 2013, it was widely hailed as another step towards the equality of sexes. In 2018, the UK military lifted a ban on women serving in close combat ground roles, clearing the way for them to serve in elite special forces.

Way Forward

- Women were being kept out of command posts on the reasoning that the largely rank and file will have problems with women as commanding officers. Thus, changes have to take place in

the culture, norms, and values of not only the rank and file of the Army but also that of society at large. The responsibility to usher these changes lies with the senior military and political leadership.

- The United States, Israel, North Korea, France, Germany, Netherlands, Australia and Canada are among the global militaries that employ women in front-line combat positions.
- It is the right of every woman to pursue a career of her choice and reach the top since Equality is a constitutional guarantee.

2. Railways Gets 5 MHz Spectrum

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the allotment of 5 MHz spectrum in the 700 MHz frequency band to the Indian Railways for improving its communication and signalling systems. Railways has also approved a indigenously developed Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS).

Key Points

About:

- The project, targeted to be completed in five years, is estimated to cost over Rs. 25,000 crore.
- The spectrum charges will be levied based on formula as prescribed by Department of Telecommunications for Royalty Charges and License Fee for captive use as recommended by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).
- With this spectrum, the railways will introduce Long-Term Evolution (LTE)-based Mobile Train Radio Communication (MTRC) on its routes. The Railways currently relies on optical fibre for its communication network but with the allocation of fresh spectrum, it will be able to use high-speed radio on a real-time basis. LTE is a fourth-generation (4G) wireless standard that provides increased network capacity and speed for cellphones and other cellular devices compared with third-generation (3G) technology.

Benefits:

- **Seamless Connection:**
 1. It will be used for modern signalling and train protection systems and ensure seamless communication between loco pilots and guards.
 2. The purpose of the LTE for Indian Railways is to provide secure and reliable voice, video and data communication services for operational, safety and security applications.
- **Reduced Accidents & Delays:**
 1. It will help prevent train accidents and reduce delays by enabling real-time interaction between the Loco Pilot, Station Master and the Control Centre.
- **Internet of Things:**
 1. This will also enable the railways to undertake Internet of Things (IoT) based remote asset monitoring, particularly of coaches, wagons and locos, and monitor live video feed of CCTV cameras in the coaches to ensure efficient, safer and faster train operations.
 2. IoT is a computing concept that describes the idea of everyday physical objects being connected to the internet and being able to identify themselves to other devices.

Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS).

- It is a microprocessor based control system, which continuously monitors the speed, direction of travel, distance travelled, aspect of the signal passed and alertness of the motorman and thus increases the safety of the railway system.
- It will help in improving the safety and increasing the line capacity to accommodate more trains using the existing infrastructure. The modern rail network will result in reduced transportation cost and higher efficiency.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

China-ASEAN Meeting

Recently, China hosted a meeting of foreign ministers from the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. The meeting marks the 30th anniversary of China-ASEAN dialogue.

Key Points.

China's Stand:

- **China's Cultural Diplomacy:** Reiterated that China and ASEAN should jointly carry forward Asian values in a subtle dig at the West. China in 2014 had put forward the idea that it was for "Asian people to uphold Asia's security".
- **Covid-Vaccines:** China offered ASEAN countries its vaccines as well as closer cooperation on joint vaccine development and production.

- **Maritime Security & Disputes:** China called for considering the lifting of China-ASEAN ties to comprehensive strategic partnership and strive for an early agreement on a code of conduct in the South China Sea. China is banking on deep economic links to both offset maritime disputes and the push among some ASEAN countries for closer defence ties with the US amid their concerns about China's growing military footprint in the South China Sea.
- **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership:** China pushed for the early implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which was signed by China, ASEAN countries, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand in November 2020. India withdrew from the RCEP largely because of concerns it would open it up to Chinese goods amid an already wide trade imbalance with China, and the failure of the agreement to adequately open up to services.

ASEAN's Importance for China:

- ASEAN plays a key role in Chinese economic and strategic interests.
- The region straddles vital sea lanes of communication that represent China's access to the global market, including vital imports of Middle Eastern oil.
- Economically entwined with China, the relatively small nations of the region also offer ample opportunities for China to advance its influence and weaken what Chinese strategists perceive as a US (Presence of US) engineered chain of encirclement around the Chinese mainland.

ASEAN and India:

- Traditionally the basis of India-ASEAN ties has been trade and people-to-people ties due to shared historical and cultural roots, a more recent and urgent area of convergence has been balancing China's rise. In 2020, 17th ASEAN-India Virtual Summit was held. The 8th East Asia Summit Economic Ministers' Meeting (EAS-EMM) was also held in 2020. It comprises the ten member states of the ASEAN, along with 8 other countries namely Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA.
- Both India and ASEAN aim to establish a rules-based security architecture for peaceful development in the region, in contrast to China's aggressive policies.
- Like India, several ASEAN members such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei have territorial disputes with China, the China factor does form an important component of the relationship.
- India in 2014 reinvigorated the Look East policy into Act East, with a more strategic outlook than its previous incarnation, focusing on engagement not just with Southeast Asian countries but also those in the Pacific. The main focus of the Act East policy is on enhancing connectivity between India and South East Asia.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations**About:**

- It is a regional grouping that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation.
- It was established in August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the founding fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Its chairmanship rotates annually, based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.
- ASEAN countries have a total population of 650 million people and a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD 2.8 trillion. It is India's 4th largest trading partner with about USD 86.9 billion in trade.

Members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam..



Way Forward

- With China frequently displaying the intention as well as capability to challenge India, as seen in the Doklam standoff, it is pertinent that India finds more like-minded nations interested in working together to protect regional peace and stability.
- In this context, ASEAN fits the bill perfectly. ASEAN can also spur rapid growth of India's underdeveloped northeastern region if linkages that enable movement of people and goods could be established quickly.
- But in order to do that, India must focus on speeding up connectivity projects and addressing its uneven balance of trade with ASEAN nations.

ECONOMY

Global Economic Prospects: World Bank

Recently, the World Bank has released its June 2021 Global Economic Prospects where it has forecast India's GDP growth to be 8.3% for the year 2021-22.

Key Points

GDP Estimate:

- For India:** India's economy is expected to grow at 8.3% for Fiscal Year 2021-22, 7.5% for 2022-23 and 6.5% for 2023-24.
- For World:** The world economy is expected to expand 5.6%, the fastest post-recession growth rate in eighty years. However, global output will still be 2% below pre-pandemic projections by year-end.

Cause

- For FY 2020-21:** The projected growth compares to the worst ever contraction of 7.3% in FY 2020-21 and 4% expansion in 2019-20. India's recovery is being hampered by the largest outbreak of any country since the beginning of the pandemic.
- For FY 2021-22:** The forecast for FY22 (8.3%) factors in expected economic damage from an enormous second Covid-19 wave and localised mobility restrictions since March 2021.

- **For FY 2022-23:** Growth is expected to slow to 7.5% as a result of the pandemic's lingering effects on the financial position of households, companies and banks and possibly low levels of consumer confidence and heightened uncertainty around job and incomes.

Steps Taken by India:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced measures to provide liquidity to Micro, Small and Medium firms (MSMEs), and loosened regulatory requirements on the provisioning for non-performing assets.
- Fiscal policy shifted in the FY 2021/22 budget toward higher expenditure targeted at healthcare and infrastructure to boost the post-pandemic recovery.

Suggestions:

- Globally coordinated efforts are essential to accelerate vaccine distribution and debt relief, particularly for low-income countries.
- As the health crisis eases, policymakers will need to address the pandemic's lasting effects and take steps to spur green, resilient, and inclusive growth while safeguarding macroeconomic stability.
- For low-income countries, policies focusing on scaling up social safety net programs, improving logistics and climate resilience of local food supply would be more helpful.

Key Terms**Gross Domestic Product:**

- GDP is a measure of economic activity in a country. It is the total value of a country's annual output of goods and services. It gives the economic output from the consumers' side.
- $\text{GDP} = \text{Private consumption} + \text{Gross investment} + \text{Government investment} + \text{Government spending} + (\text{exports}-\text{imports})$.

Recession and Depression:

- **Recession:** It is a macroeconomic term that refers to a slowdown or a massive contraction in economic activities for a long enough period, or it can be said that when a recession sustains for long enough, it is called a recession.
- **Depression:** It is a deep and long-lasting period of negative economic growth, with output falling for at least 12 months and GDP falling by over 10% or it can be referred to as a severe and prolonged recession.

Fiscal Policy:

- Fiscal policy refers to the use of government spending and tax policies to influence economic conditions.
- During a recession, the government may employ expansionary fiscal policy by lowering tax rates to increase aggregate demand and fuel economic growth.
- In the face of mounting inflation and other expansionary symptoms, a government may pursue contractionary fiscal policy.

BIODIVERSITY & ENVIRONMENT**Hindu Kush Himalayan Mountains**

According to UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) mountain ranges could lose up to two-third of its ice by 2100. About 2 billion people may face food, water shortages by 2100.

Key Points**About HKH Region:**

- It is often referred to as the 'Third Pole', on earth, is spread over 3,500 square kms across eight countries including India, Nepal and China.
- It contains the world's third-largest storage of frozen water after Antarctica and the Arctic.
- Over 240 million people live in the region's mountains. 1.7 billion live in the river basins downstream, while food grown in these basins reaches three billion people.
- The glaciers feed at least 10 major river systems, which have bearings on agricultural activities, drinking water and hydroelectricity production in the region.

Challenges:

- According to ICIMOD's (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) 2019 assessment, the HKH region will continue to warm through the 21st century even if the world is able to limit global warming at the agreed 1.5 degrees Celsius. The Paris agreement aims to substantially reduce global greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to limit the global temperature

increase in this century to 2 degrees Celsius above pre industrial levels, while pursuing the means to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees.

- In the future, even if global warming is kept to 1.5 degrees C above the pre-industrialisation levels, warming in the HKH region is likely to be at least 0.3 degrees C higher, and in the northwest Himalaya and Karakoram at least 0.7 degrees C higher.

Threat:

- High Mountain Asia (the Asian mountain ranges surrounding the Tibetan Plateau) will lose a substantial part of its cryosphere in the next decades and thus a substantial part of its water storage abilities. This will lead to increased water stress in high mountain areas. A cryosphere comprises portions of Earth's surface where water is in solid form, including sea ice, lake ice, river ice, snow cover, glaciers, ice caps, ice sheets, etc.

Causes for the Melting of Glaciers:

- The melting is driven by larger anthropogenic modifications (i.e. influenced by humans) of the atmosphere.
- The HKH region lies downwind from some of the most heavily polluted places on Earth. This threatens agriculture, climate as well as monsoon patterns.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended to shift away from fossil fuel use in energy, transport, and other sectors, while changing diets and agricultural practices to move to net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases.
- The countries in the region need to reduce emissions of black carbon and other air pollutants as well.

Suggested Policies and Actions to Mitigate the Problem:

- Farmers will need support to design and invest in locally-appropriate water storage solutions, or to shift to agricultural practices that consume less water.
- Designs of new hydropower plants and grids will need to take into account the changing climate and water availability.
- Data and information, capacity-building and early warning systems and infrastructure design will need to be improved. This calls for sufficient funding and large-scale coordination.

Related Initiative Taken by India:

- National Mission on Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE) is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
- The mandate is to evolve measures to sustain and safeguard the Himalayan glaciers, mountain ecosystems, biodiversity and wildlife conservation & protection.

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

- ICIMOD is an intergovernmental knowledge and learning centre working for the people of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH).
- It is based in Kathmandu, Nepal and works in and for eight regional member countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**Saral Jeevan Bima: IRDAI**

Saral Jeevan Bima, launched by IRDAI (Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India) in 2020, has become a popular term life insurance product among masses. IRDAI is an autonomous body that was established in 1999 to regulate and develop the insurance industry.

Term Life Insurance

- Term life insurance guarantees payment of a stated death benefit to the insured's beneficiaries if the insured person dies during a specified term.
- These policies have no value other than the guaranteed death benefit and feature no savings component as found in a whole life insurance product.
- Term life premiums are based on a person's age, health, and life expectancy.

Key Points

- IRDAI in October 2020 had mandated all life insurers to launch the Saral Jeevan Bima plans from 1st January 2021.
- Saral Jeevan Bima is a regulator-mandated standard term life insurance plan offering basic protection to people who are self-employed or belong to a lower income category.

- It is a pure term life insurance product that can be purchased by people in the age group of 18 to 65 years and will have a policy term of 5 to 40 years.
- The sum assured for the term life insurance policy ranges from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 25 lakh (in multiples of Rs 50,000). However, the insurer will have the option of providing a sum assured beyond Rs 25 lakh.
- It provides for payment of sum assured in lump sum to the nominee in case of the life assured's unfortunate death during the policy term.
- There are no exclusions, other than suicides.

2.Operation Pangea XIV: Interpol

Recently, the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) through its Operation Pangea XIV targeted the sale of fake medicines and products online. More than 1.10 lakh web links, including websites and online marketplaces, were taken down in the operation.

Key Points

About:

- Operation Pangea, is a well-established international effort of Interpol to disrupt the online sale of counterfeit and illicit health products. Just as importantly, Pangea works to raise awareness of the risks associated with buying medicines from unregulated websites. The first Operation Pangea was conducted in 2008.
- The current operation (14th) involved the police, customs and health regulatory authorities of 92 countries. It was coordinated by Interpol. Indian agencies also participated in the operation. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) that is the nodal body for the Interpol in the country.

Significance:

- The online sale of illicit medicines continues to pose a threat to public safety, which is why operations such as Pangea remain vital in combating this global health menace.
- Criminals were continuing to cash in on the huge demand for personal protection and hygiene products due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. "The reorganisation of States in India is an unfinished task". Discuss. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

Having achieved India's independence from British rule, reorganization of more than 500 princely states into effective provincial units was one of the biggest tasks. In pursuance of the same, S. K. Dhar commission (1948) and JVP Committee (1948) advocated for reorganization of states based on geographical contiguity, administrative convenience, financial self-reliance and potential for development. However, with the sudden death of Potti Sriramulu following hunger strike in demand for Andhra state created a volatile situation and Fazl Ali Commission was set up (in 1953) and its recommendation for reorganization of state based on linguistic criteria was accepted.

Benefits of re-organisation of states based on linguistic criteria

- **Created psychological integration of people with Indian Union:** When India gained Independence, many groups were apprehensive of safety and security of their linguistic identity. These groups could be conciliated through linguistic organization.
- **Easy to administer:** It created cohesive administrative units as low literacy (around 10%) after Independence was the norm and use of local languages made administration convenient and accessible to people.
- **Created Indian Union:** Unlike Pakistan and Sri Lanka, which witnessed a division and civil war due to linguistic sentiments, India's linguistic reorganization formed a strong Indian Union.

However, the reorganisation of states has been an unfinished task as outcome of linguistic reorganisation has not been quite positive in the long run:

- **Resulted in unequal sizes of province:** Differences are visible in States like UP and North eastern states. This has led to imperfect resource distribution. With few states garnering attention, while few states shrouded in negligence.
- **Opened pandora's box:** In India there are more than 600 languages and many dialects; satisfying linguistic aspirations of all groups is quite impossible. For example: demand for redistribution of boundaries of Maharashtra and Karnataka based on language.

- **Fueled the forces of regionalism:** As a result, India is still a nation in making and its sub-national sentiments are given precedence over Indian unity and integrity.

Recent creation of new states like Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand are based on developmental needs, where it was found that states, even after having enough resources, could not grow like the rest of its parent state.

In recent times, Belagavi issue has created political tussle between Karnataka and Maharashtra. Belagavi is an area in Karnataka, which has a sizeable Marathi-speaking population and has been at the heart of a five-decade-old border row between Karnataka and Maharashtra whose final order from Supreme Court is still awaited.

Way Forward

In the light of the above discussion, it can be inferred that India due to its multi-cultural and linguistic diversity cannot ever satisfy all linguistic groups. Thus, there is a need to redraw the map of India with rational criteria to create equal opportunity for all states to develop. Nevertheless, it can trigger huge regional and political resistance. So, debate, discussion and deliberation are the need of the hour to create a favourable ground to accept reorganisation of states through ‘fountain effect’ or ‘bottom up effect’ to create a strong Indian nation.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Which one of the following pairs (India's tentative list of UNESCO world heritage sites: State) is not correctly matched?

- Hire Benkal megalithic site:: Karnataka
- Bhedaghat-Lametaghata: Uttar Pradesh**
- Temples of Kancheepuram:: Tamil Nadu
- Maratha military architecture :: Maharashtra

Q2. Consider the following statements:

- Judicial disqualification (recusal) is the act of abstaining from legal proceeding due to a conflict of interest of the presiding court official.
- There are no written rules on the recusal of judges from hearing cases listed before them in constitutional courts.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2**
- Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. Consider the following statements:

- Solar Orbiter is a space mission of international collaboration between Roscosmos (Russian Space Agency) and NASA.
- This is the first mission that will provide images of the sun's north and south poles.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only**
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. The terms ‘Bitcoin, Ethereum, XRP’ sometimes mentioned news recently are related to

- Exoplanets
- Crypto currency**
- Cyber attacks
- Mini satellites

Q5. With reference to art and archaeological history of India, which one among the following was made earliest?

- Lingaraja Temple at Bhubaneswar
- Rock-cut Elephant at Dhauli**
- Rock-cut Monuments at Mahabalipuram
- Varaha Image at Udayagiri