

GOVERNANCE**AISHE-2020**

Recently, the Union Education Minister announced the release of the report of All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20. This Report provides key performance indicators on the current status of Higher education in the country. It is the 10th in the series of AISHE annually released by the Department of Higher Education.

Key Points**Total Student Enrolment:**

- In the last five years from 2015-16 to 2019-20, there has been a growth of 11.4% in student enrolment.
- Total Enrolment in Higher Education stands at 3.85 crore in 2019-20 as compared to 3.74 crore in 2018-19, registering a growth of 11.36 lakh (3.04 %). Uttar Pradesh has highest student enrolment in India, it has 49.1% male and 50.9% female students followed by Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

Gross Enrolment Ratio:

- The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) increased by a minuscule 0.8% in 2019-20. GER is the number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education.
- The percentage of students belonging to the eligible age group enrolled in higher education in 2019-20 is 27.1% against 26.3% in 2018-19 and 24.3% in 2014-2015.

Female Enrolment:

- There has been an overall increase of over 18% in female enrolment in higher education from 2015-16 to 2019-20.
- However, the share of girl students is lowest in institutes of national importance while female participation in professional courses is lower in comparison to academic courses.

Gender Parity Index:

- Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Higher Education in 2019-20 is 1.01 against 1.00 in 2018-19 indicating an improvement in the relative access to higher education for females of eligible age group compared to males. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between the sexes; a GPI that varies between 0 and 1 typically means a disparity in favour of males; whereas a GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favour of females.

Teacher's:

- Total Number of Teachers stands at 15,03,156 comprising 57.5% male and 42.5% female.
- Pupil Teacher Ratio in Higher Education in 2019-20 is 26.

Attractive Disciplines: Nearly 85% of the students (2.85 crore) were enrolled in the six major disciplines such as Humanities, Science, Commerce, Engineering & Technology, Medical Science and IT & Computer.

Recent Initiatives:

- **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020:** It aims at increasing the GER in higher education to 50% by 2035.
- **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC):** It aims at improving the research ecosystem of India's higher educational institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian institutions and the best institutions in the world.
- **Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA):** It aims at providing strategic funding to higher educational institutions throughout the country.
- **Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF):** It will attract the talent pool of the country to doctoral (Ph.D) programmes for carrying out research in cutting edge science and technology domains, with focus on national priorities.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**Maldives' UNGA Presidency**

Recently, the Maldives' Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid was elected the President of the 76th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) for 2021-22. The win was welcomed by India as Indian diplomats had been helping the Maldives and India expects close cooperation with Maldives at the UN.

Key Points**President of UNGA:**

- This is a post held on an annual basis, rotated amongst various regional groupings. The 76th session (2021-22) is the turn of the Asia-Pacific group. This is the first time Maldives will be occupying the office of the President of UNGA.
- Maldives also sees it as a win for the 52-member Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which are battling climate change vulnerability and other developmental challenges.

Addu Atoll:

- Addu Atoll, also known as Seenu Atoll, is the southernmost atoll of the Maldives.
- Apart from its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Addu is the second largest city in the archipelago, home to over 30,000 people.

India's Stand:

- India approved the opening of a new consulate in the Maldivian city of Addu, in reflection of the importance India attaches to its ties with the strategically located island nation.
- India's decision to expand its diplomatic presence in the Maldives comes amid China's consistent efforts to increase its influence in the island nation.
- Also Indian rationale for the consulate was to help Addu residents with speedy visa services.

Opposition of the Initiative:

- Some Maldivians see a new consulate with suspicion, especially on the heels of a USD 33-million Maldivian police training facility that India is helping build in Addu. There is already an Indian Embassy in Male.

Geo-Strategic Importance of Maldives to India:

- **Maldives, a Toll Gate in Indian Ocean:**
 1. Located at the southern and northern parts of this island chain lies the two important sea lanes of communication (SLOCs).
 2. These SLOCs are critical for maritime trade flow between the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Hormuz in West Asia and the Strait of Malacca in Southeast Asia.
 3. Nearly 50% of India's external trade and 80% of its energy imports transit these SLOCs in the Arabian Sea.
- **Part of Important Groupings:**
 1. Besides, Maldives is a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC).

India - Maldives Relations

Cooperation Between India & Maldives:

- **Security Cooperation:**
 1. Through the decades, India has rushed emergency assistance to the Maldives, whenever sought.
 2. In 1988, when armed mercenaries attempted a coup against President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, India sent paratroopers and Navy vessels and restored the legitimate leadership under Operation Cactus.
 3. India and Maldives conduct the joint military exercise 'Ekuverin'.
- **Disaster Management:**
 1. The 2004 tsunami and the drinking water crisis in Male a decade later were other occasions when India rushed assistance.
 2. The Maldives has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Covid-19 assistance and vaccines delivered by India among India's all neighbouring countries.
 3. When the world supply chains were blocked because of the pandemic, India continued to provide crucial commodities to the Maldives under Mission SAGAR.
- **People To People Contact:**
 1. Maldivian students attend educational institutions in India and patients fly here for superspeciality healthcare, aided by a liberal visa-free regime extended by India.
- **Economic Cooperation:**
 1. Tourism is the mainstay of Maldivian economy. Given the geographical limitations imposed on the Maldives, India has exempted the nation from export curbs on essential commodities.

Irritants in Relations:

- **Political Instability:**
 1. India's major concern has been the impact of political instability in the neighbourhood on its security and development.

2. The February 2015 arrest of Maldives' opposition leader Mohamed Nasheed on terrorism charges and the consequent political crisis have posed a real diplomatic test for India's neighbourhood policy.

- **Radicalisation:**

1. In the past decade or so, the number of Maldivians drawn towards terrorist groups like the Islamic State (IS) and Pakistan-based madrassas and jihadist groups has been increasing.
2. Political instability and socio-economic uncertainty are the main drivers fuelling the rise of Islamist radicalism in the island nation.

- **China Angle:**

1. China's strategic footprint in India's neighbourhood has increased. The Maldives has emerged as an important 'pearl' in China's "String of Pearls" construct in South Asia.
2. Also, the Maldives have started using the China card to bargain with India.

Way Forward

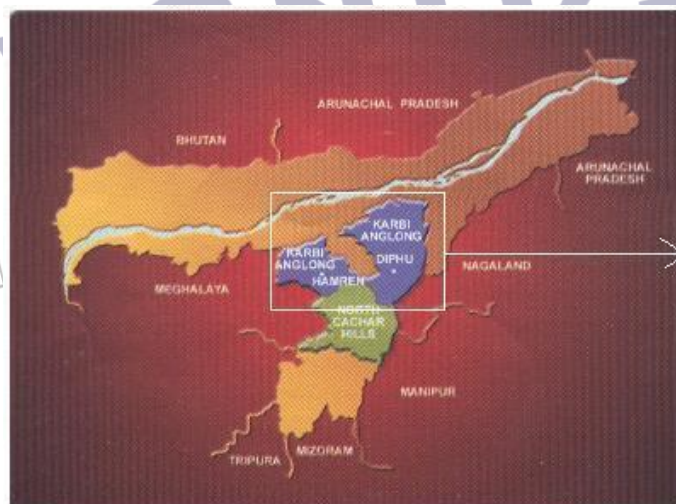
- It is hoped that India in the UN Security Council and the Maldivian President of the General Assembly will work in tandem as India pursues its goals for multilateral reform, and re-energise the dormant process of effecting change in the old power structures in the global body.
- In accordance with the Neighbourhood First Policy of the government, India remains a committed development partner for a stable, prosperous and peaceful Maldives.

INDIAN POLITY

Rengma Nagas Demand Autonomous District Council

The Rengma Naga Peoples' Council (RNPC) or Rengma Nagas have demanded an Autonomous District Council (ADC) in Assam.

The Central and the State governments recently upgraded the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) to territorial councils like the Bodoland Territorial Council.



Key Points

About the Rengma Naga Tribe:

- **Found in:** Rengma is a Naga tribe found in Nagaland, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- **History:** The first official recording of the Rengma Nagas staying in Assam's Karbi Hills (then known as Mikir Hills) was made in 1855 by Major John Butler, a British officer posted in the Northeastern region. Butler recorded that the Rengmas in Karbi Anglong had migrated there from the Naga Hills in the early part of the 18th century, abandoned many of their tribal customs and married within the local communities.
- **Festival:** The harvest festival of the Rengmas is called Ngada.

Autonomous District Council (ADC):

- **About:** The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the administration of the tribal areas in the four northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The special provision is provided under Article 244 (2) and Article 275 of the Constitution. The tribals have been given freedom to exercise legislative and executive powers through an autonomous regional council and ADCs.

- **Composition of Autonomous Councils:** Each autonomous district and regional council consists of not more than 30 members, of which four are nominated by the governor and the rest via elections. All of them remain in power for a term of five years. However, the Bodoland Territorial Council is an exception as it can constitute up to 46 members.
- **Governor's Control:** Despite various degrees of autonomy, the 6th Schedule area does not fall outside the executive authority of the state concerned. The governor is empowered to organise and re-organise the autonomous districts.
- **Applicability of Central and State Laws:** The Acts passed by Parliament and state legislatures may or may not be levied in these regions unless the President and the governor gives her or his approval, with or without modifications in the laws for the autonomous regions.
- **Civil and Criminal Judicial Powers:** The Councils have also been endowed with wide civil and criminal judicial powers, for example establishing village courts etc. However, the jurisdiction of these councils is subject to the jurisdiction of the concerned High Court.
- **Existing Autonomous Councils:**
The sixth schedule to the Constitution includes 10 autonomous district councils in 4 states. These are:
 1. **Assam:** Bodoland Territorial Council, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and North Cachar Hills/Dima Hasao Autonomous Council.
 2. **Meghalaya:** Garo Hills Autonomous District Council, Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council.
 3. **Tripura:** Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council.
 4. **Mizoram:** Chakma Autonomous District Council, Lai Autonomous District Council, Mara Autonomous District Council.

Arguments of Rengma Naga Peoples' Council (RNPC):

- Rengmas were the first tribal people in Assam to have encountered the British in 1839. But the existing Rengma Hills was eliminated from the political map of the State and replaced with that of Mikir Hills (now Karbi Anglong) in 1951.
- The Rengmas gave shelter to the Ahom refugees during the Burmese invasions of Assam in 1816 and 1819. The Ahom are an ethnic group from the Indian states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Rengma Hills and Mikir Hills were two separate entities until 1951. The Rengma Hills was partitioned in 1963 between Assam and Nagaland.
 1. Karbis have no history in the Rengma Hills.
 2. At the time of creation of Nagaland State, the Karbis were known as Mikirs till 1976.
 3. They were the indigeneous tribal people of Mikir Hills.
- The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) population is around 12 lakh and the Karbis constitute only 3 lakh, the remaining are non-Karbhis, including the Rengma Nagas, whose population is around 22,000.

NSCN (I-M) Stand:

- The National Socialist Council of Nagaland or NSCN (Isak-Muivah) has said that the Rengma issue was one of the important agendas of the "Indo-Naga political talks" and no authority should go far enough to override their interests.
- NSCN (IM) had signed a Naga Peace Accord with the Government of India in August 2015, but the final accord is yet to be finalised. One of the most contentious demands of the NSCN (IM) was the creation of a unified Naga homeland, called 'Greater Nagalim' by integrating the Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal with Nagaland.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Fast Radio Bursts

Recently, researchers from the Pune-based Tata Institute for Fundamental Research (TIFR) and the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA), have assembled the largest collection of Fast Radio Bursts (FRBs) catalogue. The data is from Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment (CHIME). In 2020, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) spotted FRB for the first time in the Milky Way.

Key Points

Fast Radio Bursts:

- FRB are bright bursts of radio waves (radio waves can be produced by astronomical objects with changing magnetic fields) whose durations lie in the millisecond-scale, because of which it is difficult to detect them and determine their position in the sky. It was first discovered in 2007.
- A defining property of these bursts is their dispersion (scattering or separation), the bursts produce a spectrum of radio waves, and as the waves travel through matter, they spread out or disperse with bursts at higher radio frequencies arriving at telescopes earlier than those at lower frequencies. Dispersion can result in signal degradation in many applications, especially over large distances.
- **This dispersion allows researchers to learn about two important things:**
 1. They can measure this dispersion to learn about the stuff that radio bursts pass through as they travel toward Earth
 2. They can indirectly determine how far apart things are.

FRBs Catalogue & Findings:

- The new catalogue significantly expands the current library of known FRBs, and is already yielding clues as to their properties.
- For instance, the newly discovered bursts appear to fall in two distinct classes: those that repeat, and those that don't. The repeaters looked different, with each burst lasting slightly longer and emitting more focused radio frequencies than bursts from single, non-repeating FRBs. These differences strongly suggest that emission from repeaters and non-repeaters is generated either by different physical mechanisms or in different astrophysical environments
- The bursts were evenly distributed in space, seeming to arise from any and all parts of the sky.
- Bright FRBs occur at a rate of about 800 per day across the entire sky - the most precise estimate of FRBs overall rate to date.

Origin of FRBs:

- FRBs have been spotted in various and distant parts of the universe, as well as in our own galaxy. Their origins are unknown and their appearance is highly unpredictable. The CHIME project has nearly quadrupled the number of fast radio bursts discovered to date. The telescope has detected 535 new FRBs in its first year of operation itself, between 2018 and 2019. With more observations, astronomers hope soon to find the origins of the FRBs.

Chime:

- It is a novel radio telescope that has no moving parts. Originally conceived to map the most abundant element in the universe - hydrogen - over a good fraction of the observable universe, this unusual telescope is optimized to have a high mapping speed.
- It is located at the Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory, operated by the National Research Council of Canada in British Columbia, Canada.
- The telescope receives radio signals each day from half of the sky as the Earth rotates.

Significance of Studying FRBs:

- The unique properties of fast radio bursts and their host galaxies combined with recent technological advancements have given researchers hope that these phenomena can be used to answer some long-standing questions about the universe.
- It can be used to understand the three-dimensional structure of matter in the universe and to learn about poorly understood early moments in the evolution of the universe.

BIODIVERSITY & ENVIRONMENT

Rescuing Gharials: Mahanadi River

Recently, Odisha announced a cash award of Rs. 1,000 to conserve gharials in Mahanadi River Basin.

Key Points

About Gharials:

- Gharials, sometimes called gavials, are a type of Asian crocodilian distinguished by their long, thin snouts. Crocodilians are a group of reptiles that includes crocodiles, alligators, caimans, and more.
- India has three species of Crocodilians namely:
 1. Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*): IUCN Red List- Critically Endangered
 2. Mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*): IUCN- Vulnerable.
 3. Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*): IUCN- Least Concern.
 4. All the three are listed on Appendix I of CITES and Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

5. **Exception:** Saltwater Crocodile populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea are included in Appendix II of CITES.
- **Habitat of Gharials:**
 1. **Natural Habitat:** Fresh waters of the northern part of India.
 2. **Primary Habitat:** Chambal river (a tributary of Yamuna).
 3. **Secondary Habitat:** Ghagra, Gandak river, Girwa river (Uttar Pradesh), the Ramganga river (Uttarakhand) and the Sone river (Bihar).
- **Significance:** Population of Gharials are a good indicator of clean river water.
- **Conservation Efforts:** Breeding Centres of Kukrail Gharial Rehabilitation Centre in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, National Chambal Sanctuary (Gharial Eco Park, Madhya Pradesh).
- **Threats:**
 1. Increased river pollution, dam construction, massive-scale fishing operations and floods.
 2. Illegal sand mining and poaching.

Mahanadi River:

About:

- The Mahanadi River system is the third largest of peninsular India after Godavari and Krishna, and the largest river of Odisha state.
- The catchment area of the river extends to Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Maharashtra.
- Its basin is bounded by the Central India hills on the north, by the Eastern Ghats on the south and east and by the Maikala range on the west.

Source: It rises from a place near Sihawa in Bastar hills in the state of Chhattisgarh to the south of Amarkantak.

Major Tributaries: Seonath River, Hasdeo river, Mand river, Ib river, Jonking river, Tel river

Mahanadi River Dispute: The Central Government constituted Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal in 2018.

Major Dams/Projects on Mahanadi:

- Hrakud Dam: This is the longest dam of India.
- Ravishankar Sagar, Dudhawa Reservoir, Sondur Reservoir, Hasdeo Bango and Tandula are other major projects.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Heritage Trees

The Maharashtra Cabinet has passed an action plan to protect and preserve trees older than 50 years in urban areas by terming them heritage trees.

Key Points

Concept of Heritage Tree:

- Few important criteria for considering a tree as a "heritage tree" are: size, shape, rarity, aesthetical/historical values, association with historic person, place or even myths.
- A certain species need not be native to an area for this tag.

Components of Plan:

- The provisions included in the plan are the concept of heritage trees and a plan of action for conservation, method to define the age of the tree, rules to be followed before hacking trees etc.
- **Compensatory Plantation:**
 1. It will include planting the number of trees equivalent to the age of trees to be cut.
 2. The saplings need to be six to eight feet in height while planting and they will undergo geo-tagging with seven years of caring period.
 3. The option of monetary compensation has also been given, instead of compensatory plantation.
- **State-level Tree Authority:**

The authority will be formed to protect and preserve heritage trees.

 1. Tree Census: It will ensure that the tree census is conducted after every five years.
 2. Land Use: Ensuring that 33% of government land is used for tree plantation.

2. Padma Awards

Online nominations/recommendations for the Padma Awards to be announced on the occasion of Republic Day, 2022 are open. In 2021, a total of 119 Padma awards were conferred, including 7 padma vibhushan, 10 padma bhushan and 102 padma shri.

Key Points

Background:

- The Padma Awards are announced annually on Republic Day (26th January).
- Instituted in 1954, it is one of the highest civilian honours of India.

Objective: To recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines where an element of public service is involved.

Categories:

- **The Awards are given in three categories:**

1. Padma Vibhushan (for exceptional and distinguished service),
2. Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of higher-order) and
3. Padma Shri (distinguished service).

Padma Vibhushan is highest in the hierarchy of Padma Awards followed by Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

Disciplines: The Awards are given in various disciplines/ fields of activities, viz.- art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service etc.

Eligibility: All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex are eligible for these Awards.

Selection Process:

- **Padma Awards Committee:** The Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year.
- **Awarded by President:** The awards are presented by the President of India usually in the month of March/April every year.

Bharat Ratna

- It is the highest civilian award of the country. It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour.
- It is treated on a different footing from Padma Award. The recommendations for Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister to the President of India.
- The number of Bharat Ratna Awards is restricted to a maximum of three in a particular year.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Indian diaspora can provide the requisite strategic impulse to unlock India's potential as a global power. Discuss.

Ans:

Introduction

According to Global Migration Report 2020, India continues to be the largest country of origin of international migrants with a 17.5 million-strong diaspora across the world, and it received the highest remittance of \$78.6 billion from Indians living abroad.

However, it is not only the economic prospects of the Indian diaspora but their role in lobbying for crucial strategic deals, promoting Indian culture abroad that has helped India to assume the distinction of Global soft power.

Body

Significance of Indian Diaspora

- **Economic Front:** The migration of less-skilled labor (especially to West Asia) brings remittances to India that have positive systemic effects on the balance of payments. By weaving a web of cross-national networks, the Indian diaspora has facilitated the flow of tacit information, commercial and business ideas, and technologies into India.
- **Diplomatic Engagement:** Indian diaspora is one of the richest minorities in many developed countries. Through this strong people-to-people contact has helped to further the nation's diplomacy. For example, the signing of the India-U.S. nuclear deal.
- **Enhancing India's Soft Power:** Indian diaspora through values, music, domestic cuisines, and traditional practices has helped India to establish India as a Brand. The recognition of 21st June as the International Day of Yoga is an example of growing India's soft power.
- **Political Front:** Indian diaspora is not just a part of India's soft power, but a fully transferable political vote bank as well. Many people of Indian origin hold top political positions in many countries, in the US itself they are now a significant part of Republicans and Democrats, as well as the government. This helps in strengthening bilateral relations.

Conclusion

The institutionalization of “diaspora diplomacy” by the Ministry of External Affairs, is a distinct indication for the fact that a country’s diaspora community has become considerably more important as a subject of interest for foreign policy and associated government activities.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. The term ‘candidiasis’ was in news recently, is a

- a. **fungal infection**
- b. viral infection
- c. bacterial infection
- d. none of the above

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. India launched a Central Sector Scheme titled ‘Development of Beekeeping for Improving Crop Productivity’ during the VIII plan (1994-95).
2. National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM) aims to achieve the goal of ‘Sweet Revolution’ as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

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. The ‘New Big 5 project’ was in news recently, is related to:

- a. Future space exploration
- b. Recent discovery of subatomic particles
- c. India’s upcoming mega infra projects
- d. **None of the above**

Q4. He was a Carniolan apiarist and painter. He is known as a pioneer of modern apiculture and a great expert in the field. May 20th of every year is celebrated as the World Bee Day to commemorate his birth anniversary. He is

- a. Dietrich Brandis
- b. Gifford Pinchot
- c. Vasily Dokuchaev
- d. **Anton Jansa**

Q5. Which among the following events happened earliest?

- a. Swami Dayanand established Arya Samaj
- b. **Dinabandhu Mitra wrote Neeldarpan**
- c. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote Anandmath
- d. Satyendranath Tagore became the first Indian to succeed in the Indian Civil Services Examination