

GOVERNANCE**Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana**

Recently, the Ministry of Food Processing industries (MoFPI) has shared some information regarding Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (PMKSY). Earlier, MoFPI had launched the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PM FME) Scheme, under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

The key sub-segments of the Food Processing industry in India are Dairy, Fruits & Vegetables, Poultry & Meat processing, Fisheries, Food retail, etc.

Key Points**About:**

- In the year 2016, MoFPI had introduced an umbrella Scheme Called “Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters” or SAMPADA, which was proposed to be implemented with an allocation of Rs 6,000 crore for the period of 2016-20.
- In the year 2017, the government renamed the SAMPADA scheme as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY). It is a Central Sector Umbrella Scheme.

Objective:

- To supplement agriculture.
- To create processing and preservation capacities.
- To modernise and expand existing food processing units with a view to increasing the level of processing.
- To add value leading to the reduction of wastage.

Components:

1. Mega Food Parks,
2. Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure,
3. Infrastructure for Agro-Processing Clusters,
4. Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages,
5. Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities,
6. Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure, and
7. Human Resources Institutions.
8. Operation Greens.

Grants-in-aid:

- MoFPI provides mostly credit linked financial assistance (capital subsidy) in the form of grants-in-aid to entrepreneurs for setting up of food processing / preservation industries.
- Grants-in-aid ranging from 35% to 75% of the eligible project cost subject to a maximum specified limit is provided to investors under the various schemes for undertaking infrastructure, logistic projects and setting up of food processing units in the country.

Benefits:

- The sanctioned projects across the country under component schemes of PMKSY are estimated to benefit about 34 lakh farmers on completion. In an evaluation study, NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) in Year 2020, estimated that captive projects under the scheme have resulted in an increase in farm-gate prices by 12.38% and each project is estimated to benefit more than 9500 farmers.

Other Related Initiatives

- **100% FDI:** 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) through automatic route in the food processing sector and 100% FDI under Government approval route for retail trading, including through e-commerce, in respect of food products produced and/or manufactured in India has been permitted.
- **Food Processing Fund:** A special fund of Rs. 2000 crore has been created with the NABARD to provide affordable credit to food processing projects/units.
- **Classification under PSL:** Food & agro-based processing units and cold chain infrastructure has been classified as agriculture activity for Priority Sector Lending (PSL).
- **Fiscal Measures:** Fiscal measures like 100% exemption of Income Tax on profit for new food processing units, 100 % income tax exemption from profit derived by Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs) having annual turnover of Rs.100 crore have been allowed for activities such as post-harvest value addition to agriculture.
- **Lower GST:** Lower Goods & Service Tax (GST) rates for the majority of food products have been fixed.
- **Operation Greens:** A new Central Sector Scheme “Operation Greens” for integrated development of Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP) crops value chain, with an outlay of Rs.500 Crore to promote FPOs, agri-logistics, processing facilities, has been launched.

- **PM FME:**All India Centrally Sponsored PM Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises Scheme (PM FME Scheme) for providing financial, technical and business support for upgradation of existing micro food processing enterprises.
- **PLI Scheme:**The Central Sector Scheme – “Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI)” to support creation of global food manufacturing champions commensurate with India’s natural resource endowment and support Indian brands of food products in the international markets with an outlay of Rs.10900 crore.

SOCIAL ISSUE

Quality of Life for Elderly Index

Recently, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) released the Quality of Life for Elderly Index. The share of elders, as a percentage of the total population in the country, is expected to increase from around 7.5% in 2001 to almost 12.5% by 2026, and surpass 19.5% by 2050.

EAC-PM is a non-constitutional, non-statutory, independent body constituted to give advice on economic and related issues to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister.

Key Points

About:

- The Index has been created by the Institute for Competitiveness at the request of EAC-PM and it sheds light on an issue often not mentioned- problems faced by the elderly. Institute for Competitiveness, India is an international initiative centered in India, dedicated to enlarging and purposeful disseminating of the body of research and knowledge on competition and strategy.
 - It identifies the regional patterns of ageing across Indian States and assesses the overall ageing situation in India.
1. Ageing is a continuous, irreversible, universal process, which starts from conception till the death of an individual.
 2. However, the age at which one’s productive contribution declines and one tends to be economically dependent can probably be treated as the onset of the aged stage of life.
 3. National Elderly Policy defines people in the 60+ age group as elderly.
- It will promote healthy competition among States through fair rankings and highlights the pillars and indicators they can improve.

Pillars & Sub-Pillars of the Index:

- **Four Pillars:** Financial Well-being, Social Well-being, Health System and Income Security
- **Eight Sub-Pillars:** Economic Empowerment, Educational Attainment & Employment, Social Status, Physical Security, Basic Health, Psychological Well being, Social Security and Enabling Environment.

Major Findings:

- **State-wise Rankings:**
1. Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh are top-scoring regions in Aged and Relatively Aged States, respectively. The Aged States refer to States with an elderly population of more than 5 million, whereas Relatively Aged States refer to States with an Elderly population of less than 5 million.
 2. Chandigarh and Mizoram are top-scoring regions in Union Territory and North-East States category.
- **Pillar-wise Performance:**
1. The Health System pillar observes the highest national average, 66.97 at an all-India level, followed by 62.34 in Social Well-being.
 2. Financial Well-being observes a score of 44.7, which is lowered by the low performance of 21 States across the Education Attainment & Employment pillar, which showcases scope for improvement.
 3. States have performed particularly worse in the Income Security pillar because over half of the States have a score below the national average in Income Security, which is the lowest across all pillars.

Challenges:

- **Feminization of Ageing:**One of the emerging issues of population ageing is the “Feminization of Ageing”, that is many more women than men reaching older ages.
- **Income security:**India has one of the weakest social security mechanisms globally as it only spends 1% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on pensions.
- **Integration of elderly in Economy:**There is a need to cater to the present older person's unique needs, motivations, and preferences, and to give them a chance to contribute to society until they promote active ageing.

- **Health care and services:** Good health lies at the core of society to ensure healthy ageing. As the life expectancy of older people increases in India, we need to ensure that people, while living longer, live healthier lives, which will translate into more significant opportunities and lower costs to older persons, their families and society.

Related Initiatives:

- **SAGE (Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine):** It is a “one-stop access” of elderly care products and services by credible start-ups.
- **Integrated Programme for Older Persons (IPOP):** To improve the quality of life of older persons by providing basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care and entertainment opportunities, etc.
- **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY):** Aids and assistive living devices are provided to senior citizens belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category who suffer from age-related disabilities such as low vision, hearing impairment, loss of teeth and locomotor disabilities.
- **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS):** Financial assistance is provided to persons of 60 years and above and belonging to families living BPL as per the criteria prescribed by Government of India. Central assistance of Rs 200 per month is provided to persons in the age group of 60-79 years and Rs 500 per month to persons of 80 years and above.
- **The Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana:** It is a pension scheme for senior citizens that comes with guaranteed returns on monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or on an annual basis for a period of 10 years. It is exclusively available to those who are 60 years of age and above.
- **Vayoshreshtha Samman:** Conferred as a National award, and given to eminent senior citizens & institutions under various categories for their contributions on International day of older persons on 1st October.
- **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPC) Act, 2007:** To ensure need-based maintenance for Parents and Senior Citizens and their welfare.

Global Initiatives:

- **Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020-2030):** The Decade of Healthy Ageing was endorsed by the 73rd World Health Assembly (decision making body of the World Health Organisation) in 2020.
- **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** calls for leaving no one behind and for ensuring that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are met for all segments of society, at all ages, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable—including older persons.

Way Forward

- India is often portrayed as a young society, with a consequent demographic dividend. But, as with every country that goes through a fast process of demographic transition, India also has a greying cum aging problem.
- For the welfare and care for the older persons, we must focus on the protection of already existing social support systems/traditional social institutions such as family and kinship, neighborhood bonding, community bonding and community participation must be revived and kins should show sensitivity towards elderly citizens.

ECONOMY

Annual Public Enterprises Survey

Recently, the 60th Public Enterprises (PE) Survey 2019-20 was released by the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE), Ministry of Finance. It is the single largest source of information on Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and acts as a basis for informed policy making.

Key Points

About Public Enterprises (PE) Survey:

- PE Survey is a 100% enumeration of the CPSE universe. It captures essential statistical data for all CPSEs on various financial and physical parameters.
- PE Survey divides CPSEs into five sectors namely:
 1. Agriculture,
 2. Mining & Exploration,
 3. Manufacturing, Processing & Generation,
 4. Services,
 5. Enterprises Under Construction.
- The Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) started bringing out the Public Enterprises Survey from the financial year 1960-61 on the recommendations of the Estimates Committee of the 2nd Lok Sabha, 73rd report (1959-60).

About DPE And CPSEs:

- DPE is the nodal department for all the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and formulates policy pertaining to CPSEs.
- According to DPE, CPSEs mean those Government companies, besides Statutory Corporations, wherein more than 50% of the share in equity is held by the Central Government.
- 1. The subsidiaries of these companies, if registered in India, are also categorized as CPSEs.
- 2. It does not cover departmentally run public enterprises, banking institutions and insurance companies.
- CPSEs are classified into 3 categories namely Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna. Presently, there are 10 Maharatna, 14 Navratna and 74 Miniratna CPSEs.

Role of Central Public Sector Enterprises:

- CPSEs in India have a twin objective of commercial efficiency and social responsibility. Besides contributing to the Government income, they discharge social obligations through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.
- **The idea of CPSEs was conceived to eradicate the accumulated problems of:**
 1. Unemployment,
 2. Rural-urban disparity,
 3. Inter-regional and inter-class disparities,
 4. Technological backwardness.
- CPSEs envisage to develop the public sector as an instrument for self-reliant economic growth.
- Before India got independence, it had only a few CPSEs.
 1. These included the Railways, Post and Telegraph, Port trusts, Ordnance factories, etc.
 2. Most CPSEs were set up after independence when the private sector had limited capacity for large capital intensive enterprises.
- **Challenge:** The challenge for these enterprises arises out of the need for them to ensure a reasonable return on investment, while discharging their constitutional and social obligations.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan - Contribution by CPSEs:

- The CPSEs have taken a range of initiatives as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan towards meeting the Government of India's 'self-reliant India' agenda.
- The initiatives include policy reforms, strategic partnerships, administrative actions, operational realignment and capacity building.
- The initiatives by the CPSEs can be divided under five broad categories as shown below:
 1. Enhancing local capacity to support Government's larger strategic objectives.
 2. Promotion of cooperation between CPSEs to explore synergies.
 3. Providing a platform for greater participation of domestic firms/MSMEs.
 4. Rationalising import dependency to ensure long term sustainability.
- Development of indigenous technology and promoting technology transfer to CPSEs.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Indian Base in Mauritius' Agalega Islands

Recently, Mauritius has denied a report that it has allowed India to build a military base on the remote island of Agalega. Earlier it was reported by a news broadcaster that an airstrip and two jetties to house an Indian military base on Agalega island is under construction.

Key Points

Background:

- In 2015, India signed an agreement with Mauritius for development of Agalega Islands. It provided for setting up and upgradation of infrastructure for improving sea and air connectivity enhancing capabilities of the Mauritian Defence Forces in safeguarding their interests in the Outer Island.
- However, since then, there have been growing reports over the Indian naval and coastguard's interests in setting up transponder systems and surveillance infrastructure, which has led to some local protests.

Agelega Project:

- Agelega project includes the construction of a jetty, rebuilding, and extension of the runway, and building an airport terminal on Agalega Island. The USD 87 million projects are funded by India.
- The project would add a new airport, port and logistics and communication facilities and potentially any other facilities related to the project.
- The Agelega island is located in the southwestern Indian Ocean, 1,122 km north of Mauritius. It has a total land area of 27 square miles (70 square km).

Significance:

- **Strengthen India's Presence:**

1. It will strengthen India's presence in the south-west Indian Ocean and facilitate its power launch aspirations in the region.
2. India considers the new base necessary to facilitate both air and surface maritime patrols in the south-west Indian Ocean and as an intelligence post.
- **Geo-Economic:**
 1. As a “central geographic point” Mauritius holds importance for commerce and connectivity in the Indian Ocean.
 2. As a member of the African Union, Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Indian Ocean Commission, Mauritius is a stepping stone to multiple geographies.
 3. As a founding-member of the ‘Small Island Developing States’ (SIDS) it has been seen as a significant neighbour.
- **Protect Foreign Trade:**
 1. 95% of India’s trade by volume and 68% of trade by value comes via the Indian Ocean.
 2. Nearly 80% of India’s crude oil requirement is imported by sea via the Indian Ocean. So presence in the Indian Ocean is of significance for India.
- **Countering China:**
 1. To counter China’s ‘String of Pearls’ which can prove to be a threat to our strategic interests, it became extremely necessary for us to have a presence in the larger Indian Ocean Region.
- **Security And Growth for All in Region:**
 2. The project can be seen as a part of India’s efforts to contribute to its neighbor’s development stories under SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in Region).
 3. The project can be seen as a way to increase cooperation between India and its neighbors.
- **Enhancing Security infrastructure of Mauritius:** The project will enhance the capabilities of Mauritius security forces through upgradation in its infrastructure.

Challenges:

- **Protests from Opposition:**
 1. Mauritius opposition has been raising concerns regarding transparency in the project.
 2. The Mauritian government has exempted the project from any Environmental license process (EIA clearances).
- **Protests from local People:**
 1. In 1965, before Mauritian independence, the UK split the Chagos islands from Mauritius, forcibly relocating the inhabitants.. Many Agalégans fear they could suffer a similar fate.
 2. All major military powers like France, China, US, and the UK have naval bases in the Indian Ocean this is leading to fears that their peaceful island region will also be militarised.
- **China Centric Policies:** China’s rapidly growing presence in the northern part of the Indian Ocean along with the deployment of Chinese submarines and ships in the region is a challenge for India.
- **Obsessive Security Policy:**
 1. An obsessively security-driven policy of India towards its neighbours has not helped in the past.
 2. Certain common challenges like climate change, sustainable development and the blue economy should be reconsidered in India’s approach to Mauritius.

Other Recent Developments:

- In July 2021, Prime Ministers of India and Mauritius jointly inaugurated a Supreme Court building in Maritius.
- In February 2021, the Union Cabinet approved signing of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) between India and Mauritius.
- India and Mauritius signed a USD 100 million Defence Line of Credit agreement
- Mauritius would get a Dornier aircraft and an Advanced Light Helicopter Dhruv on lease which would build its maritime security capabilities.
- The two sides also discussed the Chagos Archipelago dispute, which was an issue of sovereignty and sustainable development before the United Nations (UN). In 2019, India voted at the UN General Assembly in support of the Mauritian position on the issue. India was one of the 116 countries that voted demanding that the UK end its “colonial administration” from the group of islands.
- India delivered 1,00,000 Covishield vaccines to Mauritius.

Way Forward

- Unlike the military bases run by other countries, the Indian bases are the soft base which means locals can move through any Indian-made project. So the local governments get more control over their domain, without diluting their sovereignty.

- India needs to project itself as a credible and long-term partner in a more persuasive manner by allaying the fears of all parties affected.
- Companies registered in Mauritius are the largest source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India, making it crucial for India to upgrade its bilateral tax treaty, adopting the latest international practices that prevent multinational companies from artificially shifting profits to low tax countries. As India takes an integrated view of its security cooperation in the south western Indian Ocean, Mauritius is the natural node for it. Therefore, it is important to take course-corrections in India's Neighbourhood First policy.

ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY

World Biofuel Day

World Biofuel Day is observed on 10th August every year.

Key Points

About:

- It is observed to raise awareness of the importance of non-fossil fuels as a substitute for conventional fossil fuels.
- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy in association with UNIDO (United Nations Development Industrial Organisation) and GEF (Global Environment Facility - a financial mechanism) launched two schemes on this occasion which are:
 1. Interest Subvention Scheme.
 2. GIS based inventory tool of organic waste streams.
- Biofuels programme is also in synergy with Government of India's initiative of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

History: This day is observed in honour of Sir Rudolf Diesel. He was the inventor of the diesel engine and was the first to predict the possibility of vegetable oil replacing fossil fuels.

Theme for 2021: It is based on the promotion of biofuels for a better environment.

Celebrated by: Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas since 2015.

Significance:

- Any hydrocarbon fuel that is produced from an organic matter (living or once living material) in a short period of time (days, weeks, or even months) is considered a biofuel. Examples of Biofuel include ethanol, biodiesel, green diesel and biogas.
- Biofuels help in reducing the dependence on crude oil and fostering a cleaner environment.
- It also generates additional income and employment for rural areas.
- This will not only help meet India's rural energy needs but also fulfill the rising demands for transportation.
- The use of carbon fuels will reduce carbon emissions and meet the energy requirements of the 21st century.

Interest Subvention Scheme:

- It provides financial assistance to innovative waste to energy biomethanation projects and business models.
 1. The industrial organic waste-to-energy bio-methanation projects are generally capital intensive and financially sensitive to both operating costs, including waste availability, and revenue, particularly biogas yield and its utilization scenario.
 2. Innovations in such projects seek to improve overall energy output thereby minimizing the cost of energy generation but may lead to increase in the initial project cost at the establishment stage yet increase revenue and reduce operating costs over project's lifetime.
- The loan scheme provides financial assistance to beneficiaries to reduce the financial burden on account of interest on the loan component faced by such demonstration projects.

Inventory Tool Of Organic Waste Streams:

- The tool provides district level estimates of available urban and industrial organic wastes and their energy generation potential across India.
- The GIS (Geographic information system) tool will enable SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) and project developers to set up new waste to energy projects and may facilitate the rapid growth of biomethanation in the waste-to-energy sector in the country.

Govt Initiatives to Promote Biofuels

- **Blending of biofuels:** Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme, Administrative price mechanism for ethanol, Simplifying the procurement procedures by Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), amending the provisions of Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 etc are some of the initiatives taken to promote blending of biofuels.

- Researchers at the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) are developing a method to use cyanobacterium for biofuel production.
- Recently, the Central government has also allowed the conversion of surplus rice to ethanol.
- **Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana, 2019:** To create an ecosystem for setting up commercial projects and to boost Research and Development in 2G Ethanol sector
- **GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) DHAN scheme:** It focuses on managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste in farms to useful compost, biogas and bio-CNG, thus keeping villages clean and increasing the income of rural households.
- **Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO):** It was launched by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and aims for an ecosystem that will enable the collection and conversion of used cooking oil to biodiesel.
- **National Policy on Biofuels, 2018:** It expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of sugarcane juice, sugar containing materials like sugar beet, sweet sorghum, starch containing materials like corn, cassava, damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, rotten potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.

Way Forward

- Promotion of the use of biofuels in transportation in countries like India will help in reducing the crude import bill.
- India being a large agricultural economy, there is a large amount of agricultural residues available, therefore the scope of producing Biofuels is immense in the country. Biofuels can help in rural and agricultural development in the form of new cash crops.
- Efforts for producing sustainable biofuels should be made by ensuring use of wastelands and municipal wastes that get generated in cities. A properly designed and implemented biofuel solution can provide both food and energy.
- A community-based biodiesel distribution programme that benefits local economies, from the farmers growing the feedstock to local businesses producing and distributing the fuel to the end consumer, will be a welcome step.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Kaziranga National Park: Assam

Kaziranga has become the first in the country to use satellite phones, which are generally used by the law-enforcing agencies. The satellite phones will give an edge to the forest personnel over the poachers and also during emergencies like floods. The public is barred from using satellite phones in India. Satellite phones can connect from anywhere as they are directly connected to satellites around the world and do not depend on terrestrial mobile networks, as cellphones do.

Key Points

Location: It is located in the State of Assam and covers 42,996 Hectare (ha). It is the single largest undisturbed and representative area in the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain.

Legal Status: It was declared as a National Park in 1974. It has been declared a Tiger Reserve since 2007. It has a total tiger reserve area of 1,030 sq km with a core area of 430 sq. km.

International Status:

- It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.
- It is recognized as An Important Bird Area by Bird Life International.

Biodiversity:

- It is the home of the world's most one-horned rhinos. Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary has the highest density of one-horned rhinos in the world and second highest number of Rhinos in Assam after Kaziranga National Park.
- Much of the focus of conservation efforts in Kaziranga are focused on the 'big four' species—Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal Tiger and Asiatic water buffalo.
- 1. The 2018 census had yielded 2,413 rhinos and approximately 1,100 elephants.
- 2. As per the figures of tiger census conducted in 2014, Kaziranga had an estimated 103 tigers, the third highest population in India after Jim Corbett National Park (215) in Uttarakhand and Bandipur National Park (120) in Karnataka.
- Kaziranga is also home to 9 of the 14 species of primates found in the Indian subcontinent.

Rivers and Highways:

- National Highway 37 passes through the park area.
- The park also has more than 250 seasonal water bodies, besides the Diphlu River running through it.

Other National Parks in Assam are:

1. Manas National Park,

2. Dibru-Saikhowa National Park,
3. Nameri National Park,
4. Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park.
5. Dehing Patkai National Park.
6. Raimona National Park.

2. International Baccalaureate

Recently, the Delhi Board of School Education (DBSE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with International Baccalaureate (IB) to implement IB programmes in 30 government schools, including 20 of its new Schools of Specialised Excellence (SOSE) in 2021.

- With the signing of this MoU, government school students will get access to international level of educational facilities.
- Students of these schools will be issued joint certification by the IB and the Delhi board when they complete schooling.

Key Points

About:

- It is a worldwide, non-profit education program founded to give to students aged 3 to 19 the opportunity to receive an education fit for a globalizing world. Its Foundation Office is in Geneva (Switzerland).
- It emphasizes personal student development as one of its main achievements.
- There are four IB education programs, all of which are intended to develop students' intellectual, emotional, personal and social skills.
- It has around 5,000 schools globally. There are currently 193 IB schools in India, all of which are top-end elite private schools.

Objective of IB Programmes: Fostering critical thinking and building problem-solving skills, while encouraging diversity, international mindedness, curiosity, and a healthy appetite for learning and excellence.

Benefits:

- High quality programmes of education, which support development of knowledgeable and inquiring students.
- Professional development that supports effective educators and collaborative professional learning communities.
- Students will be able to engage with people in an increasingly globalized, rapidly changing world.

3. Rana Punja Bhil

Recently, a dispute has erupted in Rajasthan over the hoisting of a flag on the statue of Rana Punja Bhil, a historical figure considered as a hero by the tribal Bhil community. After the Amargarh fort dispute, this is the second issue in Rajasthan within a month.

Key Points

About Rana Punja Bhil:

- He was a contemporary of 16th century ruler of Mewar, Maharana Pratap.
- He is considered to be a significant character who bolstered the strength of Pratap during his battles with Mughal emperor Akbar.
- When Maharana Pratap was readying for the battle with Akbar, the tribal Bhil community voluntarily came to his assistance and at the time the Bhil army was commanded by Punja.
- Owing to his status as a commander, he was bestowed the title of Rana.

Bhil community:

About:

- The Bhil are one of the largest tribal groups, living in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- They are the biggest tribe in Rajasthan.
- They are classified as scheduled tribes in Rajasthan.
- The name is derived from the word 'billu', which means bow.
- Bhil women wear traditional saris while men are dressed in long frocks and pyjamas. The woman put on heavy ornaments made of silver, brass along with rosaries of beads and silver coins and earrings.

Importance of the Community:

- The Bhil are known to be excellent archers coupled with deep knowledge about their local geography.

- Traditionally, experts in guerrilla warfare, most of them today are farmers and agricultural labourers. They are also skilled sculptors.
- They have exercised significant influence in the Mewar region and throughout the past, the Rajput rulers of the region have forged alliances with the tribal group.

Other Tribes in Rajasthan

- **Sahariyas:** Sahariyas are one of the most backward Rajasthani tribes.
- **Minas:** Minas is the second biggest tribe in Rajasthan. They are known to be the inhabitants of Indus Valley Civilization.
- **Gadiya Lohars:** Gadiya Lohars are known to be a small Rajput Rajasthan tribe.
- **Garasias:** Garasias are another small Rajput Rajasthan tribe.
- **Others:** There are other Rajasthan tribes also, which include Kathodi (found in Mewar region), Sansi and Kanjar.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. A shared “digital vision” could place the South Asian region on the right track towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution post its digital transformation owing to pandemic. Elaborate. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

COVID-19 has forced South Asia to take a quantum leap in digitalisation. The shift to remote work and education has propelled an unprecedented spike in Internet penetration, with even smaller nations such as Nepal recording almost an 11% increase in broadband Internet users.

Body**Background**

- As one of the world’s poorest regions, a wide digital divide persists in access and affordability, between and within the countries of South Asia.
- Despite having the world’s second largest online market, 50% of India’s population are without Internet with 59% for Bangladesh and 65% for Pakistan.
- With monetary and health assistance schemes distributed online, 51% of South Asian women were excluded from social protection measures during the pandemic.
- Children too were at the receiving end, with 88% lacking access to Internet powered home schooling.
- Businesses too have paid a heavy price for the gap in digital solutions, whereby many South Asian firms failing to embrace e-commerce or other cloud-based technologies to survive the financial chaos of the novel coronavirus pandemic.
- The region recorded a 64% decline in sales, with small and women-led firms faring the worst.
- With COVID-19 transforming work life, the acute skills gap among youth will continue, creating unemployment.

Digital revolution in South Asia

- In India, COVID-19 accelerated the launch of the National Digital Health Mission, enhancing the accessibility and the efficiency of health-care services by creating a unique health ID for every citizen.
- The pandemic-induced suspension of bricks-and-mortar businesses spurred South Asia’s embrace of e-commerce, boosted by digital payment systems.
- Bangladesh alone witnessed an increase of 70-80% in online sales in 2020, generating \$708.46 million in revenues.
- The Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021 envisages transforming Bangladesh into a prosperous, digital society, whereas India’s biometric identification systems intend to improve the efficiency of welfare programmes through digital innovation.
- Fintech could drive significant growth and reduce poverty by building financial inclusion. For instance, Pakistan’s digital financial sector could boost GDP by 7%, if faster payment gateway, lower costs and fast track licensing are put in place.
- A timely, inclusive, and sustainable digital transformation can not only bolster productivity and growth but also serve as a panacea for some of the region’s socio-economic divides.

Need for shared digital vision: Key to South Asia’s Fourth Industrial Revolution

- During the pandemic, South Asian nations joined hands to collectively battle the crises by contributing towards a COVID-19 emergency fund, exchanging data and information on health surveillance, sharing research findings, and developing an online learning platform for health workers.

- If the eight nations (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) can start walking the talk, partnership for a successful digital revolution is plausible.
- By addressing issues such as regulatory barriers on currency flows inhibiting online payment to transport-related constraints for cross-border e-commerce activities, South Asia can emulate the European Union’s Digital Single Market Proposal.
- For the sector to drive growth, issues such as customer protection, digital and market access regulation, etc. need to be addressed. There would be no digital revolution without universal digital literacy.
- Governments and businesses need to come together to revamp the education system to meet the demand for digital skills and online platforms.
- The crossflow of data and personal information calls for stringent cybersecurity measures as many have experienced painful lessons in data privacy during the pandemic.
- It will need vision, wisdom, and commitment at the highest level of the region’s political leadership.
- Concerted collaboration at all levels is needed to push South Asia out of stagnancy and towards a digital future of shared prosperity.

Conclusion

The right concoction of regulatory and physical infrastructure, skill sets and regional cooperation can lead toward a digital utopia whereas, the lack of which can breed a dystopian tomorrow. Adequate support is needed for those who risk falling through the net of digital progress. A shared “digital vision” could place the region on the right track towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Global Programme to End Child Marriage is an initiative of UN Women.
2. The SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

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

Q2. Which Article of the Constitution of India safeguards one’s right to marry the person of one’s choice?

- a. Article 19
- b. **Article 21**
- c. Article 25
- d. Article 29

Q3. Consider the following statements about PM-DAKSH Yojana:

1. It is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India.
2. It provides financial support for free coaching to notified minority students in selected coaching institutions.

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

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBPF):

1. It is one of the five Central Armed Police Forces of India
2. It was placed under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in 1965.

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

Q5. Pensilungpa Glacier is located in

- a. **Zaskar**
- b. Srinagar
- c. Kangra Valley
- d. Dharamshala