

GOVERNANCE**National Achievement Survey 2021**

Recently, the Union Government has conducted the National Achievement Survey (NAS) across India, assessing about 38 lakh students from 1.23 lakh schools in 733 districts in 36 States and Union Territories. The survey was last conducted in 2017 and was scheduled to take place in 2020. However, due to the Covid situation, it was postponed until this year (2021).

Key Points**About:**

- It is a nationwide survey to assess the learning outcomes and health of the education system. It is the largest, nationwide, sample-based education survey conducted across India.
- It is undertaken by the Ministry of Education.
 1. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) conducted NAS 2021.
 2. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) designed an assessment framework and tools for NAS-2021.
- It provides a system-level reflection on the effectiveness of school education. It collects information on relevant background variables such as school environment, teaching processes, and student home and background factors.
- It covers the whole spectrum of schools including Government schools (both State and Central government), Government-aided schools, and Private schools across India.

Medium and Grades:

- The NAS 2021 was conducted in 22 mediums of instruction that covered English, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Manipuri, Mizo, Punjabi, Odia, Telugu, Tamil, Bodo, Urdu, Garo, Konkani, Khasi, Bhutia, Nepali, and Lepcha.
- It was conducted in different subjects for different grades. The subject and grades wise break up is below:
 1. Grade 3 and 5: Language, EVS, and Mathematics
 2. Grade 8: Language, Science, Mathematics, and Social Science
 3. Grade 10: Language, Science, Mathematics, Social Science, and English

Objective:

- To provide structured feedback on student learning levels at District, State, and national levels. These inputs are used for policy planning and designing pedagogical interventions to improve quality and ensure equity in learning.

Significance:

- It will help in assessing the learning interruptions and new learnings during the Covid-19 pandemic which will in turn help to take remedial measures.
- The findings of NAS 2021 will help in diagnosing a systematic understanding of the consequences that prolonged closure of schools has had on the learning of students in terms of their socio-emotional and cognitive development.
- It will help at resolving the learning gaps of students and devising education policies, learning, and teaching practices.
- Through its diagnostic report cards, NAS findings help in capacity building for teachers, officials involved in the delivery of education.

Education in India

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 1. Part IV of Indian Constitution, Article 45 and Article 39 (f) of Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), has a provision for state-funded as well as equitable and accessible education.
 2. The 42nd Amendment to the Constitution in 1976 moved education from the State to the Concurrent List.
 3. The 86th Amendment in 2002 made education an enforceable right under Article 21-A.
- **Related Laws:** Right To Education (RTE) Act, 2009 aims to provide primary education to all children aged 6 to 14 years and enforces education as a Fundamental Right. It also mandates 25% reservation for disadvantaged sections of the society.

Government Initiatives:

1. National Education Policy 2020.
2. Samagra Shiksha (SS) 2.0
3. NIPUN Bharat Mission

4. PM Poshan Scheme
5. Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE).
6. Performance Grading Index

ECONOMICS**RBI Integrated Ombudsman Scheme**

Recently, the Prime Minister has launched the integrated ombudsman scheme. In 2019 the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had launched the Complaint Management System (CMS) in order to improve the customer experience in the grievance redressal process of banking services.

The PM has also launched the RBI's Retail Direct Scheme.

Ombudsman

- A government official who deals with complaints made by ordinary people against public organizations. This concept of Ombudsman arrived from Sweden.
- It means an officer appointed by the Legislature to handle complaints against a service or administrative authority.
- In India an Ombudsman is appointed to resolve grievances in the following sectors.
 1. Insurance Ombudsman
 2. Income Tax Ombudsman
 3. Banking Ombudsman

Key Points**About:**

- It amalgamates three ombudsman schemes of RBI - banking ombudsman scheme of 2006, ombudsman scheme for NBFCs of 2018 and ombudsman scheme of digital transactions of 2019.
- The unified ombudsman scheme will provide redress of customer complaints involving deficiency in services rendered by RBI regulated entities viz. banks, NBFCs (Non banking Financial Companies) and pre-paid instrument players if the grievance is not resolved to the satisfaction of the customers or not replied within a period of 30 days by the regulated entity.
- It also includes non-scheduled primary co-operative banks with a deposit size of Rs 50 crore and above. The integrated scheme makes it a "One Nation One Ombudsman" approach and jurisdiction neutral.

Need:

- The first ombudsman scheme was rolled out in the 1990s. The system was always viewed as an issue by consumers.
- One of the primary concerns was the lack of maintainable grounds on which the consumer could challenge the actions of a regulated entity at the ombudsman or a rejection of the complaint on technical grounds, resulting in a preference for the consumer court notwithstanding the extended timelines for redressal.
- The move to integrate the systems (banking, NBFC, and digital payments) and expand the grounds for complaints is expected to see a positive response from consumers.

Features:

- The Scheme defines 'deficiency in service' as the ground for filing a complaint, with a specified list of exclusions. Therefore, the complaints would no longer be rejected simply on account of "not covered under the grounds listed in the scheme".
- The scheme is jurisdiction neutral and a centralised receipt and processing centre has been set-up in Chandigarh for initial handling of complaints in any language.
- RBI had created a provision for the use of Artificial Intelligence tools so that banks and investigating agencies could coordinate in a better way in the fastest time possible.
- The bank customers will be able to file complaints, submit documents, track status, and give feedback through a single email address.
- There will also be a multilingual toll-free number that will provide all relevant information on grievance redress.
- The regulated entity will not have any right to appeal in cases where an award is issued by the ombudsman against it for not furnishing satisfactory and timely information.

Appellate Authority:

- RBI's Executive Director-in charge of Consumer Education and Protection Department would be the Appellate Authority under the integrated scheme.

Significance:

- This will help in improving the grievance redress mechanism for resolving customer complaints against RBI's regulated entities.
- It is expected to ensure uniformity and streamlined user-friendly mechanisms which will add value to the scheme and bring customer delight and financial inclusion.
- 44 crore loan account holders and 220 crore deposit account holders would directly benefit from the single ombudsman, they would now be able to lodge a complaint and track their complaints on the same platform.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**Belarus-Poland Border Crisis**

Recently, Belarusian and Russian paratroopers staged joint drills near the Polish and Lithuanian borders. It is taking place during a standoff between Belarus and the European Union (EU) over migrants camped in freezing forests at the frontier.

Key Points**Background:**

- In Belarus there were months of protests following the August 2020 election that gave authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko a sixth term in office. The opposition and the West rejected the result as a sham.
- Belarusian authorities responded to the demonstrations with a fierce crackdown that saw more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands beaten by police.
- The EU and the US reacted by imposing sanctions on the Belarus government.
- In May 2021 Belarus forcibly diverted a passenger jet and scrambled a warplane to arrest an opposition journalist in an act denounced by Western powers as "state piracy" (an act of piracy where the state is involved). After which the sanctions were further strengthened.
 1. The Belarus government reacted by saying he would no longer abide by an agreement to stem illegal migration, arguing that the EU sanctions deprived his government of funds needed to contain flows of migrants.
 2. And it would stop trying to prevent undocumented migrants and refugees from reaching the EU.
- The Belarusian opposition has urged the EU to take even tougher measures, including a trade embargo and a ban on transit of cargo via Belarus. However the Belarus government has threatened to cut off Russian gas supplies to Europe through pipelines over Belarus. But Russia appeared to distance itself from that threat.

Current Crisis:

- Thousands of people arriving from the Middle East are camping at the border with Poland, enduring freezing conditions, the migrants also include women and children. Poland is a member of the EU.
- The government in Poland is not even allowing aid organizations access to provide them with supplies. This violates international conventions (United Nations Refugee Convention 1951). Poland is ruled by the right-wing populist Law and Justice party (PiS), which is hostile to immigrants.

Russia's Support:

- Belarus has received strong support from its main ally, Russia, which has helped buttress Lukashenko's government with loans and political support.
- Russia said the migrant flows resulted from the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and Western-backed Arab Spring uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa.
- In a response to Poland's troop build-up along its border with Belarus, Russia dispatched two strategic, long-range Tu-22M3 bombers to patrol the border region.
- Russia has also squarely blamed the EU for the migrant crisis, arguing that it was the EU's refusal to accept asylum-seekers that is creating the crisis.

EU's Stand:

- The EU has made a strong show of solidarity with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. EU officials are expected to discuss another round of sanctions against Belarus.
- The EU has accused Belarus of mounting a "hybrid attack" on the bloc by flying in thousands of migrants, mainly from West Asia, and pushing them to try to cross illegally into Poland.
 1. Neighbours of Belarus have expressed concern that the crisis could escalate into a military confrontation.

2. However, Belarus also denies encouraging the flow of migrants and said the EU is violating migrants' rights by denying them safe passage.

Global Reaction:

- Western members of the United Nation Security Council have condemned Belarus for the escalating crisis over migrants stranded on its border with Poland.
- The UN Refugee Agency, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are calling for an urgent resolution of the situation and immediate and unhindered access to the EU to ensure that humanitarian assistance is provided.

Way Forward

With the EU set to impose further sanctions on Belarus, Poland determined to keep the migrants out, Belarus unwilling to take measures to aid the migrants camping out in the forests without food or water, and winter closing in, the fate of thousands of migrants remains dire.

The EU, for its part, should stop its blind declarations of solidarity with Poland and put pressure on the government to work immediately on a humane solution for the people on the border, perhaps with the help of international organizations.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM**Norovirus**

Recently, a highly contagious virus named Norovirus has been detected in Kerala.

Key Points**About:**

- It is a group of viruses that leads to gastrointestinal illness.
- It causes inflammation of the lining of the stomach and intestines, in addition to severe vomiting and diarrhoea.
- Norovirus is resistant to many disinfectants and can heat up to 60°C. Therefore, merely steaming food or chlorinating water does not kill the virus. The virus can also survive many common hand sanitisers.

Transmission:

- A person can be infected with different varieties of norovirus several times in their lives, but developing immunity to one type doesn't provide protection against other varieties.
- The virus can be transferred from an infected to a healthy individual through contaminated surfaces or food.
- The virus can primarily be transmitted from oral-faecal. Disease outbreaks typically occur aboard cruise ships, in nursing homes, dormitories, and other closed spaces.

Vulnerable Group:

- The virus can affect people across all age groups but is known to cause serious symptoms in children, the elderly and people with comorbidities.

Symptoms:

- Diarrhoea, Vomiting, Stomach ache, Gastrointestinal problems etc are the symptoms.

Treatment:

- While there is no specific treatment available to cure the virus, generic medications for diarrhoea and vomiting can help cure the disease.

Status:

- There are 685 million cases annually, of which 200 million are detected among children younger than five years.
- Nearly 50,000 children die every year due to diarrhoea caused by the virus.

2.Kaiser-i-Hind Butterfly

Recently, Arunachal Pradesh has approved the large, brightly coloured Kaiser-i-Hind as the State butterfly. Kaiser-i-Hind literally means Emperor of India.

Key Points

Scientific Name: Teinopalpus imperialis

Habitat:

- It is one of the very rare and elusive swallowtail butterflies which are found at medium and higher elevations. Swallowtail butterfly is any of a group of butterflies in the family Papilionidae (order Lepidoptera).

- It flies high in the canopy of broad leaved temperate evergreen forests. The temperate evergreen forests are found in the Eastern and Western Himalayas.
- This butterfly with a 90-120 mm wingspan is found in (West Bengal, Meghalaya, Assam, Sikkim and Manipur) along the Eastern Himalayas. Its presence indicates the existence of a good forest ecosystem and protection.
- The butterfly also flutters in Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and southern China.

Protection Status:

1. IUCN: Near Threatened
2. CITES: Appendix II
3. Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule II

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Operation Cactus enhanced India's prestige enormously and showed our efficiency and capability to mount a successful operation at short notice. Comment. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

'Operation Cactus', the code name for India's military intervention in the Maldives in 1988, following an attempted coup d'état against the government of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and his request for help, was spontaneous and swift.

Body

Background: Operation Cactus

- More than 60 of PLOTE's mercenaries landed in the Maldivian capital of Male and soon gained control of the city.
- Then-President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who was able to escape capture, requested military intervention from several countries, including India.
- Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi responded to Gayoom's call, dispatching paratroopers and naval warships to the island nation.
- Operation Cactus started on the night of 3 November 1988, hours after the request for intervention.
- The Indian paratroopers rescued the President and soon returned control of the capital to the Maldivian government.

Operation Cactus: India's intervention and rationale

- India's intervention in the attempted coup became necessary as in the absence of Indian intervention, external powers would have been tempted to intervene or even to establish bases in Maldives.
- Maldives being in India's backyard would have been detrimental to India's national interest.
- India's whole security prospects in Indian Ocean was at stake due to this incident.
- Relations with Sri Lanka the same year was tense and hence could not risk two antagonistic governments as its neighbours in Indian Ocean. India, therefore, intervened with "Operation Cactus".
- It was carried out to preserve the security situation in the wider Indian Ocean Region, which would be under threat if the attempted coup in Maldives was successful. Maldives was also an import sea line of communication.
- Indian extradited some of the mercenaries captured from the freighter in July 1989 to stand trial in the Maldives. Although they were all handed death sentences, President Gayoom commuted to life imprisonment under Indian pressure. This also earned huge credibility to India.

Success of the operation and its impact

- Operation Cactus was testimony to the fact that India could play a role in ensuring security in Asia. The role was a precursor to India being a regional security provider in the Indian ocean region.
- India's swift, decisive action was hailed by the international community, ranging from US President Ronald Reagan to Margaret Thatcher.
- Operation Cactus enhanced India's prestige enormously and showed our efficiency and capability to mount a successful operation at short notice. There was universal acknowledgement of our role as a police force in the area.
- One of the impacts of the development was close alignment on the security understanding between India and Maldives.
- India has been helping in the capacity and capability development of the Maldivian armed forces. Since then, thousands of Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF) personnel have been trained in India.

Conclusion

India's foreign policy is about non-interference in sovereign countries' internal affairs but in 1988 the Maldivian president requested India's help through military intervention and as a responsible neighbour India was swift in its action and within the bounds of legality per the ICJ Nicaragua. Most importantly, nations like USA, UK and others recognized India's clout and its importance in the Indian Ocean region. India's stature on diplomatic pedestal was raised high after Operation Cactus, making it a responsible nation contributing to world peace and security.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Mid-Day Meal Rules, 2015 provide that:
2. The place of serving meals to the children shall be school only.
3. The School Management Committee mandated under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 monitor implementation of the Mid-day meal Scheme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q2. Consider the following statements about the SMILE Scheme:

1. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated this scheme for Support for Marginalized Individuals.
2. The scheme would be implemented with the support of NABARD and SIDBI.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established on 28 March 2021 by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1401.
2. Its original mandate was to support the implementation of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q4. Consider the following statements about the CPEC or the China Pakistan Economic Corridor:

1. It was launched in 2015.
2. It is the flagship project of the multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
3. It consists of highways, railways, and pipelines.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q5. Consider the following statements:

1. India currently has more than 37 military commands with less than 7 of them are service-oriented.
2. The Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) is the first and only tri-service theatre command of the Indian Armed Forces.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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