

GOVERNANCE**India Skills 2021**

India Skills 2021 Nationals, the country's biggest skill competition, concluded recently.

Key Points**About:**

- It is designed to demonstrate the highest standards of skilling and offers a platform to young people to showcase their talent at national and international levels.
- IndiaSkills Competition is held every two years with the support of state governments and industry.
- It has the potential to reach grassroot level and make an impact.

Participants:

- 30 states and Union Territories (UTs) participated in the competition and showcased their skills in 54 skills, including seven new-age ones, in 2021. Skill areas include beauty therapy, cyber security, floristry, robot system integration, cloud computing, water technology, painting and decorating, health and social care, among others.

Nodal Agency:

- National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), working under the guidance of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). NSDC has been leading India's participation at the WorldSkills International competitions since 2011.

Performance of the States:

- Odisha topped the chart followed by Maharashtra and Kerala. The winners of IndiaSkills 2021 Nationals will get a chance to represent the country at WorldSkills International Competition to be held in Shanghai, China in October 2022.

Need of the Skill Development:

- **Unskilled Labour Force:** According to the UNDP's Human Development Report-2020, only 21.1% of the labour force was skilled in the period 2010-2019 in India. This dismal result is due to lack of cohesion within policy actions, absence of holistic approach and working in silos.
- **Tackle the Rising Unemployment:** India's unemployment rate reached an all-time high in 2020. There were several factors responsible for this, including the coronavirus pandemic-induced lockdown.
- **Potential to contribute in the Economy:** According to the World Economic Forum report released in January 2021, investment in upskilling could potentially boost the global economy by USD6.5 trillion by 2030, and India's economy by USD570 billion. India had the second-highest additional employment potential through upskilling as it could add 2.3 million jobs by 2030, second only to the US's 2.7 million jobs.

Related Initiatives/Schemes

1. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
2. Recognition of Prior Learning
3. National Career Service Project
4. Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood (SANKALP)
5. Young, Upcoming and Versatile Authors' (YUVA) scheme
6. Kaushalacharya Awards
7. Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS)
8. Atmanirbhar Skilled Employee Employer Mapping (ASEEM)
9. Skill Certification

INTERNAL SECURITY**Indigenous Aircraft Carrier**

Recently, the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) 1, which will be called INS Vikrant once it enters service with the Indian Navy, began another set of sea trials. INS Vikrant is the largest and most complex warship to be built in India.

Key Points**About Aircraft Carrier:**

- An aircraft carrier is "a large ship that carries military aircraft and has a long, flat surface where they take off and land." These floating air bases are equipped with a full-length flight deck capable of carrying, arming, deploying and recovering aircraft.

- They act as command and control of a naval fleet in times of war and peace.
- A carrier battle group consists of an aircraft carrier and its escorts, together making the group. During World War II, the Imperial Japanese Navy was the first to assemble a large number of carriers into a single task force known as Kido Butai. This task force was used during the Pearl Harbour Attack.

Aircraft Carrier in India:

- **INS Vikrant (decommissioned):** Beginning with INS Vikrant which served India from 1961 to 1997. India acquired the Vikrant from the United Kingdom in 1961, and the carrier played a stellar role in the 1971 war with Pakistan that led to the birth of Bangladesh. In 2014, INS Vikrant, was broken down in Mumbai.
- **INS Viraat (decommissioned):** INS Vikrant was followed by the Centaur-class carrier HMS (Her Majesty's Ship) Hermes, which was rechristened in India as INS Viraat and served in the Indian Navy from 1987 to 2016.
- **INS Vikramaditya:** It is the Indian Navy's largest aircraft carrier and warship converted from the Russian Navy's decommissioned Admiral Gorshkov/Baku. INS Vikramaditya is a modified Kiev-class aircraft carrier that was commissioned into service in November 2013.
- **INS Vikrant:**
 1. In order to commemorate the legacy of INS Vikrant (decommissioned), the First IAC will be named as INS Vikrant.
 2. It is built at Cochin Shipyard Limited.
 3. It is currently undergoing sea trials and is likely to be commissioned in 2023.
 4. Its construction propelled India into a select group of countries having capabilities to build state-of-the-art aircraft carriers.
 5. **Operational Modalities:** According to the Indian Navy, the warship will operate MiG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31 helicopters, MH-60R multi-role helicopters and the indigenously manufactured Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH).

Significance of Aircraft Carriers:

- Currently, most of the world powers are operating or building technologically advanced aircraft carriers to safeguard their maritime rights and interests.
- Thirteen navies across the world now operate aircraft carriers. Following are the name of a few:
 1. Nimitz Class, US
 2. Gerald R Ford Class, US
 3. Queen Elizabeth Class, UK
 4. Admiral Kuznetsov, Russia
 5. Liaoning, China
 6. INS Vikramaditya, India
 7. Charles De Gaulle, France
 8. Cavour, Italy
 9. Juan Carlos I, Spain
 10. USS America, US
- Aircraft Carrier for India, provides a deterrent naval capability, that is not only essential but a strategic need. This is because India's area of responsibility ranges from the east coast of Africa to the Western Pacific.

Future Endeavours:

- Since 2015, the Navy has been seeking approval to build a third aircraft carrier for the country, which, if approved, will become India's second Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC-2).
- This proposed carrier, to be named INS Vishal, is intended to be a giant 65,000-tonne vessel, much bigger than IAC-1 and the INS Vikramaditya.

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Gateway of Hell: Turkmenistan

Recently, Turkmenistan has decided to find a way to extinguish a fire in a huge natural gas (Mixture of methane, carbon dioxide, nitrogen, hydrogen sulphide and helium) the Darvaza gas crater also known as the 'Gateway to Hell'. Turkmenistan has been at the centre of methane leakages. Out of the 50 most severe methane gas leakages onshore oil and gas operations in 2019, 31 were in Turkmenistan.

In addition to this, one of these leakages, “had a climate impact roughly equivalent to the annual emissions of all the cars in Arizona”.

Key Points**About:**

- Located in the Karakum desert, 260 kilometres away from Turkmenistan’s capital, Ashgabat, the crater has been burning for the last 50 years.
- The crater has become a significant tourist attraction in the country. In 2018, the country’s president officially renamed it as the “Shining of Karakum”.

Origin of Crater:

- The details of the origin are not actually known but it has been said that the crater was created in 1971 during a Soviet drilling operation.
 1. Soviet geologists were drilling for oil in the Karakum desert when they hit a pocket of natural gas by mistake, which caused the earth to collapse and ended up forming three huge sinkholes.
 2. A sinkhole is a depression in the ground that has no natural external surface drainage. These are regions formed when underlying limestone bedrock is dissolved by groundwater.
- Locals have also said that the crater was formed in the 1960s but wasn’t lit on fire until the 1980s.
- It has also been said that since oil and gas were very expensive commodities during Soviet rule, the formation of the crater has remained a confidential piece of information.

Reason for Closing:

- It negatively affects both the environment and the health of the people living nearby.
- Loss of valuable natural resources for which they can get significant profits and use them for improving the wellbeing of people.
- Hinders the accelerated industrial development of the subsoil riches of central Karakum.

PRELIMS FACT**Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2022**

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of the Overseas Indian community in the development of India.

Key Points**Background:**

- 9th January was chosen as the day to celebrate PBD since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa, led India’s freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.
- This day came into effect in 2003, but in 2015 it was revised and was decided to be celebrated every two years. It was then a theme-based conference that was set up every year during the interim period.
- PBD Conventions are held once every two years. PBD 2021: The 16th PBD Convention was held virtually in New Delhi. The theme was "Contributing to Atmanirbhar Bharat".
- On this day, the Government also confers Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award. It is the highest honour conferred on a Non-Resident Indian, Person of Indian Origin; or an organisation or institution established and run by Non-Resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin, who have made significant contribution in better understanding of India abroad, support India's causes and concerns in a tangible way.

Significance:

- This day plays a significant role as the overseas Indian community gets a shared platform to get themselves engaged with the government and the native people of the land.
- The conventions are very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.

Government Initiative related to Overseas Indians

- **Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** To institutionalize the process of skill development of emigrant Indian workers.
- **Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC):** 100 scholarships per annum are granted to Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) and Non Resident Indians (NRI) students for undergraduate courses.

- **Know India Program' (KIP):** It familiarizes Indian-origin youth (18-30 years) with their Indian roots and contemporary India.
- **E-migrate system:** It is a foreign employers database. It ensures the welfare and check on exploitation met to emigrants.
- **VAJRA (Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty) scheme:** It formalizes a rotation program wherein top NRI scientists, engineers, doctors, managers and professionals serve Indian public sector organizations for a brief period, lending their expertise.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Electoral bonds were introduced as a harbinger of a new era of transparency and accountability. In truth, electoral bonds have only legitimized opacity. Critically Analyse. (150 words)

Ans:

Introduction

Electoral bonds will allow donors to pay political parties using banks as an intermediary. Although called a bond, the banking instrument resembling promissory notes will not carry any interest. The electoral bond, which will be a bearer instrument, will not carry the name of the payee and can be bought for any value, in multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh or Rs 1 crore.

Electoral bonds have received tremendous attention and scrutiny as a unique poll funding instrument since their introduction in 2018. Critics have termed this a significant step backward in achieving the goal of transparency in political funding.

Body**Rationale behind the electoral bonds:**

- Electoral bonds have been introduced to promote transparency in funding and donation received by political parties.
- The scheme envisages building a transparent system of acquiring bonds with validated KYC and an audit trail. A limited window and a very short maturity period would make misuse improbable.
- The electoral bonds will prompt donors to take the banking route to donate, with their identity captured by the issuing authority. This will ensure transparency and accountability and is a big step towards electoral reform.
- The previous system of cash donations from anonymous sources is wholly non-transparent. The donor, the donee, the quantum of donations and the nature of expenditure are all undisclosed.
- According to government the system of Bonds will encourage political donations of clean money from individuals, companies, HUF, religious groups, charities, etc.
- After purchasing the bonds, these entities can hand them to political parties of their choice, which must redeem them within the prescribed time.
- Some element of transparency would be introduced in as much as all donors declare in their accounts the amount of bonds that they have purchased and all parties declare the quantum of bonds that they have received.
- The electoral bonds are aimed at rooting out the current system of largely anonymous cash donations made to political parties which lead to the generation of black money in the economy.

Findings on Electoral bonds:

- Since its introduction, electoral bonds have become an essential source of financing for all major political parties.
- Between March 2018 and January 2021, electoral bonds worth Rs 6,514.50 crore were redeemed by parties.
- While the ruling BJP has managed to receive the lion's share (60.17%) of political funding made through the bonds, over half of the total income of all national and regional parties too was contributed through this method.
- for both the principal political parties, it seems that the quantum of political donations channelised through cash donations/non-identifiable sources has decreased substantially.
- Instead, today more funds are channelised through the formal banking system. This was not the case with the earlier system in which half of the political donations were not traceable as they were made in cash form.

- Viewed from this angle, the electoral bonds scheme is an improvement over the previous system.

Electoral bonds have only legitimized opacity:

- The move could be misused, given the lack of disclosure requirements for individuals purchasing electoral bonds.
- Electoral bonds make electoral funding even more opaque. It will bring more and more black money into the political system. electoral bonds would cause a “serious impact” on transparency in funding of political parties
- With electoral bonds there can be a legal channel for companies to round-trip their tax haven cash to a political party. If this could be arranged, then a businessman could lobby for a change in policy, and legally funnel a part of the profits accruing from this policy change to the politician or party that brought it about.
- The amendments would pump in black money for political funding through shell companies and allow “unchecked foreign funding of political parties in India which could lead to Indian politics being influenced by foreign companies
- Companies no longer need to declare the names of the parties to which they have donated so shareholders won't know where their money has gone.
- They have potential to load the dice heavily in favour of the ruling party as the donor bank and the receiver bank know the identity of the person. But both the banks report to the RBI which, in turn, is subject to the Central government's will to know.

Alternative mechanisms for electoral funding:

- According to Former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi, an alternative worth exploring is a National Electoral Fund to which all donors can contribute.
- The funds would be allocated to political parties in proportion to the votes they get. Not only would this protect the identity of donors, it would also weed out black money from political funding.
- The total cost of MPLADS funding for all MPs is nearly ₹4,000 crore every year, and scrapping the scheme even for one year in an MP's five-year term will be enough to bankroll state funding of Lok Sabha candidates. This is a legalized way of allowing MPs and MLAs to shower money on their constituencies at state expense.
- Direct funding of candidates, who will be reimbursed according to their final share of the votes cast.
- The best way to bring about such transparency in political funding is to put a complete ban on cash donations by individuals or companies to political parties.
- Making it mandatory for all parties to receive donations only by cheque, or other modes of money transfer.
- There should be clear provisions for getting tax benefits for all those making such donations.
- Make it mandatory for political parties to submit details of all donations received with the Election Commission and also with the income-tax department.
- State funding of political parties can be considered. The Indrajit Gupta Committee on State Funding of Elections had endorsed partial state funding of recognised political parties.
- The mechanics of this process need to be carefully worked out to establish the allocation of money to national parties, State parties and independent candidates, and to check candidate's own expenditure over and above that which is provided by the state.
- Voters have to be made aware through awareness campaigns about ill effects of money power during elections. Bringing political parties under the preview of RTI act.

Conclusion

The 255th Law Commission Report on Electoral Reforms observed that opacity in political funding results in “lobbying and capture” of the government by big donors. Various commissions, including the Election Commission, have given detailed recommendations on suitable remedies. Public funding needs to be examined and introduced with proper checks and balances.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements about Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC):

1. It is an economic and political union comprising of all the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf except Iraq.

2. The council's main headquarter is in the city of Riyadh in Saudi Arabia.

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. A movie titled The Man Who Knew Infinity is based on the biography of

- a. **S. Ramanujan**
- b. S. Chandrasekhar
- c. S. N. Bose
- d. C. V. Raman

Q3. Consider the following statements about flexible fuel vehicles (FFVs):

- 1. An FFV is a modified version of vehicles that could run both on gasoline and doped petrol with different levels of ethanol blends.
- 2. FFVs have compatible engines to run on more than 84 percent ethanol blended petrol.

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 Olive Ridley Turtles:

- 1. The Olive ridley turtles are freshwater turtles found only in India.
- 2. They are classified as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.

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

Q5. Consider the following statements about Pralay Missile:

- 1. It is India's first conventional quasi-ballistic missile.
- 2. It has a range of 1500-5000 kilometre and can be launched from a mobile launcher.

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