

SOCIAL JUSTICE

PM-POSHAN Scheme

Recently, the central government requested state governments/union territory administrations to explore the possibility of introducing millets under the PM POSHAN Scheme preferably in the districts where eating millets is a culturally accepted food habit.

NITI Aayog has also been advocating the need to introduce millets in the mid-day meal programme (now PM POSHAN Scheme), moving away from rice and wheat.

What are the Benefits of Millets?

- Millets or nutri-cereals, which include Jowar, Bajra, and Ragi, are rich in minerals and B-complex vitamins, as well as proteins and antioxidants, making them an ideal choice for improving the nutritional outcome of children.
- Multidimensional benefits associated with millets can address the issues related to nutrition security, food systems security, and farmers' welfare.
- Further, many unique features linked with millets makes them a suitable crop which is resilient to India's varied agro-climatic conditions.
- India pushed a resolution to declare 2023 as the international year of millets which has been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

What is the PM Poshan Scheme?

- In September 2021, the Union Cabinet approved the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman or PM-POSHAN for providing one hot cooked meal in Government and Government-aided schools with the financial outlay of Rs 1.31 trillion.
- The scheme replaced the national programme for mid-day meal in schools or Mid-day Meal Scheme.
- It has been launched for an initial period of five years (2021-22 to 2025-26).

What are the Features of the PM Poshan Scheme?

- **Coverage:** Primary (1-5) and upper primary (6-8) schoolchildren are currently entitled to 100 grams and 150 grams of food grains per working day each, to ensure a minimum of 700 calories. It also covers students of balvatikas (children in the 3-5 year age group) from pre-primary classes.
- **Nutritional Gardens:** Use of locally-grown nutritional food items will be encouraged from "school nutrition gardens" for boosting the local economic growth, and will also include involvement of Farmers Producer Organizations (FPO) and Women Self Help Groups in the implementation of the scheme.
- **Supplementary Nutrition:** The scheme has a provision for supplementary nutrition for children in aspirational districts and those with high prevalence of anaemia.
 1. It does away with the restriction on the part of the Centre to provide funds only for wheat, rice, pulses and vegetables.
 2. Currently, if a state decides to add any component like milk or eggs to the menu, the Centre does not bear the additional cost. Now that restriction has been lifted.
- **Tithi Bhojan Concept:** Tithi Bhojan is a community participation programme in which people provide special food to children on special occasions/festivals.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** The Centre has directed the states and the UTs to switch to Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system for providing compensation to the cooks and helpers working under the scheme. This is to ensure no leakages at the level of district administration and other authorities.
- **Nutrition Expert:** A nutrition expert is to be appointed in each school whose responsibility is to ensure that health aspects such as Body Mass Index (BMI), weight and haemoglobin levels are addressed.
- **Social Audit of the Scheme:** A social audit of the scheme has also been mandated for each school in each state to study the implementation of the scheme, which was so far not being done by all states.

What is the Need for Introducing Millets?

- **Malnutrition and Anaemia among Children:** According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5, India has unacceptably high levels of stunting, despite marginal improvement over the years. In 2019-21, 35.5% of children below five years were stunted and 32.1% were underweight.

- **Global Nutrition Report-2021:** According to the Global Nutrition Report (GNR, 2021), India has made no progress on anaemia and childhood wasting.
 1. Over 17% of Indian children under 5 years of age are affected due to childhood wasting.
 2. The data in NFHS 2019-21 shows the highest spike in anaemia was reported among children aged 6-59 months from 67.1% (NFHS-5) from 58.6% (NFHS-4, 2015-16).
- **Human Capital Index:** India ranks 116 out of 174 countries on the human capital index. Human capital consists of the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate over their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society.

What are the other related Initiatives?

1. Anemia Mukh Bharat Abhiyan
2. The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013
3. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)
4. Poshan Abhiyaan

Way Forward

- Looking at this data related to the nutrition of children, it is imperative to push for convergence of health and nutrition programmes right from pregnancy until the child reaches five years of age.
- A well-planned and effective Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) strategy is essential since behaviours are ingrained in society and in family traditions.
- Effective monitoring and implementation of programmes to address malnutrition and prioritizing the reduction of child undernutrition in the national development agenda is the need of the hour.

ENVIRONMENT

One Ocean Summit

Recently, the Prime Minister addressed the high-level segment of the One Ocean Summit. The summit was organised by France in Brest, France in cooperation with the United Nations and the World Bank. The summit was addressed by various other Heads of State and Governments from countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, Canada among others.

What is the Importance of Oceans?

- The ocean covers more than 70% of the surface of our planet, yet too often remains on the sidelines of major European and international events.
- The ocean is a regulator of major environmental balances, and climate in particular, a provider of resources, an important enabler of trade, and an essential link between countries and human communities.
- However, it is now seriously threatened by numerous pressures, such as the effects of climate change, pollution or the overexploitation of marine resources.
- In an effort to mobilise the international community and take tangible action to mitigate such pressures on the ocean, France has decided to organise a One Planet Summit dedicated to the ocean.

What is One Ocean Summit?

- The goal of the One Ocean Summit is to raise the collective level of ambition of the international community on marine issues.
 1. Commitments will be made towards combating illegal fishing, decarbonising shipping and reducing plastic pollution.
 2. Will also focus on efforts to improve governance of the high seas and coordinating international scientific research.

What was India's Stand at the Summit?

- India has always been a maritime civilization. India's ancient scriptures and literature talk about the gifts of the oceans including marine life.
- India's security and prosperity are linked to oceans. India's "Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative" contains marine resources as a key pillar.
- India supports the French initiative of a "High Ambition Coalition on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction".
 1. The coalition gathers parties which are committed, at the highest political level, to achieve an ambitious outcome of the ongoing negotiations on a Treaty of the High Seas ("the implementing agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction"), under the auspices of the United Nations.

2. The “BBNJ Treaty”, also known as the “Treaty of the High Seas”, is an international agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, currently under negotiation at the United Nations.
3. This new instrument is being developed within the framework of the United Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the main international agreement governing human activities at sea.
- India is committed to eliminating single-use plastic. India recently undertook a nation-wide awareness campaign to clean plastic and other waste from coastal areas. Three hundred thousand young people collected almost 13 tons of plastic waste.
- India will be happy to join France in launching a global initiative on single use plastics.
 1. Recently, the Ministry Of Environment Forest And Climate Change has notified the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021 which prohibit specific single-use plastic items which have “low utility and high littering potential” by 2022.
 2. India has also directed its Navy to contribute 100 ship-days this year to cleaning plastic waste from the seas.

Are there any Other Global initiatives to Protect Oceans?

- **United Nations Ocean Conference:** The 2017 UN’s Ocean Conference sought to mobilise action for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. Next conference is scheduled to be held in 2022.
- **Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development:** The UN has proclaimed a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) to support efforts to reverse the cycle of decline in ocean health and gather ocean stakeholders worldwide behind a common framework that will ensure ocean science can fully support countries in creating improved conditions for sustainable development of the Ocean.
- **World Oceans Day:** June 8th is World Oceans Day, the United Nations day for celebrating the role of the oceans in our everyday life and inspiring action to protect the ocean and sustainably use marine resources.
- **India- Norway Ocean Dialogue:** In 2019, the Indian and Norwegian governments agreed to work more closely on oceans by signing a MoU and establishing the India-Norway Ocean Dialogue.
- **India’s Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI):** It is an open, non-treaty based initiative for countries to work together for cooperative and collaborative solutions to common challenges in the region. IPOI draws on existing regional architecture and mechanisms to focus on seven pillars: Maritime Security, Maritime Ecology, Maritime Resources, Capacity Building and Resource Sharing, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation and Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport.
- **GloLitter Partnerships Project:** It is launched by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UNs (FAO) and initial funding from the Government of Norway. It is aimed to prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from shipping and fisheries.

ECONOMY

National Single Window System

Recently, Jammu & Kashmir became the first Union Territory to be onboarded the National Single Window System (NSWS). This marks a major leap in Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) in the Union Territory.

NSWS is linked with India Industrial Land Bank (IILB) which hosts 45 industrial parks of J&K. This will help Investors to discover available land parcels in J&K.

What is the National Single Window System?

- The platform was soft launched in September 2021 by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It is a one-stop digital platform that aims at allowing investors to apply for various pre-operations approvals required for commencing a business in the country.
- It makes the business registration process easier, allowing the beneficiary to get significant approvals online, without having to run to the government offices for approvals and can avail themselves of services with just a click.

What is the Significance?

- It would become a “one stop shop” for state and Central government compliances and bring transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the ecosystem.
- It will also offer a Know Your Approvals service to inform businesses of the details of all the approvals they need to obtain as well as a common registration form, document repository and e-communication module.
- It will provide strength to other schemes e.g. Make in India, Startup India, PLI scheme etc.

What are Other Initiatives to Improve EoDB?

- In the Union Budget speech 2020, the Investment Clearance Cell (ICC) was announced. ICC will provide “end to end” facilitation and support to investors, including pre-investment advisory, provide information related to land banks and facilitate clearances at Centre and State level. The cell was proposed to operate through an online digital portal.
- Amendments to Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and Decriminalisation under Companies Act, 2013.
- Reduction of corporate tax from 30% to 25% for mid-sized companies.
- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), has initiated the MCA21 project, which enables easy and secure access to MCA services in an assisted manner for corporate entities, professionals, and the general public. It has also launched the Simplified Proforma for Incorporating Company Electronically Plus (SPICE+) web form.
- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) has launched eSanchit (e-Storage and Computerised Handling of Indirect Tax documents) for paperless processing, uploading of supporting documents and to facilitate the trading across Borders.
- E-assessment scheme for taxpayers.

PRELIMS FACT

National Award for Innovations and Good Practices in Educational Administration

Recently, the Ministry of Education presented the 5th National Award for Innovations and Good Practices in Educational Administration (IGPEA). The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) has instituted the National Award for IGPEA for District and Block Level Education Officers. NIEPA, under the Ministry of Education, is a premier organization dealing with capacity building and research in planning and management of education not only in India but also in South Asia.

What are the key things about the award?

About:

- It was launched by NIEPA in 2014 with an aim to encourage innovations and good practices in educational administration at grassroot level for improving the functioning of the public system of education.

Objectives:

- To recognise innovative ideas and practices adopted by the district and block level education officers for effective management of the educational administrative system at the district and block levels.

Significance:

- The educational officers at the field level are also an essential link between system level administration and institutional level management of education. Role of these officers is crucial in the process of implementation of policies and programmes at the field level.
- Some of the major areas wherein the officers have initiated many interventions include – the use of ICT to the extent of digital classrooms, use of Facebook and WhatsApp; mobilization of physical, human and financial resources; improving infrastructure facilities within the schools, community mobilization and support; skill building, especially language skills; capacity building of the teachers and interventions related to enhancement in the quality of the overall function of the schools.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. If the construction of the Sino-Russian united front has been dazzling, equally impressive has been the rebuilding and expansion of US alliances. Analyze the threats and opportunities that the current geopolitics and a ‘new cold war’ present for India.

Introduction

If the progress of the Sino-Russian united front has been spectacular, it has been as the rebuilding and expansion of US alliances have been particularly exciting. It will get harder to stand in the middle as both sides strengthen their global alliances. India's abstention from the United Nations Security Council last week on the issue of debating Ukraine is an indicator that its standing in the resurgent bloc politics is shrinking.

Body

Great power politics and rivalry

- Both Russia and China want to leverage the united front to secure better terms from America. Washington, on the other hand, wants to probe the boundaries between Moscow and Beijing.
- Last year, Biden's contact with Putin was on the ground that if there was a mutually beneficial relationship with Russia in Europe, the US could better focus on the challenges faced by China in the Indo-Pacific region. Putin is profiting from that idea by raising the stakes in Europe.
- If Putin is focusing on military solutions to rewrite the European security agreement with the United States, Xi is focusing on economic measures to restructure US ties. Washington is cautioning that if Beijing backs Moscow in the Ukraine crisis, Chinese companies could face significant financial losses.
- The argument that the US's withdrawal from Afghanistan reflects Washington's deficient political will is also misleading. Biden's withdrawal from Afghanistan was borne out of the recognition that it was time to move away from the anti-insurgency movement in the Greater Middle East to the war with other major powers.
- Despite China's dramatic rise and its latest cooperation with Russia, the united front can't quite match the United States' and its allies' total national power.
- Russia isn't in the top ten economies today; seven of the ten countries in the top ten are allies of the United States, which has been at the top for a century and more.
- China also cannot forget that it is still a no match for USA in terms of defence capabilities.

Challenges India faces amidst West vs Sino-Russia axis

- India's abstention in UNSC on Ukraine issue shows the precarious situation that India finds itself right now. It is walking a tight rope between the West and Russia.
- Delhi now stands closer than ever to the West thanks to the resurgent power rivalry that coincided with India's weakening links with China.
- The meeting of the Quad foreign ministers in Australia this week and the proposed summit of their leaders in Japan in May will give some clues to India's future relationship between the two nations; but Delhi is unlikely to let Moscow undermine its enthralling relationship with the West in Europe if it comes to blows with the West.
- Delhi has no way to push Moscow toward Washington, nor does it have a veto over Russia's strategic alliance with China.

Opportunities for India in this matter

- France has been mediating between Russia and Ukraine amidst the crisis. This role can also be taken up by India, by ensuring that USA and Russia come on the negotiating table.
- India is one country that has strong relations with Moscow and Washington at the same time.
- India's strategic autonomy especially in defence purchases shows that both nations trust India's stature on the global arena. This relation can be leveraged to bring a political solution using the UNSC platform, where India is currently a member.
- India's membership to Quad and SCO can be the conduit through which a political solution can be formulated and ensured that the relevant stakeholders listen to the same.

Conclusion

There has been a revival of alliances by USA that was thwarted by Trump regime. This is another opportunity for India to build stronger relations and ensure that its voice is heard in international platform. While India grows closer to the West, it must not forget the strategic autonomy and its ties to Russia.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed from office only through impeachment by Parliament.

2. If elections are being held only for the State Legislature, the expenditure is borne entirely by the concerned State.

Which of the above statements 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 Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC):

1. It is an intergovernmental organisation of more than sixty member-states.
2. It was founded by Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill.

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 with reference to Messenger RNA (mRNA):

1. It is a single-stranded RNA molecule.
2. It is created during the process of transcription.
3. The existence of mRNA was first suggested by James Watson and Francis Crick.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

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

Q4. Consider the following statements

1. The Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) is an intergovernmental agency that is organized under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
2. India is a member state of Nuclear Energy Agency.
3. India has capacity to produce 20,000 MW of electricity from nuclear installations

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q5. With reference to India's Panna Tiger reserve, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It forms the northern most tip of the natural teak forests.
2. It forms the eastern most tip of the natural Kardhai forests.
3. It is dotted with two thousand year-old rock paintings.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

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