

**SOCIAL EVENT****PM CARES Scheme for Children**

Recently, the Centre has extended the PM Cares for Children Scheme till 28th February 2022, which was earlier valid till 31st December 2021.

**What is the 'PM-CARES for Children' Scheme?****About:**

- The scheme was launched on 29th May, 2021 with the aim to support children who lost both or surviving parent(s), legal guardian/adoptive parents or single adoptive parent to Covid-19. The status of children in need of care and protection included orphans (10,094), lost either parent (1,36,910) and abandoned (488) taking the total to 1,47,492. In the gender-wise break-up, out of the 1,47,492 children, there are 76,508 boys, 70,980 girls and four transgender.
- The objective is to ensure comprehensive care and protection of children in a sustained manner, enable their wellbeing through health insurance, empower them through education and equip them for self-sufficient existence with financial support on reaching 23 years of age.

**Features of the Scheme:**

- **Corpus of Rs. 10 Lakh:** The scheme offers a corpus of Rs. 10 lakh to each of these children from the PM CARES fund. This corpus will be used to give a monthly stipend from 18 years of their age, for the next five years and on reaching the age of 23 years, he or she will get the corpus amount as one lump-sum for personal and professional use.
- **Education to the Children:** The education expenses of younger children are supported by way of admission to Kendriya Vidyalayas and private schools up to higher secondary level. These children are also supported during their higher education through either a scholarship equivalent to the tuition fees or educational loans where the interest on the loan will be paid by the PM-CARES fund.
- **Health Insurance:** All children will be enrolled as a beneficiary under Ayushman Bharat Scheme with a health insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh. The premium amount will be paid by PM-CARES till a child turns 18.

**What is the PM-CARES Fund?**

- The government has set up the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM-CARES Fund) to deal with any kind of emergency or distress situation like posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Fund is a public charitable trust with the Prime Minister as its Chairman. Other Members include Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister.
- The Fund enables micro-donations as a result of which a large number of people will be able to contribute with the smallest of denominations.
- It will strengthen disaster management capacities and encourage research on protecting citizens.
- Contribution to PM - CARES Fund Qualifies as CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Expenditure.

**What are the other Children Related Initiatives Taken by the Government During Covid?****Bal Swaraj Covid-Care:**

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has devised an online tracking portal "Bal Swaraj (Covid-Care)" for children in need of care and protection.
- This has been created with a purpose for online tracking and digital real time monitoring mechanism of children who are in need of care and protection.

**PM e-VIDYA:**

- On 17th May, 2020, a comprehensive initiative called PM e-VIDYA was initiated as part of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education.
- It was launched under the One Nation One Digital Platform with the objective of protecting the education of children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Manodarpan:**

- It is aimed to provide psychosocial support to students, family members and teachers for their mental health and well-being during the times of Covid-19.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATION****India-France External Affairs Ministers Meet**

Recently, the External Affairs Minister of India held talks with his French counterpart. The two leaders discussed several regional and global issues including the India-EU relationship, Afghanistan situation, Indo-Pacific Strategy, South China Sea Dispute, Iran nuclear deal and the Ukraine crisis.

**What are the Highlights of the Meeting?**

- **Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership:** The two Ministers agreed to jointly launch the Indo-French call for an Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership. This partnership aims to build capacities in the Indo-Pacific region, in terms of sustainable management of protected areas, by gathering and sharing the experiences and expertise that exist in the region among key Indo-Pacific public & private natural park managers.
- **India-France Roadmap on the Blue Economy and Ocean Governance:** Both sides also adopted the "India-France Roadmap on the Blue Economy and Ocean Governance". The roadmap aims to enhance partnership in the field of blue economy by way of institutional, economic, infrastructural and scientific cooperation.
- **Intensify India-EU Ties:** They also agreed to intensify India-E.U. ties under the French Presidency, and the need to begin negotiations on the Free Trade and Investment Agreements and implement the India-E.U. Connectivity Partnership. **Strengthening Multilateralism:** They also agreed to coordinate in the United Nations Security Council on issues of mutual concern.
- **Deepening Strategic Partnership:** Both Ministers agreed to further deepen the Strategic Partnership, particularly in the areas of trade and investments, defence and security, health, education, research and innovation, energy and climate change.
- **Facilitating People-To-People Contact:** Agreed to soon conclude a Joint Declaration of Intent in the Area of Sports, aimed at further facilitating people-to-people contact.
- Strengthening the long-standing cooperation on public administration and administrative reforms between the relevant authorities.

**What are the Areas of Cooperation in India-France Relations?**

**Background:** France was one of the first countries with which India signed a "strategic partnership" after the end of the Cold War, in January 1998. France was one of the very few countries to support India's decision to test nuclear weapons in 1998. Today, France has emerged as India's most reliable partner on issues relating to terrorism and Kashmir.

**Defence Cooperation:** Both countries have a defence dialogue at the Ministerial level.

- The three services have regular defence exercises, viz.
  1. Exercise Shakti (Army)
  2. Exercise Varuna (Navy)
  3. Exercise Garuda (Air Force)
- Recently, the Indian Air Force (IAF) has inducted French Rafale multi-role combat aircraft.
- India entered into a contract with a French firm to build six Scorpene submarines in India's Malegaon dockyards through a technology-transfer arrangement in 2005.
- The two countries also signed the Agreement regarding the Provision of Reciprocal Logistics Support.

**Bilateral trade and Economic relations:** The India-France Administrative Economic and Trade Committee (AETC) provides an appropriate framework to assess and find ways to further promote bilateral trade and investment as well as to speed up the resolution of market access issues to the benefit of economic operators.

**Global agendas:** Climate change, biodiversity, renewable energy, terrorism, cybersecurity and digital technology, etc:

1. There have been joint efforts to limit climate change and develop the International Solar Alliance.
2. Both countries have agreed on a road map on cybersecurity and digital technology.

**Way Forward**

- France has opened the pathway for deeper engagement with Europe on global issues, especially after uncertainty in the region due to BREXIT.
- The new partnerships with France, Germany and other like-minded countries like Japan would hopefully turn out to be far more consequential for India's influence on the global stage.

**INTERNAL ISSUE**

**Insurgency in Manipur**

Recently, the Centre Government has announced that it is ready to hold dialogue with insurgency groups in Manipur to bring lasting peace to the region. The emergence of insurgency in Manipur dates back to 1964 with the formation of the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), which still remains **one of the most formidable militant outfits**.

**What are the Reasons for Rise of Insurgency in Manipur?**

- **Forced Merger:** The rise of separatist insurgency in Manipur mainly attributed to perceived discontent over alleged "forced" merger of Manipur with the Union of India and the subsequent delay in granting it full-fledged statehood. While the erstwhile Kingdom of Manipur was merged with India on 15th October, 1949, it became a state only in 1972.

- **Rise of Militancy:** The later years saw a slew of militant outfits being formed, including the People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), and Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), among others. These valley-based outfits have been demanding an independent Manipur.
- **Spillover Effect of Greater Nagalim Demand:** The Naga movement in neighbouring Nagaland spilled over into Manipur's hill districts with the NSCN-IM controlling most of it while pressing for "Nagalim" (Greater Nagaland), which is perceived in the valley as a "threat" to Manipur's "territorial integrity".
- **Valley-Hills Conflict:** While the hills account for nine-tenths of Manipur's geographical area, they are sparsely populated, with most of the state's population concentrated in the valley. The Meitei community forms a majority in Imphal valley, while the surrounding hill districts are inhabited by Nagas and Kukis.
- **Naga-Kuki Conflict:** In the early 1990s, the ethnic clashes between Nagas and Kukis led to the formation of several Kuki insurgent groups, which have now scaled down their demand from a separate Kuki state to a Territorial Council. The further continuance of insurgency led to the formation of smaller outfits like the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF), People's United Liberation Front (PULF) and other splinter groups.

#### What are the Steps Taken by the Government?

- **Military Action:**
  1. AFSPA: In 1980, the Centre declared the entire Manipur as a "disturbed area" and imposed the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to suppress the insurgency movement, which remains in force till date.
  2. Operation All Clear: Assam Rifles and the army had conducted operation "All Clear" in the hill areas, most of the militants' hideouts had been neutralised, with many of them having shifted to the valley.
- **Ceasefire Agreement:**
  1. The NSCN-IM entered a ceasefire agreement with the Government of India in 1997, even as peace talks between them have still been continuing.
  2. The Kuki outfits under two umbrella groups, the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF), also signed the tripartite Suspension of Operation (SoO) pacts with the Governments of India and Manipur on August 22, 2008.
  3. Many of their smaller outfits have however entered the SoO agreement with the state government, which has launched rehabilitation programmes for such groups.
  4. However, major valley-based militant outfits (Meitei groups) such as the UNLF, PLA, KYKL etc. are yet to come to the negotiating table.

#### What are the Challenges in Restoring Peace in Manipur?

- **Many Conflicting Demands:** The central government's approach of a peaceful settlement with the militant outfits has proved counterproductive. Since, the demands of many of the outfits conflict with each other, any conventional agreement with one group becomes a cause for agitation by other groups.
- **Proxy Groupings:** Given that peace talks are on with the insurgents groups, there has been a tendency for the groups to continue the armed rebellion by another faction, with merely a change in nomenclature or by forming a new group.
- **Politician-Insurgents Nexus:** The nexus between the politicians and insurgents and criminals adds to the woes of the state.
  1. Some of the outfits operate as criminal gangsters thriving on extortion, kidnapping and contract killings.
  2. Nonetheless, miscreants take advantage of the unrest and extort funds, disguising themselves as insurgents.
  3. Besides, most of the security issues are politicised by the political parties to gain mileage for vote banks by enhancing controversies.
- **Border State:** Manipur being a border state, with a porous international border in a hostile jungle environment, the inflow of arms and trans-border movement of insurgent outfits who rely on external countries for training and other required logistics support are continuing.

#### Way Forward

- **Good Governance:** Good governance needs to be instituted in the state through a transparent government, fair judiciary system, respect for the rule of law, and the provision of the minimum basic amenities like hospitals, schools, police stations, etc.
  1. There is a need for political sincerity coupled with proper distribution of funds for the development of the state, both in the valley and the hills.

2. This should be followed by economic development through government, semi-government and private entrepreneurship participation.
- **Border Management:** Before initiating any kind of counter-insurgency policy/operations, the Indo-Myanmar international border needs proper management.
- **Engaging With People:** The connectivity and intermingling amongst the diverse communities of Manipur with mainland India should be made more effective to encourage national integration. For this, Non-Governmental Organisations (Ngos), women's associations, along with games and cultural programmes could be best utilised for restoring confidence among the valley and hill masses.

### PRELIMS FACT

#### Similipal Biosphere Reserve: Odisha

Recently the Forest Administration and SHGs (Self Help Groups) have started an awareness Campaign to manage fires in Similipal Biosphere Reserve this year. Earlier, scientists unravelled the mystery behind Odisha's 'Black Tigers' in Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR).

#### **What are the Key Points?**

##### **About:**

- Similipal derives its name from 'Simul' (silk cotton) tree.
- It was formally designated a tiger reserve in 1956 and brought under Project Tiger in the year 1973.
- It was declared a biosphere reserve by the Government of India in June, 1994.
- It has been part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserve since 2009.
- It is part of the Similipal-Kuldiha-Hadgarh Elephant Reserve popularly known as Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve.
- It is prone to forest fires. In 2021, the Similipal saw a major fire between February-end and early March.

##### **Location:**

- It is situated in the northern part of Odisha's Mayurbhanj district. Geographically, it lies in the eastern end of the eastern ghat.

##### **Coverage:**

- The biosphere spread over 4,374 sq. km. has 845 sq. km. of core forest (tiger reserve), 2,129 sq km buffer area and 1,400 sq km of transition space.

##### **Vegetation:**

- Similipal has 1,076 flowering species and 96 species of orchids.
- It boasts of having tropical semi-evergreen forests, tropical moist deciduous forests, dry deciduous hill forests.

##### **Tribes:**

- Two tribes, the Erenga Kharias and the Mankirdias, inhabit the reserve's forests and practise traditional agricultural activities.

##### **Wildlife:**

- Similipal is home to a wide range of wild animals including tigers and elephants, besides 304 species of birds, 20 species of amphibians and 62 species of reptiles.

#### **What causes Fires and Mitigation?**

##### **Forest Fires:**

- **Natural:** Natural causes such as lightning or even soaring temperatures can sometimes result in forest fires here.
- **Man Made Factors:** Instances of poaching and hunting wherein the poachers set a small patch of forest on fire to divert the wild animals.

##### **Mitigation Strategies:**

- Forecasting fire-prone days and including community members to mitigate incidents of fire, creating fire lines, clearing sites of dried biomass, and crackdown on poachers.

#### **What are the Other Major Protected Areas in Odisha?**

1. Bhitarkanika National Park
2. Badrama WLS
3. Chilika (Nalaban island) WLS
4. Hadgarh WLS
5. Baisipalli WLS
6. Kotagarh WLS
7. Nandankanan WLS
8. Lakhari Valley WLS
9. Gahirmatha (Marine) WLS

**DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Corporate governance in India has often found to be inefficient, reactive and too powerless to prevent unethical practises. Comment in the light of recent events. (250 words)**

**Introduction**

Corporate governance is the system of rules, practices, and processes by which a firm is directed and controlled. Corporate governance essentially involves balancing the interests of a company's many stakeholders, such as shareholders, senior management executives, customers, suppliers, financiers, the government, and the community. Ethics is at the core of corporate governance, and management must reflect accountability for their actions on the global community scale.

**Body**

**Background**

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) passed its final order in a sordid saga, involving the country's largest stock exchange.
- The order, strongly censuring senior officials of the NSE, including its former MD and CEO Chitra Ramkrishna, throws light on a series of governance lapses at the stock exchange.
- The stock exchange regulator has levied fines on the parties involved in acts of impropriety, and also barred NSE from introducing any new products for a six-month period.
- The order highlights the scale of misgovernance, including the violation of several rules and regulations.
- More worryingly, the episode has exposed the absence of checks and balances at the stock exchange.

**Challenges for Corporate governance in India**

- It is common for friends and family of promoters and management to be appointed as board members.
- In India, founders' ability to control the affairs of the company has the potential of derailing the entire corporate governance system. Unlike developed economies, in India, identity of the founder and the company is often merged.
- Women director appointed are primarily from family in most of the companies which negates the whole reform.
- Appointed independent directors are questionable as it is unlikely that Independent Directors will stand-up for minority interests against the promoter. In the Tata case, these directors normally toe the promoter's line.
- An independent director can be easily removed by promoters or majority shareholders. This inherent conflict has a direct impact on independence.
- Data protection is an important governance issue. In this era of digitalisation, a sound understanding of the fundamentals of cyber security must be expected from every director.
- Board's Approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is often found unsupportive.
- Conflict of Interest – The ICICI Bank Ltd fiasco demonstrates the challenge of managers potentially enriching themselves at the cost of shareholders in the absence of a promoter.

**Measures to improve Corporate Governance:**

- **Ensure a balanced, competent and diverse Board:** Business should strive for directors who are qualified, understand the business and can offer a fresh perspective. Studies show Boards with greater gender diversity result in improved financial performance.
- **Review your Board composition** on a regular basis to identify any shortcomings and make timely improvements.
- **Build solid foundations for oversight:** Establish, monitor and evaluate the roles and responsibilities of the Board and management. The Board needs to have visibility of management actions and key decision making.
- **Gear key performance indicators** towards long term value creation not just in the short term.
- **Prioritize risk management:** Establish an effective risk management and internal control framework and periodically review its effectiveness. Developing a disaster recovery plan is essential.
- **Ensure integrity in corporate** reporting including safeguards such as conducting external audits of the business.
- **Provide timely and balanced information:** Providing transparency to key stakeholders both in the good and bad times promotes stakeholders' confidence in the business.
- **Emphasise integrity,** promote ethical behaviours and consult different categories of stakeholders on their interests.

- Treat shareholders equitably and respect their rights.
- **Ensure adequate disclosures** around related parties' transactions and director's other interests. This is especially important where a director may have external financial interests that could influence his decision.

**Conclusion:**

The effectiveness of the Corporate Governance has become a global concern. Mainly after many corporate collapse (e.g. Enron, Boeing etc.), fraud cases (e.g. Lehman Brothers), shareholder suits or questionable strategic decisions are drawing attention to the top level decision-making body of the corporation and the board of directors, necessitating the need for ethical considerations where in Indian context, Uday Kotak committee recommendations can form guidelines for better ethical corporate governance.

**DAILY QUIZ**

Q1. Consider the following statements 'Nal Se Jal' Yojana:

1. It aims to provide piped drinking water to every rural home by 2024.
2. It is a component of the government's Jal Jivan Mission.

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 Jal Jeevan Mission:

1. It is under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
2. It was launched in 2021.
3. It envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household.

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

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. An IFSC caters to customers outside the jurisdiction of the domestic economy.
2. Currently, GIFT-IFSC is the maiden international financial services centre in India.

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 Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC):

1. It is the legal tender issued by a central bank in a digital form.
2. It is exchangeable one-to-one with the fiat currency.

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:

1. The definition of "Critical Wildlife Habitat is incorporated in the Forest Rights Act, 2006.
2. For the first time in India, Baigas have been given Habitat Rights.
3. Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change officially decides and declares Habitat Rights for Primitive and Vulnerable Tribal Groups in any part of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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