

GOVERNMENT POLICIES (EDUCATION)

- ❖ **PM SHRI: Schools upgraded to 'NEP labs'**
- ❖ **CONTEXT:** After Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that 14,500 schools across India will be upgraded to showcase components of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a new centrally sponsored scheme under which the initiative will be implemented.
- ❖ **The PM SHRI scheme**
 - According to the Ministry of Education, the scheme will be called PM SHRI Schools (PM Schools for Rising India). Under the scheme, 14,500 schools across India's states and Union Territories will be redeveloped to reflect the key features of the NEP, 2020.
 - The idea was first discussed with the Education Ministers of states and UTs during a conference organised by the Ministry of Education in June at Gandhinagar in Gujarat. The Centre has held many rounds of discussions with the states on the implementation of the scheme. The idea of PM SHRI, was to create a set of schools that would be able to act as "NEP labs".
- ❖ **Key features of NEP**
 - The NEP for schools envisages a curricular structure and teaching style categorised in four stages:
 - Foundational
 - Preparatory
 - Middle
 - Secondary
 - According to the NEP, the foundational years (pre-school and grades I and II) should involve play-based learning. At the preparatory level (grades III-V), light textbooks are to be introduced along with some formal classroom teaching.
 - Subject teachers are to be introduced at the middle level (grades VI-VIII). The secondary stage (grades IX-XII) will be multidisciplinary, with no hard separation between arts and sciences or other disciplines.
 - It also proposed that board exams be held twice a year, including one for helping students to improve their scores, and that two types of papers on mathematics should be offered — a standard paper, and a different one to test higher levels of competency.
- ❖ **Centrally sponsored scheme**
 - A centrally sponsored scheme is one in which the cost of implementation is mostly split in a 60:40 ratio between the Union government and the states/UTs. The mid-day meal scheme (now PM Poshan) or the PM Awas Yojana are examples of centrally sponsored schemes.
 - In the case of the Northeastern states, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, and UTs without legislatures, the Centre's contribution can go up to 90 per cent. PM SHRI will be implemented at a cost of Rs 27,360 crore over the next five years, in which the Centre's share will be Rs 18,128 crore.
- ❖ **PM SHRI, KVs, JNVs**
 - Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) come entirely under the Centre's Ministry of Education.
 - They are fully funded by the Union government under central sector schemes.
 - While KVs largely cater to children of central government employees posted in states and UTs, JNVs were set up to nurture talented students in rural parts of the country.
 - PM SHRI schools will be an upgrade of existing schools run by the Centre, states, UTs, and local bodies.
 - This essentially means that a PM SHRI school can be an upgraded KV, JNV, or even a school that is run by a state government or a municipal corporation.
- ❖ **Where and how**
 - The PM SHRI scheme will be application-based, which means states will have to identify schools for upgradation under the scheme. Subsequently, schools will be required to self-apply online. The portal will be opened four times a year, once every quarter, for the first two years of the scheme.
 - According to the selection methodology decided by the central government, states and UTs interested in getting included under the scheme will have to first agree to implement the NEP in its entirety. Also, only those schools that meet a certain benchmark will qualify — the qualification criteria will include around 60 parameters from the availability of electricity to toilets.
 - In the third stage, teams of state government officials, KVs, and JNVs will verify the claims made by the applicant school through a physical inspection. "Maximum two schools (one Elementary & one Secondary/Senior Secondary) would be selected per block/ ULB..." (urban local body) as per the plan. The final call will be taken by an expert committee.
- ❖ **What's the difference?**
 - How PM SHRI schools will be different from existing government-run schools remains to be seen — however, as per the plan, the upgraded schools are expected to be superior in terms of infrastructure.
 - They will be equipped with labs, smart classrooms, libraries, sports equipment, art room, etc., and shall also be developed as green schools with water conservation, waste recycling, energy-efficient infrastructure and integration of organic lifestyle in curriculum.
 - These schools will also "offer mentorship" to other schools in their vicinity.
 - In terms of the quality of education, there will be special modules on improving foundational literacy and numeracy.

- Each school will be linked/ connected to higher education institutions for mentoring, and there will be provisions for internships with local artisans.
- Pedagogy adopted in these schools will be more experiential, holistic, integrated, play/ toy-based (particularly, in the foundational years) inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible and enjoyable.
- Focus will be on learning outcomes of every child in every grade. Assessment at all levels will be based on conceptual understanding and application of knowledge to real life situations, and will be competency-based.

HISTORY (ART AND CULTURE)

❖ **Historical Tidbits- Early history of Kashmir and Martand Temple**

❖ **CONTEXT:** In May 2022, some pilgrims offered prayers inside the Martand Temple, an Archaeological Survey of India-protected (ASI) monument. Soon after, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor **Manoj Sinha** participated in a 'Navgrah Ashtamangalam Puja' on the premises. The ASI objected to this, saying no permission was granted for the ceremony. Two months later, in July, another group of people entered the temple and held an hour-long prayer session.

❖ **What is the history of Martand temple?**

- The Martand Temple was built by the Karkota dynasty king Lalitaditya Muktapida, who ruled Kashmir from 725 AD to 753 AD. Although some historians believe that an earlier temple existed here and was incorporated into Lalitaditya's grander structure, others credit Lalitaditya entirely for it. Lalitaditya built his capital at Parihaspora, the ruins of which also survive to this day.
- Dedicated to Vishnu-Surya, the Martand Temple has three distinct chambers—the mandapa, the garbhagriha, and the antralaya probably the only three-chambered temple in Kashmir. The temple is built in a unique Kashmiri style, though it has Gandhar influences.
- A major historical source for Kashmir's history remains Rajatarangini, written in the 12th century by Kalhana, and various translations of the work contain descriptions of Martand's grandeur.
- Historian G M D Sufi, in his book Kashir, writes, "The celebrated temple of Martanda possesses far more imposing dimensions than any other existing temple, being 63 feet long. The stone carving is very fine indeed.
- According to G T Vigne, the traveller: "As an isolated ruin this deserves on account of its solitary and massive grandeur to be ranked, not only as the first ruin of the kind in Kashmir but as one of the noblest amongst the architectural relics of antiquity that are to be seen in any country. Another view is that there is something of the rigidity and strength of the Egyptian temple and something of the grace of Greece.
- Though owes much to the influence of Gandhara the sculptures show a close connection with the typical Hindu work of the late Gupta period.

❖ **What are the architectural features of Martand temple?**

- According to experts from the ruins of the temple, it is evident that the complex originally consisted of a principle shrine at the centre of a quadrangular courtyard, flanked towards the north and south by two small structures it appears that the central courtyard was initially filled with water supplied by a canal from river Lidar to a level which immersed almost one foot of the base of the columns.
- This courtyard was enclosed by a colonnade, which seem to have consisted of 84 pillars.
- The temple walls are built of "huge blocks of evenly dressed grey limestone by making use of lime mortar. This is remarkable, because the use of lime mortar "is encountered in north India generally after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the 13th century", and points to Lalitaditya employing immigrant Byzantine architects.
- The temple is influenced by Classical Greco-Roman, Buddhist-Gandharan, and North Indian styles. This can be explained by Kashmir's proximity to Gandhar, possible direct contact between Kashmir and Greece, and to architects from other empires making their way to Kashmir. Lalitaditya is known to have subjugated the king of Kannauj, which can be one of the reasons for North Indian workers building his temple.
- Today, the temple's roof is missing. Alexander Cunningham [also called the father of Indian archaeology] assumes that a two-tiered pyramidal roof must have covered not only the central shrine but the other two smaller shrines in stone.

❖ **What History tells about destruction of Martand temple?**

- Many Historians believe Sultan Sikandar 'Butshikan' (iconoclast) was behind it, others blame earthquakes, faults in the temple's masonry, and the simple passage of time in an area prone to weather excesses.
- For those who hold Sikandar responsible, one of the main sources is poet-historian Jonaraja—who wrote the 'Dvitiya', or second, Rajatarangini while in the employment of Sikandar's son Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-1470)—though he is by no means the only one.
- What historians agree on is that Sikandar, influenced greatly by the Sufi saint Sayyid Muhammad Hamadani, was on an 'Islamification' mission, and his rule saw the persecution of Hindus. The Sultan had been crowned when still a boy, and a lot of this persecution was carried out on the orders of his chief minister, Suhabhata, who had converted to Islam, taking the name of Malik Saif-ud-Din. Whether Sikandar destroyed specifically the Martand Temple is less certain.
- Some scholars reason that as more people converted to Islam, the character of existing temples was changed by removing idols and making a niche toward the Ka'ba, but the temples were not necessarily brought down.
- According to Suka's Rajatarangini that a severe earthquake wrought havoc in Kashmir in 1554. However, the inhabitants of Vijayesvara, Martanda, and Varahakshetra did not experience fear from the earthquake due to the

sanctity of these tirthas, suggesting that these shrines might have been visited by worshippers and their condition could have been fine at that time.

- some experts concludes that the temple appears to have been destroyed by “earthquakes, friable nature of the material used, frost and snow causing natural weathering, and improper fitting of stones at their joints.
- Three centuries after Lalitaditya and two centuries before Sikandar existed a Hindu king known for destroying and desecrating temples: King Harsha (1089 AD to 1101 AD) of the first Lohara dynasty.
- Harsha’s actions against the temples had nothing to do with religion—he was simply a profligate king who ran out of money and began looting temples for treasure and for the precious metals of the idols. However, Harsha appears to have spared the Martand Temple, where a few years before, his father had drawn his last breath.

❖ **Famous rulers in the early history of Kashmir**

❖ **Karkota dynasty**

➤ Durlabhavardhana:

- Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan Tsang visited Kashmir and spent three years from A.D 631 to 633. He left a detailed account on Kashmir and its people, Buddhist monasteries, Ashokan stupas containing relics of Buddha.
- His territories extended beyond Kashmir and was the first king of Kashmir to issue coins, according to Chinese annals.

➤ Lalitaditya

- He was known for his military exploits and active patronage of arts and letters.
- The most important exploit of his career was the defeat of Yasovarman of Kanauj and the annexation of his kingdom.
- He founded many towns and settlements and built temples and mathas.
- In Parihasapura he built four Vaishnava shrines with gold and silver images, a Buddhist temple enshrining a brass image, and a monastery.
- The most important religious foundation laid by Lalitaditya was the Sun temple at Martanda.

❖ **Utpala dynasty**

➤ Avantivarma

- He is known for brought peace, prosperity and stability on Kashmir with the help of his loyal minister named Sura.

- He founded Avantipura and built two great temples of Avantivarma and Avantivara there.

- His court consisted of authors and poets such as Bhatta Kallata, Muktakana, Sivasvami, Ratnakara and Anandavardhana.

- His reign is also known for the engineering achievements of Suyya. Suyya devised technique of controlling the waters of the river Jhelum and increasing the amount of cultivable land. It involved the improvement of facilities of irrigation.

➤ Sankaravarma

- His expeditions drained Sankaravarma’s treasury and forced him to impose heavy taxes. His extortions fell heavily on temple endowments, priestly corporations, and on the cultivators who were further oppressed by forced labour.

- He founded Sankaraputrapattana and adorned by three large shiva temples.

➤ Didda

- She was the wife of the ruler Kshemagupta and dominated the political scene in Kashmir for half a century- as a queen-cosort, regent and finally as sovereign.

❖ **I Lohara dynasty**

➤ Harsa

- He possessed both scholarly and musical talent. But lacked on military and administrative fronts. He is blamed for robbing temple-treasures and melting down ancient images in order to replenish his exchequer.

❖ **II Lohara dynasty**

➤ Jayasimha

- He is said to have ruled through a judicious combination of strength and cunning. He was the patron of Kalhana, author of the Rajatarangini.

- After Jayasimha’s death, Kashmir continued to be ruled for about two centuries by a succession of weak Hindu princes until A.D 1337 when Hindu rule was terminated by Sultan Shamsuddin.

❖ **What does the early history of Kashmir tell about Religion?**

- Nilamatapurana, a work from Kashmir of seventh century A.D. informs that Kashmir has had a strong persistent tradition of Naga worship.

- When Asoka’s missionary Majjhantika came to Kashmir to preach Buddhism in the third century B.C he had to contend with the Naga cult. Hsuan Tsang informs that Majjhantika achieved remarkable success.

- Kaniska convened the fourth Buddhist Council in Kashmir and at the end had the Tripitaka treatises engraved on copper plates and deposited in a stupa in the valley.

- Hsuan Tsang who stayed in Kashmir saw in the valley about 5,000 Buddhist priests and viharas.

- Ou-kong who visited Kashmir during the eighth century A.D. also found Buddhism in a flourishing state.

- The Karkota kings who were followers of Brahmanical religion but they extended liberal patronage to Buddhism.

- Kashmir developed a stronghold of the Sarvastivada sect and played an important role in the spread of Buddhism and Buddhist art beyond India to Afghanistan, Central Asia, Tibet and China.
- After eighth century, Buddhism was overshadowed by Shavism and Vaishnavism. Kashmir fostered a distinctive four-faced Vaikuntha form of Vishnu. Utplala kings from Sankarvarma onwards were more inclined towards Shavism. Kashmir was a citadel of Pasupata sect.
- ❖ **Some of the other important temples in Kashmir**
- Shankaracharya temple
- Pandrethan temple
- Sankara Guruvaram (Sugandesha) temple
- Naranag Temple
- Avantismami (Avantipur) Temple
- Loduv Temple
- Mamaleshwar Temple

PRELIMS

1. China's fully solar-powered, semi-satellite drone.

❖ **CONTEXT: China's first fully solar-powered unmanned aerial vehicle has successfully completed its maiden test flight with all onboard systems functioning optimally.**

❖ **The new machine**

- With a wingspan of 164-ft, the drone is a large machine powered entirely by solar panels.
- The high-altitude, long-endurance (HALE) UAV can stay airborne for long durations.
- Named the Qimingxing-50, or Morning Star-50, this drone flies above 20-km altitude where there is stable airflow with no clouds.
- This helps these drones to make the maximum use of solar equipment to stay functional for extended durations.
- It can operate without a break for months, even years.

❖ **Cross between drone and satellite**

- The drone can operate in near-space 20 km to 100 km above the Earth's surface makes it capable of carrying out satellite-like functions.
- If satellite services are not available for, say, time-sensitive operations or in case of wartime disruption, then near-space UAVs can step in to fill the operational gap.
- These drones are also referred to as 'High Altitude Platform Stations' or pseudo-satellites. China already has this capacity, but the Qimingxing-50's long-endurance provides an added advantage to make this capability available over a longer period.
- In July 2022, the US Army helped test a solar-powered, near-space Airbus Zephyr S drone that set a new record by being airborne for 42 days.
- Both these drones can undertake surveillance missions that require them to stay operational, watching over borders or oceans, for months.

❖ **Easy to lock-and-load**

- Drones like the Morning Star-50 are cost-effective to build and are also easy to launch and operate. Being entirely powered by clean energy from the Sun, the present one can help boost China's capabilities to operate in near-space and over the ocean. This HALE UAV is capable of conducting high-altitude reconnaissance, apart from monitoring forest fires, providing communication and environment relay.

2. Onam

❖ **CONTEXT: The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu has sent her greetings to all fellow citizens on the eve of Onam.**

- Onam is an annual cultural festival in Kerala.
- It is the official festival of the state and includes a spectrum of cultural events.
- Onam commemorates King Mahabali and Vamana.
- Vamana is an avatar of Lord Vishnu.
- Onam is celebrated in remembrance of the good governance under the rule of Mahabali, a mythical king who ruled Kerala.
- The date of Onam celebration is based on the Panchangam, and falls on the 22nd nakshatra Thiruvonam in the month Chingam of Malayalam calendar

❖ **Historical evidences:**

- The earliest known reference to Onam is found in Maturaikkāñci – a Sangam era Tamil poem.
- It mentions Onam being celebrated in Madurai temples.
- The 9th-century Pathikas and Pallads by Periyazharwar describes Onam celebrations and offerings to Vishnu, mentions feasts and community events.
- An 11th-century inscription in the Thrikkakara Temple (Kochi) dedicated to Vamana mentions a series of offerings made by a votary over two days prior and on Thiru Onam.
- A 12th-century inscription in the Tiruvalla Temple dedicated to Vishnu, mentions Onam and states a donation was made to the temple as the Onam festival offering.
- Uddanda Sastrin, a southern Indian Sanskrit poet visiting the court of the Zamorin, has written about a festival called sravana.

- It is presumed that this verse is about the festival of Onam
- ❖ **Types of dances performed:**
 - Thiruvathira Kali is a women's dance performed in a circle around a lamp.
 - Kummattikali is a colorful-mask dance.
 - Onam Kali is a form of dance where players arrange themselves in circles around a pole or tree or lamp, then dance and sing songs derived from the Ramayana and other epics
 - Kathakali performances are a part of Onam tradition with dancers enacting characters from the various Ancient Indian legends.
- 3. **SETU - Supporting Entrepreneurs in Transformation and Upskilling programme**
 - ❖ **Context: The Minister of Commerce and Industry launched the US Startup SETU - Supporting Entrepreneurs in Transformation and Upskilling programme in the Bay Area of San Francisco.**
 - SETU or Supporting Entrepreneurs in Transformation and Upskilling is an Indian government initiative to help budding entrepreneurs and start-up in India to US-based investors and start-up ecosystem leaders with mentorship and assistance in various areas.
 - SETU is designed to break the geographical barriers between mentors based in US that are willing to invest in entrepreneurship and sunrise startups in India.
 - ❖ **MAARG**
 - The interaction will be supported through the mentorship portal under the Startup India initiative MAARG, or the Mentorship, Advisory, Assistance, Resilience, and Growth program, which is a single-stop solution finder for startups in India.
 - The core functions of MAARG are:
 - to improve ease of access,
 - use Artificial Intelligence for Matchmaking,
 - schedule meetings virtually,
 - host masterclasses,
 - provide a custom dashboard for relevant information, analytics, features, etc.,
 - host cohort-based programs that will allow startup ecosystem enablers to become a part of the program
 - enable outcome driven activities.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. "If the last few decades were of Asia's growth story, the next few are expected to be of Africa's." In the light of this statement, examine India's influence in Africa in recent years.

The last few decades saw extraordinary growth of Asian countries mainly driven by China, South Korea, Japan, India and others. Now the paradigm is tilting towards Africa. Since 2000, at least half of the world's fastest-growing economies have been in Africa. And by 2030, Africa will be home to 1.7 billion people, whose combined consumer and business spending will total \$6.7 trillion. A surplus of workers is something which is turning the heads of everyone towards Africa.

India's influence in Africa in recent years:

- **Political Engagement:** In the last few years, Africa has been the focus of India's development assistance and also diplomatic outreach, as evident in plans to open 18 new embassies.
- **Economic Engagement:** India's duty-free tariff preferential scheme for Least Developed Nation (LDCs) launched in 2008 has benefited 33 African states. India was the fourth largest importing partner and the fifth largest export destination for South Africa in 2017-18.
- **Grants in Aid:** After South Asia, Africa is the second-largest recipient of Indian overseas assistance with Lines of Credit (LoC) worth billions of dollars.
- **Capacity Building:** India is investing in capacity building providing more than \$1 billion in technical assistance and training to personnel under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program.
- **Security Cooperation:** Approximately 6,000 Indian soldiers are deployed in UN peace-keeping missions in conflict zones in Africa.
- **Cooperation on Multiple Fronts:** This includes solar energy development (International Solar Alliance), information technology, cybersecurity, maritime security, disaster relief, counter-terrorism and military training.
- **Medical Diplomacy:** Under the e-ITEC initiative, India has shared COVID-19 management strategies, training webinars exclusively aimed at training health-care professionals from Africa by Indian health experts.

India and Africa offer a lot of opportunities for each other in coming times like addressing the food security problem, becoming the voice of the developing world, preventing global rivalries, and maintaining diplomatic ties. India-Africa (Gandhi-Mandela) friendship in a longer will benefit both mutually.

MCQs

1. What is the theme for "International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies" 2022?
 - a) **The Air We Share**
 - b) Healthy Air, Healthy Planet
 - c) Clean Air for Healthy Life
 - d) Air is life

2. Consider the following statements about the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:
1. It was drafted by a committee headed by Dr. K Kasturirangan.
 2. The NEP 2020 is the first new education policy to be introduced in India in the 21st century
- Select the correct statement/s from the codes given below:
- a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Consider the following statements with respect to the schemes initiated by the Government of India.
1. NISHTHA is a teachers training program.
 2. SVANidhi is a scheme to facilitate artisans to access affordable working capital loan.
 3. SATYABHAMA is a scheme to promote research and development in science and technology.
 4. Manodarpan is a scheme to promote tourism in rural parts of India.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct ?
- a) 1 and 3 only**
 - b) 2 and 4 only
 - c) 3 and 4 only
 - d) 2 only
4. The term "Morning Star-50" often mentioned in news is related to which of the following?
- a) A shooting star
 - b) A Dwarf planet
 - c) Unmanned Ariel Vehicle**
 - d) Polar launch vehicle
5. Consider the following activities:
1. Spraying pesticides on a crop field.
 2. Inspecting the craters of active volcanoes.
 3. Collecting breath samples from spouting whales for DNA analysis.
- At the present level of technology, which of the above activities can be successfully carried out by using drones?
- a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) All of the above**
6. Consider the following statements about festival Onam:
1. It is a rice harvest celebration in Kerala
 2. Lord Vishnu is revered on this day
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- a) 1 Only
 - b) 2 Only
 - c) Both 1 & 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Which of the following statement/s regarding PM SHRI Schools (PM ScHools for Rising India) is/are correct?
1. It is completely a green field project and a centrally sponsored scheme.
 2. PM SHRI Schools will showcase all components of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, act as exemplar schools and also offer mentorship to other schools in their vicinity.
- Select the correct option using the code given below:
- a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only**
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. Consider the following statements:
1. Reduce stunting in children among 0-6 years
 2. Reduce anaemia among children 6-59 months
 3. Reduce the prevalence of anaemia among women and adolescent girls
 4. Reduce low birth weight
- Which of the above is/are the targets of PM-POSHAN programme?
- a) 1,2 and 4
 - b) 1 and 2 only
 - c) 3 and 4 only
 - d) 1,2,3,4**
9. Which of the following schemes of Government of India can be relate to women empowerment?
1. KIRAN
 2. CURIE
 3. Vigyan Jyoti Scheme
 4. WEST initiative
- Choose the correct answer using the codes given below
- a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1,2 and 4 only
 - d) All of the above**
10. National Clean Air Programme launched with target to reduce 20% to 30% pollution of 2.5 pm and 10pm by which year?
- a) 2024**
 - b) 2025
 - c) 2026
 - d) 2027