

www.vishnuias.com



AUGUST

31.08.2021

CURRENT AFFAIRS

A MAGAZINE FOR CIVIL SERVICES PREPARATION

JOIN OUR TELEGRAM: <https://t.me/vishnuiasmentor>

**Articles of the day
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS**

UPSC

General Studies

Test Series

**Online &
Offline
classes**

**One-Stop
Solution**

**Free daily
materials**

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Rights to free movement and residence

In News : The Supreme Court has held that the power of the State to pass **an externment order (direction restricting certain people entry to specified areas)** should be exercised only in “exceptional cases”.

- The judgment was based on an appeal filed by a journalist, Rahmat Khan, who received an externment order passed by the Maharashtra police. He was banned from entering Amravati City or Amravati rural district for a year.
- The court said externment orders have their use in maintaining law and order. However, they cannot be employed as retaliatory measure.
- A person cannot be denied his fundamental right to reside anywhere in the country or to move freely throughout the country on flimsy grounds

According to Indian constitution :

- **Article 19(1)(d) of the Indian Constitution** entitles every citizen to move freely throughout the territory of the country.
 - - This right is protected against only state action and not private individuals.
 - Moreover, it is available only to the citizens and to shareholders of a company but not to foreigners or legal persons like companies or corporations, etc.
 - According to **Article 19(1)(e) of the Constitution**, every citizen of India has the right “to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India.”
 - The object of the clause is **to remove internal barriers** within India or any of its parts.
 - Restrictions on these fundamental rights can only be imposed on two grounds that are mentioned in the **Article 19(5)** of the constitution -the interests of the general public and the protection of interests of any scheduled tribe.

2. N. Korea may have restarted N-reactor: IAEA

In News: IAEA has reported that Nuclear-armed North Korea appears to have restarted its plutonium-producing reprocessing reactor indicating that North Korea is expanding its banned weapons programme.

- The development on the 5-megawatt reactor in **Yongbyon** – North Korea’s main nuclear complex – comes with nuclear talks between North Korea and US at a standstill.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

- It is an international organization that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- The IAEA was established as an autonomous organisation on 29 July **1957**.
- Though established independently of the United Nations through its own international treaty, the IAEA Statute, the **IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and UN Security Council**.
- The IAEA has its headquarters in **Vienna, Austria**.
- India joined IAEA in **1957**.
- In 2005, it was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** for their work for a safe and peaceful world.

3. West Nile Virus Infections

In News: Recently, Russia warned of a possible increase in West Nile Virus (WNV) **Infections** this autumn as mild temperatures and heavy precipitation create favourable conditions for the mosquitos that carry it.

About

- It is a **member of the flavivirus genus** and belongs to the Japanese encephalitis antigenic complex of the family Flaviviridae.
- WNV was first isolated in a woman in the **West Nile district of Uganda in 1937**.
- It was identified in birds in the Nile delta region in 1953. Before 1997, WNV was not considered pathogenic for birds.

- Human infections attributable to WNV have been reported in many countries for over 50 year. WNV is commonly found in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America and West Asia.
- WNV is an infectious disease spread by infected mosquitoes. It spreads from birds to humans with the bite of an **infected Culex mosquito**. It can lead to a fatal neurological disease in humans.
- **Symptoms:**
 - Those infected usually have no symptoms or mild symptoms.
 - The symptoms include a fever, headache, body aches, skin rash, and swollen lymph glands. They can last a few days to several weeks, and usually go away on their own.
 - If West Nile virus enters the brain, it can be life-threatening. It may cause inflammation of the brain, called **encephalitis**, or inflammation of the tissue that surrounds the brain and spinal cord, called **meningitis**.
- **Treatment:**
 - There are **no specific vaccines or treatments** for human WNV disease.
 - The best way to avoid WNV is **to prevent mosquito bites**.

4. Delhi High Court upheld the view on Right to be Forgotten

In News: The Delhi High Court, in a recent case, upheld the view that the “Right to Privacy” includes the “Right to be Forgotten” and the “Right to be Left Alone”.

What are these rights?

- Right to be forgotten is the right to have personal information removed from the Internet and other directories.
- Right to be left alone - The State or the society will not interfere in the individual choices of a person so long as they do not cause harm to others. State intrusion is allowed only if necessitated by a just, reasonable, and fair law

What is the High Court Case all about?

- A Bengali actor had filed a petition in the High Court to remove her audition/demo videos of the web series that were circulating on the internet.
- The videos are being portrayed in a manner that infringes her privacy.
- Even though the project fell through, she had not permitted the producer of the videos to publish them.

- Similarly, Ashutosh Kaushik who won reality TV shows Bigg Boss in 2008 and MTV Roadies 5.0 approached the Delhi High Court with a plea saying that his videos, photographs and articles etc. be removed from the internet citing his “Right to be Forgotten”.

What are the Court’s remarks?

- The Court has already held that “right to privacy” includes the right to be forgotten and the right to be left alone as “inherent aspects”.
- The court held that explicit videos that are being circulated have a clear and immediate impact on the reputation of the person seen in the videos.
- The court thus called for protection of the plaintiff from invasion of her privacy on account of such publication/transmission of the videos.
- The Right to be Forgotten falls under the purview of an individual’s right to privacy, which is governed by the Personal Data Protection Bill that is yet to be passed by Parliament.
- In K.S.Puttaswamy Case of 2017, the Right to Privacy was declared a fundamental right by the Supreme Court. It held that the right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

5. Marital rape: an indignity to women

In News: Based on the allegations of wife, charges were framed on husband by a trial court under

- Section 376 (rape),
- Section 377 (carnal intercourse against the order of nature)
- Section 498A (cruelty towards wife by husband or his relatives) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The Chhattisgarh High Court upheld charges under Sections 498A and 377 but discharged the husband under Section 376

- **Reason:** Exception 2 to Section 375 (the definition of rape), sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife (provided she is over the age of 18) would not amount to the offence of rape.

Issues

1. Inconsistent provisions

- - Other sexual offences make no such exemption for marriage.
 - Thus, a husband may be tried for offences such as sexual harassment, molestation, voyeurism, and forcible disrobing in the same way as any other man.
 - A husband may be charged and tried for non-consensual penetrative sexual interactions other than penile-vaginal penetration with his wife under Section 377 (**before Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, 2018**, consent was not relevant to Section 377, but it is now).

2. Patriarchal beliefs

- - The marital rape exception is an insult to the constitutional goals of individual autonomy, dignity and of gender equality enshrined in fundamental rights such as Article 21 (the right to life) and Article 14 (the right to equality).
 - Non recognition of marital rape means that women's husband is her sexual master and his right to rape her is legally protected.
 - Presently, marriage signifies perpetual sexual consent by women. This reinforces Patriarchal belief and violates individual autonomy of woman.
 - In *Joseph Shine v. Union of India (2018)*, SC held that the offence of adultery was unconstitutional because it was founded on the principle that a woman is her husband's property after marriage. Similar principle is not applied while recognising marital rape.

Arguments for providing exemption to marital rape

- Recognising it destroy the institution of marriage. This was the government's defence in *Independent Thought v. Union of India (2017)*
- Since marriage is a sexual relationship, determining the validity of marital rape allegations would be difficult.

Conclusion

In 2017, the Supreme Court, in *Independent Thought*, said that **husbands who raped their minor wives** could no longer hide behind exemptions provided in Section 375 of IPC. It is high time adult women are afforded the same protection and dignity in marriage.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

6. The National Monetisation Pipeline may not help realise the best value for assets

In the news:

The Government has launched a National Monetisation Pipeline, or NMP to sell the revenue streams of public assets over the next four years.

About NMP

- **Financing infrastructure:** As outlined in the Union Budget, the NMP aims to mobilise resources for **financing infrastructure**.
- **Type of assets:** The pipeline mostly includes **railway stations, freight corridors, airports**, and renovated national highway segments amounting to **₹6-lakh crore, or 3% of GDP in 2020-21**.
- The other two methods of raising resources are: setting up of a **development finance institution (DFI)** and raising the share of infrastructure investment in the central and State Budgets.

Concerns

1) Not different from Disinvestment-Privatisation (D-P)

- Asset monetisation as defined in NMP is the same as the net present value (NPV) of the future stream of revenue with an implicit interest rate (whether it is a sale or lease of the asset).
- **Missed targets:** Since D-P proceeds (revenues) have seriously missed the targets almost every year, how believable are the NMP targets? And how are they likely to perform differently?
- If the NMP attempt to shore up public finances, such distress (fire) sale would find it difficult to obtain a “fair value” for public assets.
- Would the market not factor in the dire state of the economy in beating down the prices, as in any distress sale?
- The NMP document seems silent on **how to overcome past mistakes**.

2) PPP mode of implementation

- The NMP outlines mainly two modes of implementing the monetisation: public-private partnership (PPP) and “structured financing” to tap the stock market.

- PPP in infrastructure has been a **financial disaster in India**, as evident from what happened after the economic boom of 2003-08.
- After the 2008 financial crisis, many PPP projects failed to repay bank loans leading to the piling up of non-performing assets (NPAs) of banks.
- Further, as the bulk of the lending was to politically connected corporate houses and firms.
- India is still reeling from the legacy of that period without any easy and credible solutions in sight.

3) Stock market crash threaten the success of InvIT

- An Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) is being mooted as an alternative means of raising finance from the stock market.
- In principle, **InvIT is much like a mutual fund**, whose performance is largely linked to stock prices.
- The disinvestment process began in 1991 in which the bundles of shares of public sector enterprises (PSEs) were sold by UTI in the booming secondary stock market to realise the best price.
- However, as the market crashed in the wake of the Harshad Mehta scam, stalling and discrediting the disinvestment process for almost the entire decade.
- Hence, it may be worth learning the lessons from the historical missteps before exploring the idea all over again by the current stock market boom
- At present, the U.S. Fed committed to reducing its assets purchase programme (known as quantitative easing), the “hot money” inflow that has fuelled Indian stock prices **may dry up throwing up nasty surprises**.

Suggestion: Monetise debt

- With the financial system flush with liquidity with no takers for bank credit, finance the proposed investment – as envisaged in the Budget – by **government borrowing**.
- With a negative 0.4% **real interest rate (real interest rate is nominal interest rate minus inflation rate)**, domestic borrowing in home currency is a steal.
- **No Crowding out:** Chances of crowding-out private investments are remote with a liquidity overhang in the market.
- **Low inflation risk:** Inflation risk is also limited with little aggregate demand pressures (barring temporary bottlenecks due to localised lockdowns).
- **Rating downgrade risk:** If the debt is productively used to expand GDP (the denominator), rating downgrade risk due to rising Debt-GDP ratio seem minimal.
- Moreover, **rising external debt by fickle portfolio investors** perhaps carries a greater risk to external instability.

Conclusion

If reviving investment demand quickly is the real goal, debt monetisation seems a better option than asset monetisation.

7. Leaded Petrol is officially eradicated

The use of leaded petrol has been eradicated from the globe, a/c to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

Leaded Petrol :

- Tetraethyl-lead (TEL) is a petro-fuel additive, first being mixed with petrol beginning in the 1920s as a patented octane rating booster that allowed engine compression to be raised substantially.
- This in turn caused increased vehicle performance and fuel economy.
- The practice of adding tetraethyl lead to petrol had spread widely to all countries soon after its anti-knock and octane-boosting properties were discovered.
- TEL is still used as an additive in some grades of aviation gasoline.

Issues with leaded petrol

- Lead is toxic, affects multiple body systems and is particularly harmful to young children.
- It affects the brain, liver, kidneys and bones. Lead is measured in blood to understand exposure.
- Lead in bone is released into blood during pregnancy and becomes a source of exposure to the developing foetus.
- More recent research has indicated that lead can damage the infant brain even at blood levels as low as 5 microunit per decilitre (μ /dl).

India's tryst with leaded petrol

- India was among those countries that took early action to phase out leaded petrol. The process of phase down that had started in 1994, got completed in 2000.
- Initially, low-leaded petrol was introduced in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai in 1994, followed by unleaded petrol in 1995.
- The entire country got low-leaded petrol in 1997 while leaded fuel was banned in the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

- The final introduction of unleaded petrol in the entire country was mandated in April 2000.
- This decision was also catalysed by the Supreme Court order that had directed the introduction of unleaded petrol to enable the adoption of catalytic converters in petrol cars.

Significance of phasing out

- It is a milestone that will prevent more than 1.2 million premature deaths and save world economies over \$2.4 trillion annually.
- It has taken 100 years to stop the use of leaded fuel finally.

8. DRDO (Defence Research & Development Organisation)

- DRDO is the R&D wing of Ministry of Defence, Govt of India, with a vision to empower India **with cutting-edge defence technologies and a mission to achieve self-reliance** in critical defence technologies and systems, while equipping our armed forces with **state-of-the-art weapon systems** and equipment in accordance with requirements laid down by the three Services.
- DRDO's pursuit of **self-reliance and successful indigenous development** and production of strategic systems and platforms such as Agni and Prithvi series of missiles; light combat aircraft, Tejas; multi-barrel rocket launcher, Pinaka; air defence system, Akash; a wide range of radars and electronic warfare systems; etc., have given quantum jump to India's military might, generating effective deterrence and providing crucial leverage.
- "Balasya Mulam Vigyanam"—the source of strength is science—drives the nation in peace and war. DRDO has firm determination to make the nation strong and self-reliant in terms of science and technology, especially in the field of military technologies.
- **DRDO was formed in 1958** from the amalgamation of the then already functioning Technical Development Establishment (TDEs) of the Indian Army and the Directorate of Technical Development & Production (DTDP) with the Defence Science Organisation (DSO). DRDO was then a small organisation with 10 establishments or laboratories.
- Over the years, it has grown multi-directionally in terms of the variety of subject disciplines, number of laboratories, achievements and stature.
- Today, DRDO is a network of more than 50 laboratories which are deeply engaged in developing defence technologies covering various disciplines, like aeronautics, armaments, electronics, combat vehicles, engineering systems, instrumentation, missiles, advanced computing and simulation, special materials, naval systems, life sciences, training, information systems and agriculture.

- Several major projects for the development of missiles, armaments, light combat aircrafts, radars, electronic warfare systems etc are on hand and significant achievements have already been made in several such technologies.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Taliban and new real politik

In News :

As the last American soldiers fly out of Kabul airport and the world adapts to the return of the Taliban, three uncomfortable but enduring features of international politics have come into sharp focus.

1) The normalisation of the Taliban by the International community

- That victories on the battlefield have political consequences is one of the fundamental features of international politics.
- There is no reason for India to be surprised at the rapid **normalisation of the Taliban** by the international community.
- Whether it likes the new and victorious sovereign or not, a government has the obligation to secure its national interests – ranging from the protection of its citizens and property to maintaining the regional balance of power.
- India is not immune to this essential principle of international relations and will find ways to protect its stakes in Afghanistan under Taliban rule.

2) Future U.S. relations with the Taliban

- The second enduring feature of world politics – that there are **no permanent friends or enemies**, only permanent interests.
- **Convergence of interests:** The US would want to explore if the Taliban can help secure long-term American interests in preventing **a regrouping of international terror outfits** like the al Qaeda and ISIS in Afghanistan.
- The Taliban on the other hand would want American and Western **support in rebuilding Afghanistan**.

- It is by no means clear if such a deal can be clinched, given the big risks it presents to both sides.
- The US engagement with the Taliban to counter the ISIS-K has been met with derision across the world.
- Critics say all these groups are part of the same school of terror, driven by similar religious zeal and nurtured in Pakistan's sanctuaries.

3) Exploit the differences between adversaries: Way forward for India

- The third feature of international politics is that differences even among the closest of friends are natural and always offer openings to adversaries.
- For India, the main interest is in **preventing Afghan soil from being used by anti-India terror groups.**
- At least a section of the Taliban is eager to continue political and commercial engagement with India.
- This is part of a natural quest for a diversified set of international partnerships.
- India would be right to wait patiently on the Taliban's ability to deliver on these promises and stand up against the Pakistan army's pressures to keep India out.
- **Exploit the contradictions:** India should not rule out contradictions between Pakistan and the terror groups it has nurtured as well as among various jihadi organisations.
- Despite its powerful appeal, religious ideology has failed to build durable political coalitions within and across nations.

Conclusion

Given this history, it is unwise for Delhi to paint the external challenges arising from the Afghan tumult as a single coherent force. The Panchatantra has a more sensible strategy to offer – try and divide your potential adversaries and strengthen your internal unity.

2. What is the School Bubble Concept?

The Karnataka government has proposed the 'school bubble' concept to mitigate the spread of the disease among children (aged below 18) attending offline classes at schools and pre-university colleges across the state.

What are school bubbles?

- School bubbles are physical classifications made between groups comprising a small number of students.
- As per the concept, each such bubble will include students who tend to remain as a group during school hours throughout the term or an academic year.
- The concept would help managements easily isolate a fewer number of students in case anyone gets infected.
- For instance, a school bubble can include 30 students. If one among them gets infected, the others can self-isolate but the school need not be closed completely.
- This would allow uninterrupted learning to others as well.

Why are school bubbles significant?

- The concept of school bubbles, experts feel, will be more relevant to students studying in primary school or below.
- These students will have more chances of peer-to-peer interactions on a daily basis.
- With school bubbles in place, the risk assessment process to identify close contacts of a Covid-positive student will also get easier.

Is this concept completely new?

- This has been successfully implemented at schools in the United Kingdom.
- The government there has further relaxed social-distancing measures for students within a particular school bubble.
- However, all members of the bubble are mandatorily subjected to RT-PCR tests if a student is infected.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

3. India becomes 4th largest forex reserves holder globally

India's foreign exchange reserves rose by \$835 million to touch a record high of \$612.73 billion in the week ended July 16, 2021, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data showed.

Forex Reserves

India's forex reserves cover:

- Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs) (rose by \$463 million to \$568.748 billion)
- Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) (up by \$1 million at \$1.548 billion)
- Gold Reserves (up by \$377 million to \$37.333 billion)
- Reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (up by \$1 million at \$1.548 billion)

What is Foreign Exchange Reserve?

- Foreign exchange reserves are important assets held by the central bank in foreign currencies as reserves.
- They are commonly used to support the exchange rate and set monetary policy.
- In India's case, foreign reserves include Gold, Dollars, and the IMF's quota for Special Drawing Rights.
- Most of the reserves are usually held in US dollars, given the currency's importance in the international financial and trading system.
- Some central banks keep reserves in Euros, British pounds, Japanese yen or Chinese yuan, in addition to their US dollar reserves.

Countries with the highest foreign reserves

Currently, China has the largest reserves followed by Japan and Switzerland. India has overtaken Russia to become the fourth largest country with foreign exchange reserves.

1. China - \$3,349 Billion
2. Japan - \$1,376 Billion
3. Switzerland - \$1,074 Billion
4. India - \$612.73 Billion
5. Russia - \$597.40 Billion

Why are these reserves so important?

- All international transactions are settled in US dollars and, therefore, required to support India's imports.
- More importantly, they need to maintain support and confidence for central bank action, whether monetary policy action or any exchange rate intervention to support the domestic currency.
- It also helps to limit any vulnerability due to sudden disturbances in foreign capital flows, which may arise during a crisis.

- Holding liquid foreign currency provides a cushion against such effects and provides confidence that there will still be enough foreign exchange to help the country with crucial imports in case of external shocks.

Initiatives taken by the government to increase forex

- To increase the foreign exchange reserves, the Government of India has taken many initiatives like AatmaNirbhar Bharat, in which India has to be made a self-reliant nation so that India does not have to import things that India can produce.
- Other than AatmaNirbhar Bharat, the government has started schemes like Duty Exemption Scheme, Remission of Duty or Taxes on Export Product (RoDTEP), Nirvik (Niryat Rin Vikas Yojana) scheme etc.
- Apart from these schemes, India is one of the top countries that attracted the highest amount of Foreign Direct Investment, thereby improving India's foreign exchange reserves.

4. Milky Sea Phenomenon

Some researchers would use satellites to study the elusive milky sea phenomenon.

What is Milky Sea

- Milky seas, also called mareel, is a luminous phenomenon in the ocean in which large areas of seawater appear to glow translucently (in varying shades of blue).
- Such occurrences glow brightly enough at night to be visible from satellites orbiting Earth.
- They are a rare nocturnal phenomenon in which the ocean's surface emits a steady bright glow.

Why do they glow?

- Luminous bacteria cause the particles they colonize to glow.
- The purpose of this glow could be to attract fish that eat them.
- These bacteria thrive in the guts of fishes, so when their populations get too big for their main food supply, a fish's stomach makes a great second option.

How do they occur?

- It is typically caused by *Noctiluca scintillans* (popularly known as "sea sparkle"), a dinoflagellate that glows when disturbed and is found in oceans throughout much of the world.

- Once their population gets large enough – about 100 million individual cells per millilitre of water – a sort of internal biological switch is flipped and they all start glowing steadily.

5. National Small Industry Day

India observes **National Small Industry Day** on **30th August** annually to commemorate the contribution of small-scale industry to the country's growth.

Aim:

- To promote and support enterprises in **the small-scale industry** for growth and setting up new businesses to generate employment opportunities.

Role of MSME sector

- India is home to more than **6.3 crore** MSMEs.
- These MSMEs work with **international markets** and act as **ancillaries** to larger international firms.
- In terms of **exports**, the sector holds high potential in various sub-sectors such as textiles, leather & pharmaceuticals, automotive, gems & Jewellery etc. with overall contribution of 45 percent.
- Indian economy is likely to emerge as one of the leading economies in the world, poised to become **USD 5 trillion economy** by 2025.

Key reforms introduced by Ministry of MSME:

- **Revision of MSME definition:** MSME classification was revised in June 2020 by inserting composite criteria of both investment and annual turnover.
- **Udyam Registration:** Udyam is an online and simplified procedure of filing of registration which enables MSMEs to obtain registration without any documentation and fees.
- **Champions Portal:** CHAMPIONS is an online platform to help and handhold the MSMEs specially in this difficult time. It is an ICT based technology system aimed at making the smaller units big by solving their grievances.
- **National SC-ST Hub (NSSH):** National SC-ST Hub has been launched to promote entrepreneurship culture in the SC-ST community.
- **Self-Reliant India (SRI) Fund:** The scheme is expected to facilitate equity financing of Rs.50,000 crore in the MSME Sector.
- **Procurement Policy:** For providing marketing support to MSEs, all Central Ministries/Government Departments and CPSEs are required to procure 25% of their annual requirements of goods and services from MSEs.

- **Establishment of Enterprise Development Centers (EDCs):** To provide Information related to MSMEs at one place, Enterprise Development Centres (EDCs) have been conceptualized. Ministry of MSME has set up 102 EDCs across India.

Challenges faced by small scale industries:

1. Finance:

- **Scarcity of capital** and inadequate availability of **credit facilities** are the major concerns.
- **Adequate funds** are not available and entrepreneurs due to weak economic base have lower credit worthiness.

2. Raw Material:

- Small scale industries normally **tap local sources** for meeting raw material requirements.
- These units face numerous problems like availability of inadequate quantity, poor quality and even supply of raw material is not on regular basis.

3. Technology:

- **Small scale entrepreneurs** are not fully exposed to the latest technology.
- They lack **requisite resources** to update or modernise their plant and machinery.

4. Marketing:

- Small-scale units are also exposed to **marketing problems**.
- They are not able to get firsthand information about the market i.e., about the competition, taste, liking, disliking of the consumers and prevalent fashion.

5. Infrastructure:

- Infrastructure aspects adversely affect the functioning of **small-scale units**.
- There is **inadequate availability** of transportation, communication, power, and other facilities in the backward areas.

Suggestions:

- **Equitable allocation** of raw materials, imported components and equipment.
- Improvement in the methods and techniques of production.
- Provision for adequate finance.

- Marketing assistance.
- Provision for industrial education and training.
- Demarcating spheres for large-scale and small-scale units.

Key Fact:

- UN General Assembly has declared **June 27** as the MSME Day to enhance public awareness of MSMEs' contribution to sustainable development and the global economy.

6. Militancy in Assam's Dima Hasao

A suspected militant attack left five truckers dead in Assam's Dima Hasao hill district.

History :

- The hill districts of Assam– Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao– have had a long history of insurgency by Karbi and Dimasa groups which **peaked in the mid-1990s**, and was rooted in a **core demand of statehood**.
- Both districts are **now protected under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution**, and allows for greater political autonomy and decentralised governance in certain tribal areas of the Northeast.
- They are run by the **North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council** and the **Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council** respectively.
- In Dima Hasao, the **demand for statehood began in the 1960s**, along with other tribal sections of undivided Assam.
- While new states such as Meghalaya were carved out, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar remained with Assam, including **implementation of Article 244 (A)**, which allows for an 'autonomous state' within Assam in certain tribal areas. This was never implemented.
- A demand for a full-fledged state, '**Dimaraji**', gathered steam, and led to the formation of the militant **Dimasa National Security Force (DNSF) in 1991**.
- The group **surrendered in 1995**, but its commander-in-chief, Jewel Gorlosa, broke away and formed the **Dima Haram Daogah (DHD)**.
- After the DHD began talks with the government in 2003, Gorlosa broke away again and formed the **Dima Haram Daogah (Jewel) (DHD-J)**, with an armed wing called **Black Widow**.
- Gorlosa was arrested in 2009, signed a ceasefire agreement in 2012, and joined mainstream politics.

- In 2017, a National Investigation Agency (NIA) court convicted him and 14 others for diverting government funds to insurgent groups for terror activities between 2006 and 2009.
- The area was a hotbed of insurgency in 1994-95 and again in 2003-2009, but has been largely peaceful in the last decade.

What is the DNLA?

- It is a new **insurgent group**, formed in 2019.
- It is aimed to develop a sense of **brotherhood among the Dimasa** and also to **rebuild the trust and faith among the Dimasa society** for regaining the Dimasa Kingdom.
- The group runs on extortion and taxation.

Dimasas:

- The Dimasas (or Dimasa-Kacharis) are the earliest known **rulers and settlers of Assam**.
- They now live in Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Hojai and Nagaon districts of central and southern Assam, as well as parts of Nagaland.

7. Leaded petrol eradicated, says UNEP

Context: The use of leaded petrol has been eradicated from the globe as per the observation made by **UNEP**

More on this

- Achieving of this milestone will prevent more than 1.2 million premature deaths and save world economies over \$2.4 trillion annually
- Algeria – the last country to use the fuel – exhausted its supplies last month
- India banned leaded petrol in **March 2000**

Harmful effects of leaded petrol

- Lead exposure can have serious consequences for the health of children. At high levels of exposure, lead attacks the brain and central nervous system to cause coma, convulsions and even death. Children who survive severe lead poisoning may be left with mental retardation and behavioral disorders.
- Lead in bone is released into blood during pregnancy and becomes a source of exposure to the developing fetus.

- The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) estimated that in 2017, lead exposure accounted for 1.06 million deaths and 24.4 million years of healthy life lost (disability-adjusted life years (DALYs)) worldwide due to long-term effects on health.
- Lead also causes long-term harm in adults, including increased risk of high blood pressure and kidney damage.

About UNEP

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

It aims to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

It is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya

The broad areas where UNEP focuses are: climate change, disasters and conflicts, ecosystem management, environmental governance, chemicals and waste, resource efficiency, and environment under review

The UNEP is funded by voluntary contributions of its members

It hosts the secretariats of many critical multilateral environmental agreements and research bodies, bringing together nations and the environmental community to tackle the greatest challenges of our time. These include the following:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
- The Minamata Convention on Mercury
- The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions
- The Vienna Convention for the Protection of Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol
- The Convention on Migratory Species
- The Carpathian Convention
- The Bamako Convention
- The Tehran Convention

Prelims Practice Questions

1. With reference to Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), which of the following statement is incorrect?

- a. These are investment vehicles that pool investor money and use it to buy a portfolio of real estate assets
- b. The structure of a REIT is similar to a mutual fund
- c. The minimum investment amount in a REIT should be Rs. 50,000
- d. REITs need to mandatorily distribute 90% of their income to unit-holders

Answer : c

- SEBI has reduced the minimum application value of REITs and InvITs, and revised trading lot to one unit for these emerging investment instruments to make them attractive for retail investors.
- The minimum application value has been cut down to the range of Rs 10,000-15,000 for both REITs and InvITs, compared to the earlier requirement of Rs 50,000 for REITs and Rs 1 lakh for InvITs.

Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT)

- These are investment vehicles that pool investor money like mutual funds and use it to buy a portfolio of real estate assets.
- They manage these assets to generate a regular income and capital appreciation.
- The structure of a REIT is similar to a mutual fund.
- It has three-tier structure – a sponsor, who is responsible for promoting the REIT with his own capital; a fund management company which is responsible for selecting and operating the properties; and the trustee, who ensures that the money is managed in the interest of unit-holders.
- As per SEBI's guidelines, REITs need to mandatorily distribute 90 per cent of their income to unit-holders. The distribution could be in the form of dividend or interest income or both.
- Investors' awareness and participation had been slowly improving since the listing of the first REIT in the country.

2. Who among the following Mughal emperors shifted emphasis from illustrated manuscripts to the album and individual portraits?

- a. Humayun
- b. Akbar
- c. Jahangir
- d. Shah Jahan

Answer: c

Explanation:

- During Akbar's reign, many manuscripts were illustrated, the prominent being Razmnamah, the Persian translation of Mahabharata. It was during Jahangir's reign that manuscripts became less important and individual portraits became more prominent.
- Jahangir shifted emphasis from illustrated manuscripts to the album and individual portraits.

3. With reference to Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs), consider the following statements:

1. They are designed to pool small sums of money for investment in infrastructure projects.
2. They are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
3. They are suitable for high net worth individuals.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C 1 and 3 only
- D 1, 2 and 3

Answer :C

Explanation

- **About Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvIT):**
 - They are designed to pool small sums of money from a number of investors to invest in assets that give cash flow over a period of time.

Part of this cash flow would be distributed as a dividend back to investors.

- They are instruments that work like **mutual funds**. Hence, **statement 1 is correct**.
- InvITs are structured so as to **give investors an opportunity to invest in infrastructure assets with predictable cash flows**, while the asset owners can raise upfront resources against future revenue cash flows from those assets, which in turn can be deployed in new assets or used to repay debt.
- InvITs are regulated by the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014**. Hence, **statement 2 is not correct**.
- The minimum investment amount in an InvIT **Initial Public Offering (IPO)** is **Rs 10 lakh**, therefore, **InvITs are suitable for high net worth individuals**, institutional and non-institutional investors. Hence, **statement 3 is correct**.

4. India entered into Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) with which among the following countries?

- a. Japan
- b. Australia
- c. USA
- d. Russia

Answer: d

Explanation:

- As part of the efforts to further deepen the defence cooperation between India and Russia, India and Russia are expected to conclude the bilateral logistics agreement, Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) during the upcoming Russian Defence Minister's visit to India.
- This means Indian ships or aircraft can now use Russian ports or airfields without having to take permission or make immediate payments. India has already signed a similar agreement with the USA. The LEMOA or the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement between India and the United States was signed in 2016.

5. With respect to National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI), consider the following statements:

1. It is India's apex advisory body on immunization established in 200
2. It will be chaired by the Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

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

Answer : a

National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI)

- It was established by an order of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) in 2001.
- As India's apex advisory body on immunization, the NTAGI provides guidance and advice to the MoHFW on provision of vaccination and immunization services for the effective control of vaccine preventable diseases in the country.
- It is chaired by Secretary Health, MoHFW and Co-chaired by Secretary Department of Biotechnology and Secretary Department of Health Research.
- The NTAGI Secretariat was established in 2013, under MoHFW to provide technomanagerial support to NTAGI and STSC and its working groups.
- The NTAGI secretariat is tasked with undertaking technical review of scientific evidence on matters related to immunization policy and programmes.

6. POSHAN Abhiyaan is the Government of India's flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for which of the following sections of the society?

1. Adolescent Girls
2. Children
3. Disabled
4. Pregnant women and lactating mothers
5. Senior Citizens

Options:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1, 2 and 4 only
- c. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition or POSHAN Abhiyaan or National Nutrition Mission is the Government of India's flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescent girls and pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- The POSHAN Abhiyaan directs the attention of the country towards the problem of malnutrition and addresses it in a mission mode.

Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss different types of cybercrimes and measures required to be taken to fight the menace.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing what do you mean by cybercrimes.
- Discuss various types of Cybercrimes and measures required to tackle them.
- Conclude suitably.

2. How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite some recent examples to validate your answer.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the idea of federalism.
- Discuss some recent examples that showcase the features of cooperative, competitive, and confrontational federalism in India.
- Conclude suitably.

