



# Civils Cafe

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## IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR PRELIMS VOL 18

- DAVINCI+ AND VERITAS MISSION BY NASA TO VENUS
- FIT FOR 55 PACKAGE - EUROPEAN UNION
- CHAMOLI DISASTER
- INDIAN ROSEWOOD
- ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME
- OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT
- EKALAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS
- VRUKSHA BANDHAN PROJECT



SCAN TO EXPLORE





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**IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS**  
**FOR PRELIMS VOL - 18**  
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**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****1) DAVINCI+ AND VERITAS MISSION BY NASA TO VENUS**

**IN NEWS:** - NASA has selected two missions to the planet Venus, Earth's nearest neighbor. The missions are called DAVINCI+ and VERITAS. These missions were selected by NASA as part of their Discovery programme.

**ABOUT DAVINCI+**

- DAVINCI+ is expanded as 'Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigation of Noble gases, Chemistry, and Imaging'.
- It is the first US-led mission to Venus since 1978.
- The mission will image Venus in multiple wavelengths from above and also study the chemical composition of Venus' atmosphere and take photographs.
- It will try to understand Venus' composition to see how the planet formed and evolved.
- The DAVINCI+ mission will take photographs of a geological feature that is unique to Venus - The tesserae.
- The "tesserae" may be comparable to Earth's continents.
- The presence of tesserae may suggest that Venus has tectonic plates like Earth.

**ABOUT VERITAS MISSION**

- VERITAS is expanded as 'Venus Emissivity, Radio Science, InSAR, Topography, and Spectroscopy'.
- The spacecraft will orbit Venus, gathering data to reveal how the paths of Venus and Earth diverged, and how Venus lost its potential to be a habitable world.
- VERITAS will help create the first global high-resolution topographic and radar images of Venus.

- The mission will help make the first maps of regions where geologic processes are actively deforming the surface of Venus.
- VERITAS will produce the first near-global map of surface rock composition.
- VERITAS will refine our estimates of Venus' core size and composition.

### ABOUT VENUS

- Venus, which is the second closest planet to the Sun, is called the Earth's twin because of their similar sizes
- From the Earth, Venus is the second-brightest object in the sky after the moon.
- It appears bright because of its thick cloud cover that reflects and scatters light.
- Surface temperatures on Venus can go up to 471 degrees Celsius, which is hot enough to melt lead, NASA notes.

### OTHER MISSIONS TO VENUS

- The first mission to Venus was the Soviet Union's Venera series
- It was followed by NASA's Magellan Mission that studied Venus from 1990-1994.
- As of now, Japan's Akatsuki mission is studying the planet from Orbit.

### PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements

1. The VERITAS mission is led by the Soviet Union.
2. VERITAS is expanded as 'Venus Emissivity, Radio Science, InSAR, Topography, and Spectroscopy'.

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - b**

## INDIAN ECONOMY

### 2) GOVERNMENT SECURITIES ACQUISITION PROGRAMME - 2

**IN NEWS:** - The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced that it will conduct an open market purchase of government securities of Rs 25,000 crore under the G-sec Acquisition Programme (G-SAP 2.0).

#### ABOUT G-SEC ACQUISITION PROGRAMME -2

- The G-Sec Acquisition Programme (G-SAP) is an unconditional and a structured Open Market Operation (OMO), of a much larger scale and size.
- The word 'unconditional' here connotes that RBI has committed upfront that it will buy G-Secs irrespective of the market sentiment.
- As described by the RBI, It is an Open Market Operation with a 'distinct character'.
- Objective:- To avoid volatility in the G-sec market in view of its central role in the pricing of other financial market instruments across the term structure and issuers, both in the public and private sectors.
- It will provide certainty to the bond market participants with regard to RBI's commitment of support to the bond market in FY22.
- The announcement of this structured programme will help reduce the difference between the repo rate and the 10-year government bond yield. That, in turn, will help to reduce the aggregate cost of borrowing for the Centre and states in FY 2021-22.
- It will enable a stable and orderly evolution of the yield curve amidst comfortable liquidity conditions.

#### YIELD CURVE

- A yield curve is a line that plots yields (interest rates) of bonds having equal credit quality but differing maturity dates.

- The slope of the yield curve gives an idea of future interest rate changes and economic activity.

### **OPEN MARKET OPERATIONS**

- These are market operations conducted by RBI by way of sale/purchase of government securities to/from the market with an objective to adjust the rupee liquidity conditions in the market on a durable basis.
- If there is excess liquidity, RBI resorts to sale of securities and sucks out the rupee liquidity.
- Similarly, when the liquidity conditions are tight, RBI buys securities from the market, thereby releasing liquidity into the market.
- It is one of the quantitative (to regulate or control the total volume of money) monetary policy tools which is employed by the central bank of a country to control the money supply in the economy.

### **PRACTICE QUESTION**

Consider the following statements

1. The G-Sec Acquisition Programme (G-SAP) is an unconditional and a structured Open Market Operation.
2. Open Market Operations are market operations conducted by RBI by way of sale/purchase of government securities to/from the market with an objective to adjust the rupee liquidity conditions in the market on a durable basis.

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - c**

**ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY****3) FIT FOR 55 PACKAGE - EUROPEAN UNION**

**IN NEWS:** - Recently, the European Union (EU) released a new climate proposal, the Fit for 55 package. The EU in December 2020 submitted a revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement.

**ABOUT FIT FOR 55 PACKAGE****AIMS**

- To deliver the nationally determined Contributions and carbon neutrality goal through proposed changes that would ensure a fair, competitive and green transition by 2030 and beyond.
- To achieve a balance between “regulatory policies” and market-based carbon pricing to avoid the pitfalls of each.

**PROVISIONS**

- To increase the binding target of renewable sources to 40% from 32% earlier and improve energy efficiency by 36% (from 32.5% earlier) by 2030.
- Vehicular Carbon Emissions must be cut by 55% by 2030 and by 100% by 2035, which means a phaseout of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2035.
- Creation of Emissions Trading System for buildings and road transport to become operational from 2026.
- To help low-income citizens and small businesses adjust to the new ETS, the EU proposes the creation of a Social Climate Fund
- Carbon-Border Adjustment Mechanism: It will put a price on imports from places that have carbon-intensive production processes.
- It has set a target to enhance the EU’s sink capacity to 310 million tonnes of CO equivalent, which it hopes will be achieved through specific national targets by member countries.

## ABOUT EUROPEAN UNION

- The European Union is a group of 28 countries that operate as a cohesive economic and political block.
- 19 of these countries use EURO as their official currency. 9 EU members (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) do not use the euro.

## PRACTICE QUESTION

With reference to Fit For 55 package, consider the following statements

1. It was put forward by the UNFCCC
2. It aims to phase out Petrol and Diesel by 2035.
3. It proposes creation of a Social Climate Fund

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. All of the above

**Answer: - b**

## 4) CHAMOLI DISASTER

**IN NEWS:** - The flash flood in February in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand claimed at least 72 lives and caused at least 200 to be missing or dead. It was due to a large mass of snow, ice and rock avalanche along with a hanging mass of rock crashing into the Raunthi Garh valley floor.

## ABOUT CHAMOLI DISASTER

- The flash flood began on 7 February 2021 in the environs of the Nanda Devi National Park in the outer Garhwal Himalayas in Uttarakhand.
- It is believed to have been caused by a landslide, an avalanche or a glacial lake outburst flood.



- It has caused flooding in the Chamoli district, most notably in the Rishiganga River, the Dhauliganga River, and in turn the Alaknanda the major headstream of the Ganges.
- Experts are uncertain about what caused the massive Glacial Lake Outburst Flood at Chamoli in Uttarakhand.
- It is unclear whether there was an avalanche in the area recently or whether the lake breach was the result of construction, anthropological activities, climate change etc.

#### **ABOUT GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURST FLOODS (GLOF)**

- A GLOF is a type of outburst flood that occurs when the dam containing a glacial lake fails.
- An event similar to a GLOF, where a body of water contained by a glacier melts or overflows the glacier, is called a jökulhlaup.
- The dam can consist of glacier ice or a terminal moraine.

#### **ABOUT AVALANCHE**

An avalanche (also called a snowslide) is a rapid flow of snow down a slope, such as a hill or a mountain. Avalanches can happen due to various factors such as increased precipitation or snowpack weakening or by external means such as humans, animals, and earthquakes.

#### **5) INDIAN ROSEWOOD**

**IN NEWS:** - India has proposed to remove rosewood (*Dalbergia sissoo*) from Appendix II of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals.

#### **ABOUT INDIAN ROSEWOOD**

- *Dalbergia sissoo*, known commonly as North Indian rosewood or shisham, is a fast-growing, hardy, deciduous rosewood tree native to the Indian subcontinent and southern Iran.

- Dalbergia sissoo is a large, crooked tree with long, leathery leaves and whitish or pink flowers.
- It is used as firewood, timber, poles, posts, tool handles, fodder, erosion control and as a windbreak. Oil is extracted from the seed and tannin from the bark.
- It is best known internationally as a premier timber species of the rosewood genus. However, Shisham is also an important fuel wood, shade, and shelter.
- The species is currently part of Appendix II of CITES that has species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival.
- The species grows at a very fast rate and has the capacity to become naturalised outside its native range, even it is invasive in some parts of the world.
- IUCN Status is Least Concern

#### **DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN ROSEWOOD**

- It is native to the foothills of the Himalayas. It is primarily found growing along river banks below 900 metres (3,000 ft) elevation, but can range naturally up to 1,300 m (4,300 ft).
- The temperature in its native range averages 10–40 °C (50–104 °F), but varies from just below freezing to nearly 50 °C (122 °F).
- It can withstand average annual rainfall up to 2,000 millimetres (79 in) and droughts of 3–4 months.
- Soils range from pure sand and gravel to rich alluvium of river banks; shisham can grow in slightly saline soils.

#### **PRACTICE QUESTION**

With respect to Indian Rosewood, consider the following statements

1. It is listed in Appendix II of CITES

2. Its IUCN Status is Endangered

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - a**

## INDIAN POLITY

### 6) e- COURTS INTEGRATED MISSION MODE PROJECT

**IN NEWS:-** The High Court of Punjab and Haryana to launch its first virtual court (e-Court) at Faridabad.

#### **ABOUT e- COURTS INTEGRATED MISSION MODE PROJECT**

- The e-Courts Mission Mode Project, is a Pan-India Project, monitored and funded by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India for the District Courts across the country.
- The e-Courts project was conceptualized on the basis of the “National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary – 2005” submitted by e-Committee, Supreme Court of India with a vision to transform the Indian Judiciary by ICT enablement of Courts.

#### **PROJECT AIMS**

- To provide efficient & time-bound citizen-centric services delivery as detailed in e-Court Project Litigant's Charter.
- To develop, install & implement decision support systems in courts.
- To automate the processes to provide transparency in the accessibility of information to its stakeholders.

- To enhance judicial productivity, both qualitatively & quantitatively, to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost-effective, predictable, reliable and transparent.

## 7) ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME

**IN NEWS:-** In an independent appraisal report released today, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India has lauded the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) as 'a very successful model of local area development' that 'should serve as a best practice for several other countries where regional disparities in development status persist for many reasons'.

### ABOUT ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME

- Aspirational Districts are those districts in India that are affected by poor socio-economic indicators.
- These are aspirational in the context that improvement in these districts can lead to the overall improvement in human development in India.
- The 115 districts were identified from 28 states, at least one from each state.
- At the Government of India level, the programme is anchored by NITI Aayog. In addition, individual Ministries have assumed responsibility to drive the progress of districts.
- ADP is based on 49 indicators from the 5 identified thematic areas, which focuses closely on improving people's Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure.
- With States as the main drivers, ADP seeks to focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.
- The broad aims of the programme are:

- Convergence (of Central & State Schemes) which brings together the horizontal and vertical tiers of the government.
- Collaboration (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors) which enables impactful partnerships between government, market and civil society.
- Competition among districts driven by a spirit of the mass movement, it fosters accountability on district governments.
- The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) is one of the largest experiments on outcomes-focused governance in the world.

### 8) OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT

**IN NEWS:-** The government has sought action against The Hindu newspaper and news agency ANI under Official Secrets Act, 1923 for publishing documents related to India's deal to buy 36 Rafale jets from France

#### ABOUT OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT

- OSA has its roots in the British colonial era.
- The original version was the Indian Official Secrets Act (Act XIV), 1889.
- This was brought in with the main objective of muzzling the voice of a large number of newspapers that had come up in several languages.
- They were opposing the Raj's policies, building political consciousness and facing police crackdowns and prison terms.
- It was amended and made more stringent in the form of The Indian Official Secrets Act, 1904, during Lord Curzon's tenure.
- The 1923 version of the Indian Official Secrets Act was extended to all matters of secrecy and confidentiality in governance in the country.
- It broadly deals with two aspects,
  - Spying or espionage, covered under Section 3, and

- Disclosure of other secret information of the government, under Section 5.

### RTI VS OSA

- Section 22 of the RTI Act provides for its primacy vis-a-vis provisions of other laws, including OSA.
- So if there is any inconsistency in OSA with regard to furnishing of information, it will be superseded by the RTI Act.
- However, under Sections 8 and 9 of the RTI Act, the government can refuse information.
- However the government can classify a document as “secret” under OSA Clause 6, that document can be kept outside the ambit of the RTI Act, and the government can invoke Sections 8 or 9.

### PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements regarding Official Secrets Act

1. Official Secrets Act deals with espionage and disclosure of other secret information of the government.
2. Section 22 of the RTI Act provides for its primacy vis-a-vis provisions of Official Secrets Act.

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 or 2

**Answer: - c**

**MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS****EKALAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS**

- Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) started in the year 1997-98 to impart quality education to ST children in remote areas.
- The schools focus not only on academic education but on the all-round development of the students.
- The objective of EMRS is to provide quality middle and high level education to Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in remote areas, not only to enable them to avail of reservation in high and professional educational courses and as jobs in government and public and private sectors but also to have access to the best opportunities in education at par with the non ST population.
- Each school has a capacity of 480 students, catering to students from Class VI to XII.
- These are being set up by grants provided under Article 275(1) of the Constitution.
- Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) are funded by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- In order to give further impetus to EMRS, it has been decided that by the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an EMRS.

**VRUKSHA BANDHAN PROJECT**

- In a unique initiative Ministry of Tribal Affairs in partnership with The Art of Living Foundation, Aurangabad, and Maharashtra launched Vrushka Bandhan Project where 1100 tribal women created Rakhis for Raksha Bandhan with seeds of indigenous trees, which is a unique contribution to increasing forest cover & combating climate change.

- The Rakhis were made of indigenous seeds stuck on naturally dyed, soft indigenous, non-toxic, biodegradable cotton.
- Once used, the seeds can be sown in soil, thereby benefiting the environment.
- It is expected that thousands of trees would be planted under this project and project will provide employment to tribal women associated with the project

### **ANAMAYA**

- Tribal Health Collaborative 'Anamaya' is a Multi Stakeholder Initiative to enhance Tribal Health and Nutrition.
- The Collaborative is a multi-stakeholder initiative of the Tribal Affairs Ministry supported by the Piramal Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF).
- It will converge efforts of various Government agencies and organisations to enhance the health and nutrition status of the tribal communities of India

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