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IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR PRELIMS VOL 41

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IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR PRELIMS VOL - 41

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INDIAN POLITY**1) NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES**

IN NEWS: - According to a parliamentary committee's recent report, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has been dysfunctional for the last four years and has not delivered a single report to Parliament.

ABOUT NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES (NCST)

- NCST was set up with effect from 19th February, 2004 by amending Article 338 and by inserting a new article 338A in the Constitution through the 89th Constitution Amendment Act, 2003.
- It is a constitutional body.
- Article 338A inter-alia gives powers to the NCST to oversee the implementation of various safeguards provided to STs under the Constitution or under any other law for time being in force or under any other order to the Government and to evaluate the working of such safeguards.
- It consists of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and 3 other Members who are appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal. At least one member should be a woman.
- The Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the other Members hold office for a term of 3 years.
- The members are not eligible for appointment for more than two terms.
- The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Ministers, the Vice Chairperson has the rank of a Minister of State and other Members have the rank of a Secretary to the Government of India.

2) PADMA AWARDS

IN NEWS:- General Bipin Rawat, first Chief of Defence Staff who died in an air crash recently was conferred with Padma Vibhushan posthumously on the eve of 73rd Republic Day

ABOUT PADMA AWARDS

- The Padma Awards are one of the highest civilian honours of India. They are announced annually on the eve of Republic Day.
- The awards come under the aegis of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Awards are given in three categories:
 - Padma Vibhushan for exceptional and distinguished service.
 - Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of higher-order.
 - Padma Shri for distinguished service.
- The award seeks to recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines where an element of public service is involved.
- The Padma Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year. The nomination process is open to the public. Even self-nomination can be made.
- The Government of India instituted two civilian awards, the Bharat Ratna and Padma Vibhushan in 1954.
- The Padma Vibhushan had three classes namely Pahela Varg, Dusra Varg, and Tisra Varg. These were later renamed Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri through a Presidential Notification issued on January 8, 1955.
- Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award in the country. It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any

field of human endeavour. It is considered on a different level from Padma Award.

- The recommendations for Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister to the President of India. No formal recommendations for Bharat Ratna are necessary.
- The number of Bharat Ratna Awards is restricted to a maximum of three in a particular year. The government has conferred Bharat Ratna Award on 45 persons to date.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements

1. The Padma Awards Committee is constituted by the President
2. Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award in the country.

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

3) NIPUN BHARAT PROGRAMME

IN NEWS: - The Union Education Minister has launched the NIPUN Bharat Programme.

ABOUT NIPUN BHARAT PROGRAMME

- NIPUN stands for the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy.
- The Programme is an initiative of the Ministry of Education.

- It will be implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy.
- It has been envisioned for ensuring that every child in the country necessarily attains foundational literacy and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.
- It will cover the learning needs of children in the age group of 3 to 9 years.
- A five-tier implementation mechanism will be set up at the National- State- District- Block- School level in all States and UTs, under the aegis of the centrally sponsored scheme of Samagra Shiksha.
- The mission focuses on different domains of development like physical and motor development, socio-emotional development, literacy and numeracy development, cognitive development, life skills etc. for Holistic development of the child.
- It is envisaged to support and encourage students, along with their schools, teachers, parents, and communities, in every way possible, to help realise the true potential of children and propel the country to new heights.

PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements

1. The NIPUN Bharat Programme is an initiative of the Ministry of Education
2. It has been envisioned for ensuring that every child in the country necessarily attains foundational literacy and numeracy by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.

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

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**4) INDIA'S ARCTIC POLICY**

IN NEWS: - The Ministry of Earth Science has unveiled India's Arctic Policy, titled India and the Arctic: building a partnership for sustainable development.

ABOUT INDIA'S ARCTIC POLICY

- India's Arctic Policy aims to enhance the country's cooperation with the resource-rich and rapidly transforming Arctic region.
- The policy also seeks to combat climate change and protect the environment in the region, which is warming three times faster than the rest of the world.
- It was released by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- There are Six Central Pillars of the arctic policy:
 - Science and research.
 - Environmental protection.
 - Economic and human development.
 - Transportation and connectivity.
 - Governance and international cooperation.
 - National capacity building.

Objectives of Arctic policy

- To strengthen national capabilities and competencies in science and exploration, climate and environmental protection, maritime and economic cooperation with the Arctic region.
- To strengthen institutional and human resource capacities within the government and academic, research and business institutions through inter-ministerial coordination in pursuit of India's interests in the Arctic.
- To enhance understanding of the impact of climate change in the Arctic region

- To promote better analysis, prediction, and coordinated policymaking on the implications of ice melting in the Arctic
- To study the linkages between polar regions and the Himalayas and deepen the cooperation between India and the countries of the Arctic region
- To increase India's participation in the Arctic Council

Arctic council

- The Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous peoples, and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic.
- It was formally established in 1996.

5) FINLANDIZATION

IN NEWS:- France's President Emmanuel Macron has suggested the "Finlandization" of Ukraine for defusing tensions with Russia.

ABOUT FINLANDIZATION

- The term refers to Finland's strict neutrality during the Cold War, enshrined in a 1948 treaty with Moscow when tensions between the Soviet Union and the West were at a high.
- The treaty ensured Finland that unlike other countries in Eastern Europe, it would not face a Soviet invasion, but in return, it agreed to stay out of NATO and allowed the giant next door to exercise significant influence over its domestic and foreign policy.
- Article 1 of the treaty reads: "In the eventuality of Finland, or the Soviet Union through Finnish territory, becoming the object of an armed attack by Germany or any state allied with the latter (meaning, essentially, the United

States), Finland will, true to its obligations as an independent state, fight to repel the attack.

- The principle of neutrality was rooted in the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance that Finland signed with the USSR in April 1948.

Ukraine and Finlandization

- Ukraine, formerly a part of the Soviet Union, has increasingly tilted toward the West, economically and politically, while resisting Russian influence.
- In 2008, NATO said it planned eventually for Ukraine to join the alliance, a popular idea within the country, though it has never actually applied for membership and NATO officials say it would not happen any time soon.
- “Finlandization” would allow Moscow a heavy hand in Ukrainian affairs.
- It goes against what Ukraine has been striving for, that is joining NATO and the E.U.

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6) INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL SYMPOSIUM

IN NEWS: - The 7th edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs is being hosted by French Navy at Paris.

ABOUT INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL SYMPOSIUM

- It was conceived by the Indian Navy in 2008.
- It act as a forum which seeks to enhance maritime co-operation among Navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive platform for discussions on regionally relevant maritime issues that would lead to common understanding on the way ahead.
- The inaugural edition of IONS was held in Feb 2008 at New Delhi, with Indian Navy as the Chair for two years.

- The IONS Chair is presently held with France.

INDIAN ECONOMY

7) \$5 BILLION DOLLAR RUPEE SWAP

IN NEWS: - The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) conducted a \$ 5 billion dollar-rupee swap auction as part of its liquidity management initiative.

ABOUT \$5 BILLION DOLLAR RUPEE SWAP

- It's a forex tool whereby the central bank uses its currency to buy another currency or vice versa.
- In a Dollar–Rupee buy/sell swap, the central bank buys dollars (US dollars or USD) from banks in exchange for Indian Rupees (INR) and immediately gets into an opposite deal with banks promising to sell dollars at a later date.
- In a dollar–rupee sell/buy swap it sells USD in exchange for INR and promises to buy dollars from banks after some years.

Impact:

- It will lead to infusion of dollars and sucking out of the rupee from the financial system.
- The central bank's move will reduce the pressure on inflation and strengthen the rupee.
- The major impact will be that liquidity will shrink. The RBI normally brings down liquidity in the system when inflation threatens to rise sharply.

8) UPI123Pay

IN NEWS: - The Reserve Bank of India has launched a new Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payments solution for feature phone users dubbed 'UPI123Pay'.

ABOUT UPI123Pay

- UPI '123PAY' is a three-step method to initiate and execute services for users which will work on simple phones.
- It will allow customers to use feature phones for almost all transactions except scan and pay.
- It doesn't need an internet connection for transactions. Customers have to link their bank account with feature phones to use this facility.
- The new UPI payments system offers users four options to make payments without internet connectivity:
 - **Interactive Voice Response (IVR):** Users would be required to initiate a secured call from their feature phones to a predetermined IVR number and complete UPI on-boarding formalities to be able to start making financial transactions like money transfer, mobile recharge, EMI repayment, balance check, among others.
 - **App-based functionality:** One could also install an app on feature phone through which several UPI functions, available on smartphones, will be available on their feature phone, except scan and pay feature which is currently not available.
 - **Missed call facility:** The missed call facility will allow users to access their bank account and perform routine transactions such as receiving, transferring funds, regular purchases, bill payments, etc., by giving a missed call on the number displayed at the merchant outlet. The customer will receive an incoming call to authenticate the transaction by entering UPI PIN.
 - **Proximity sound-based payments:** One could utilise the proximity sound-based payments option, which uses sound waves to enable contactless, offline, and proximity data communication on any device.

9) MISSION FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF HORTICULTURE

IN NEWS: - The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has provided an enhanced allocation of Rs. 2250 Crore for the year 2021-22 for 'Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture' (MIDH).

ABOUT MISSION FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF HORTICULTURE (MIDH)

- MIDH is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is implementing MIDH with effect from 2014-15.
- MIDH is implemented under Green Revolution - Krishonnati Yojana.
- Under MIDH, Government of India (GoI) contributes 60% of total outlay for developmental programmes in all the states except states in North East and Himalayas, 40% share is contributed by State Governments.
- In the case of North Eastern States and Himalayan States, GoI contributes 90%.
- **MIDH Sub-Schemes:**
 - **National Horticulture Mission (NHM):** It is being implemented by State Horticulture Missions (SHM) in selected districts of 18 States and 6 Union Territories.
 - **Horticulture Mission for North East & Himalayan States (HMNEH):** HMNEH is being implemented for overall development of Horticulture in North East and Himalayan states.
 - **National Horticulture Board (NHB):** NHB is implementing various schemes under MIDH in all States and UTs.

- **Coconut Development Board (CDB):** CDB is implementing various schemes under MIDH in all Coconut growing states in the country.
- **Central Institute for Horticulture (CIH):** CIH was established at Medi Zip Hima, Nagaland in 2006-07 for providing technical backstopping through capacity building and training of farmers and Field functionaries in the North Eastern Region.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

10) DRAFT NATIONAL MEDICAL DEVICES POLICY 2022

IN NEWS: - The government is proposing a new Draft National Policy for Medical Devices, 2022 to reduce India's dependence on import of high-end medical devices.

ABOUT DRAFT NATIONAL MEDICAL DEVICES POLICY 2022

The objective of the policy is to adopt public-private partnerships to reduce the cost of healthcare, drive efficiency, and aid quality improvements in medical devices manufactured in the country

The key proposals include:

- Incentivising the export of medical devices and related technology projects through tax rebates and refunds
- Increasing government spending in "high-risk" projects in the medical devices sector
- Single-window clearance system for licencing medical devices
- Pricing environment with no price control on newly developed innovation in the sector
- Allot a dedicated fund for encouraging joint research involving existing industry players, reputed academic institutions and start-ups

- Incorporate a framework for a coherent pricing regulation, to make available quality and effective medical devices to all citizens at affordable prices
- NPPA (National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority) shall be strengthened with adequate manpower of suitable expertise to provide effective price regulation balancing patient and industry needs.
- Pharmaceuticals Department will also work with industry to implement a Uniform Code for Medical Device Marketing Practices (UCMDMP)

11)Exo Mars MISSION

IN NEWS: - The European Space Agency (ESA) has suspended its €1bn (£844m) ExoMars mission, which is a joint project with Russia. It was due to launch a robotic rover in September. Member states of the ESA voted recently to cancel the launch because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

ABOUT Exo Mars MISSION

- The Mars rover, named Rosalind Franklin, was assembled in the UK for a planned launch onboard a Russian rocket.
- Rosalind Franklin is the second stage of the joint European-Russian mission.
- The first part, a satellite called the Trace Gas Orbiter, was launched in 2016 and is studying the planet's atmosphere.
- It was also supposed to act as a telecommunications relay for Rosalind Franklin when the rover arrived.
- The next available launch window, based on the alignment of the Earth and Mars, will be 2024, but the technical and political issues may take longer than this to resolve.
- The ESA has commissioned a feasibility study of how to get ExoMars off the ground without Roscosmos (Russian space agency) involvement.

- Working with NASA is one option and it had expressed a “strong willingness to support” the mission.

12) PACER SCHEME

IN NEWS: - The Polar Science and Cryosphere (PACER) scheme has been approved for continuation during 2021-2026.

ABOUT PACER SCHEME

- Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER) scheme comprises the Antarctic program, Indian Arctic program, Southern Ocean program and Cryosphere and Climate program.
- It is being implemented successfully through National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

ABOUT CRYOSPHERE

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- The cryosphere is the frozen water part of the Earth system.
- These are places on Earth that are so cold that water is frozen solid. These areas of snow or ice, which are subject to temperatures below 0°C 32°F for at least part of the year, compose the cryosphere.
- The term “cryosphere” comes from the Greek word, “krios,” which means cold.
- Ice and snow on land are one part of the cryosphere.
- This includes the largest parts of the cryosphere, the continental ice sheets found in Greenland and Antarctica, as well as ice caps, glaciers, and areas of snow and permafrost.
- When continental ice flows out from land and to the sea surface, we get shelf ice.

- The other part of the cryosphere is ice that is found in water. This includes frozen parts of the ocean, such as waters surrounding Antarctica and the Arctic. It also includes frozen rivers and lakes, which mainly occur in polar areas.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

13) INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS

IN NEWS: - International Day of Forests observed on March 2022

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS

- Events on March 21 are organised the United Nations Forum on Forests, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with governments in various countries and other organisations working in this field.
- Theme: 'Forests and Sustainable production and consumption.'
- The first-ever International Day of Forests was observed on March 21,
- It was established, on November 28, 2012, by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
- The aim behind observing the International Day of Forests is to 'celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests.'

14)PROGRAMME ON SEAGRASSES

IN NEWS: - The Government of India has launched the Programme on Seagrasses

ABOUT PROGRAMME ON SEAGRASSES

- Seagrasses are flowering plants which are found in our sea beds and ocean floors.

- The major seagrass beds exist along our coastline of Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay regions on the east coast, Gulf of Kachchh region on the west coast, the lagoons of islands in Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea and Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal.
- Seagrass ecosystems are recognized globally for their ability to sequester carbon, nurture fish communities and support marine mammals such as sea cows or dugongs.
- Seagrasses have been studied for over two decades with the financial support of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the State/UT Governments.
- Based on field surveys and satellite data, the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management has estimated the total extent of seagrass ecosystem in India to be 516.59 km².
- Further, the Government has also initiated a project across the States of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Odisha on enhancing climate resilience of India's coastal communities in association with the Global Climate Fund (GCF) covering 24 ecosystems in these selected States which aims to strengthen the climate resilience of coastal communities by protecting and restoring India's natural ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrasses.

15) FLY ASH MANAGEMENT AND UTILIZATION MISSION

IN NEWS: - The National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed the constitution of a 'Fly Ash Management and Utilisation Mission.

ABOUT FLY ASH MANAGEMENT AND UTILIZATION MISSION

- The aim of the mission is to 'coordinate and monitor issues relating to the handling and disposal of fly ash and associated issues.'

- The Mission is to be jointly headed by the secretaries of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Union Ministry of Coal and Power, keeping on board chief secretaries of respective states where the mission is being implemented.
- The secretary of MoEF&CC will be the nodal agency for coordination and compliance.

ABOUT FLY ASH

- Fly ash is an unwanted unburnt residue of coal combustion in a coal thermal power plant.
- It is emitted along with flue gases during the burning of coal in a furnace and collected using the electrostatic precipitators.
- It is hazardous for health and the environment due to the concentrated presence of heavy metals.
- Fly ash utilization, especially in concrete, has significant environmental benefits including:
 - increasing the life of concrete roads and structures by improving concrete durability,
 - net reduction in energy use and greenhouse gas and other adverse air emissions when fly ash is used to replace or displace manufactured cement,
 - reduction in amount of coal combustion products that must be disposed in landfills,
 - conservation of natural resources and materials.



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