

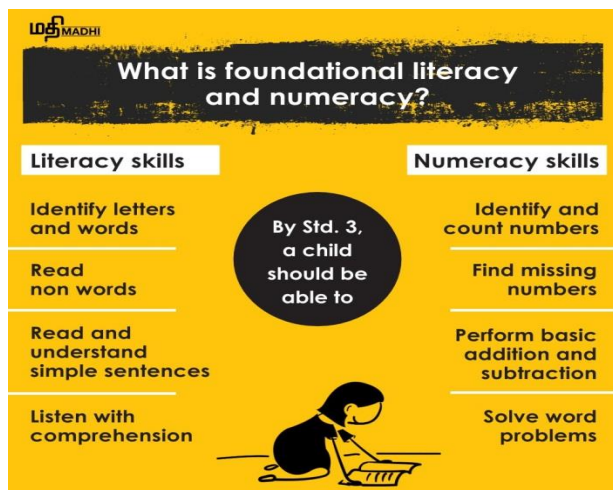


18 March, 2024

ULLAS - Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram

Context: The Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), Ministry of Education, Government of India, conducted the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test (FLNAT) as part of the ULLAS - Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram.

- The FLNAT was conducted in all districts of each participating State/UT, with the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and Government/aided schools serving as test centres.
- The assessment comprised three subjects: Reading, Writing, and Numeracy, each carrying 50 marks, totaling 150 marks. It aimed to evaluate the foundational literacy and numeracy skills of registered non-literate learners.



- Two FLNATs were conducted in 2023, in March and September. The last FLNAT, held on September 24, 2023, saw 17,39,097 learners appearing, out of which 15,58,696 were certified. A total of 36,00,870 learners have been certified till date.
- The test was conducted in the regional language of the learners, aligning with NEP 2020's focus on promoting multilingualism and using the mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction.
- Some UTs, including Chandigarh, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, and Goa, aimed to declare 100 per cent literacy through FLNAT this time.
- Conducting the test in regional languages aimed to promote and preserve linguistic diversity.
- The test was crucial in assessing the impact of teaching-learning sessions conducted as part of the ULLAS - Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram.
- Qualifying learners received a certificate issued by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), recognizing their achievement in acquiring foundational literacy and numeracy skills.
- The FLNAT conducted on March 17, 2024, represented another significant step in realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat and Jan Jan Saakshar Bharat.

ULLAS

➤ Scheme Overview:

- The Government of India approved the "Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram" for FYs 2022-2027, aligning with the National Education Policy 2020.
- The scheme aims to cover all aspects of Education For All, focusing on foundational literacy and numeracy, critical life skills, vocational skills development, basic education, and continuing education.

➤ Implementation Approach:

- Implemented through volunteerism and online mode with face-to-face training sessions.
- Material and resources provided digitally for easy access.
- Coverage includes non-literates aged 15 and above across all states and UTs.

➤ Target and Financial Outlay:

- Target of 5 crore learners for foundational literacy and numeracy over FYs 2022-2027.
- Financial outlay of Rs. 1037.90 crore, including Rs. 700 crore central share and Rs. 337.90 crore state share.

➤ Salient Features:

- Schools serve as the unit for implementation.
- Strategies tailored for different age cohorts with flexibility for innovative activities.
- Use of technology for wider coverage.
- Performance Grading Index for monitoring progress.
- Possibility of CSR/Philanthropic support.
- Priority given to specific categories and areas.
- Convergence with other ministries/departments for effective implementation.

➤ Janandolan - Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav:

- Involvement of students, teachers, volunteers, community, and philanthropic organizations.
- Utilization of various media platforms for awareness and promotion.
- Scientific assessment of literacy conducted in local schools.
- Annual achievement survey of learning outcomes and outcome-output monitoring framework implemented.

Model Code of Conduct

Context: The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced that the Lok Sabha elections will take place in seven phases from April 19 to June 1, with results declared on June 4, triggering the implementation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

➤ Objectives of the Model Code of Conduct:

- The MCC serves as a set of norms and principles for political parties and candidates during elections, ensuring adherence to its principles and promoting fair conduct.
- It prevents the misuse of official machinery for electoral purposes and aims to curb electoral offenses, malpractices, and corrupt practices.
- Enforced by the Election Commission, the MCC is applicable from the announcement of the election schedule until the completion of the electoral process,

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ensuring free and fair elections at all levels - national, state, and local.

➤ **Historical Background of the Model Code of Conduct:**

- Originating in the electoral history of India, the MCC evolved from a 'Code of Conduct' prepared during the 1960 Assembly elections in Kerala.
- Initially circulated by the Election Commission in the 1962 Lok Sabha elections, it was refined over time to address issues of electoral malpractices.
- The MCC gained prominence after 1991 when the Election Commission began enforcing it more rigorously, including guidelines on election manifestos as directed by the Supreme Court in 2013.

Provisions under MCC

➤ **Prohibitions:**

- Criticism of political parties should be limited to their policies, programmes, past record, and work.
- Activities like using caste and communal feelings to secure votes, criticizing candidates based on unverified reports, bribing or intimidating voters, etc., are prohibited.

➤ **Meetings:**

- Parties must inform local police authorities of the venue and time of any meeting in advance to enable adequate security arrangements.

➤ **Processions:**

- If multiple candidates plan processions along the same route, parties must establish contact beforehand to ensure no clashes occur.
- Carrying and burning effigies representing members of other political parties is not allowed.

➤ **Polling Day:**

- Only voters and those with valid passes from the EC are permitted to enter polling booths.
- Authorized party workers at polling booths should be provided with suitable badges or identity cards.
- Identity slips supplied to voters by authorized party workers should be on plain (white) paper without any symbols, candidate names, or party names.

➤ **Observers:**

- The EC will appoint observers to whom candidates can report problems regarding election conduct.

➤ **Party in Power:**

- Restrictions were incorporated in 1979 to regulate the conduct of the party in power.
- Ministers should not combine official visits with election work or use official machinery for the same.
- Avoid advertising at the public exchequer's cost or using official mass media for publicity to improve election chances.
- Ministers and authorities must refrain from announcing financial grants or promises of infrastructure development once elections are announced.

➤ **Election Manifestos:**

- Election manifestos should adhere to guidelines outlined by the ECI:

- Must not contain anything against the ideals and principles of the Constitution.
- Avoid promises that may influence voters unduly or compromise the election process's integrity.
- Reflect the rationale for promises and indicate ways to meet financial requirements.
- Should not be released during the prohibitory period as per Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

➤ **Recent Additions to the MCC:**

- Regulation of opinion polls and exit polls during the period notified by the ECI.
- Prohibition of advertisements in print media on polling day and one day prior unless pre-certified by screening committees.
- Restriction on government advertisements featuring political functionaries during the election period.

➤ **Enforceability of MCC**

- Despite lacking statutory backing, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) has gained significance over the past decade due to strict enforcement by the Election Commission (EC).
- Some aspects of the MCC can be enforced by utilizing corresponding provisions in other laws like the Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860, Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) 1973, and Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1951.
- In 2013, the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law, and Justice recommended incorporating the MCC into the RPA 1951 to make it legally binding.
- The Election Commission opposes the idea of making the MCC legally binding, citing the need to complete elections within a relatively short timeframe of around 45 days, as judicial proceedings typically take longer, making it unfeasible to enforce it by law.



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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Sangita Kalanidhi Award



Carnatic vocalist and Magsaysay Award winner T.M. Krishna has been selected recently for the Sangita Kalanidhi award of the Music Academy for 2024.

Sangita Kalanidhi Award:

- The Sangita Kalanidhi is an award given to a **Carnatic musician by the Madras Music Academy** and is considered the **highest accolade in the field of Carnatic music**.
- The award consists of a **gold medal and a birudu patra** (citation).
- It has been around **since 1942**, and the title translates to "**music**, art, treasure or ocean".
- The Sangita Kalanidhi is **considered the Oscar equivalent** for Carnatic music.
- It is a landmark institution in the history of the fine arts and emerged as an offshoot of the All India Congress Session held in Madras in December **1927**.

Carnatic Music:

- Carnatic music is a special kind of music from South India, including states like **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu**.
- This musical tradition also extends its influence to neighboring country Sri Lanka.
- In Carnatic music, beautiful melodies and rhythmic patterns stand out, performers often make up music on the spot, using scales called **ragas** and rhythmic cycles known as **talas**.
- Carnatic music originated from ancient Hindu traditions in South India, akin to Hindustani music, which evolved in the North with influences from **Persia and Islam**.

European Union



EU chief and five European leaders visited Egypt to announce a **€7.4 billion financial package** aimed at addressing economic challenges and migration issues.

About the European Union:

- The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union of **27 European** countries.
- 19 European Union member states use the euro (€)** as their official currency, while **8 do not use the euro**.
- It plays a role in external relations and defense through the Common Foreign and Security Policy.
- It maintains diplomatic missions worldwide and participates in international organizations like the **UN, WTO, G7 and G20**.
- The EU was officially established with the Maastricht Treaty in **1993**, achieving full legal personality with the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009.
- The EU was formed to promote peace and unity in Europe after **World War II** to prevent future conflicts.
- European Union awarded with Nobel Peace Prize in **2012** for contributing to peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.

Opium Poppy



Recently, despite being a restricted area due to the presence of tigers and abundant wildlife, the Similipal Tiger Reserve has become a target for narcotics traffickers, who have initiated poppy cultivation in the region.

About Poppy Cultivation:

- The opium poppy, also known as **Papaver somniferum** or breadseed poppy, is a **flowering plant** that **produces both opium and poppy seeds**.
- It is believed to have originated in the **Mediterranean region**.
- It is extensively cultivated in countries like **India, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Turkey**.
- It typically grows up to **about 1 to 1.5 meters in height**.
- The plant has bluish-green leaves and large, showy flowers with petals ranging from white to **pink, red or purple**.
- It is primarily cultivated for the production of opium, a narcotic substance derived from the latex of its unripe seed pods.
- Opium contains various alkaloids, including **morphine, codeine and thebaine**.
- It has been used for pain relief, cough suppression, and diarrhea treatment.

Similipal Tiger Reserve:

- Similipal National Park is a **tiger reserve** and national park in the Mayurbhanj district of **Odisha**.
- It is part of the **Similipal-Kuldiha-Hadgarh Elephant Reserve**.
- It is surrounded by high plateaus and hills, the highest peak being the twin peaks of **Khairiburu** and **Meghashini**.
- It was declared a 'Tiger Reserve' in the year 1956 and brought under the 'Project Tiger' in **1973**.
- Flora:** Similipal has 1078 plant species, including 94 types of orchids, with Sal trees being the most common.
- Fauna:** Animals in the area include leopards, **gaurs**, elephants, langurs, deer, **bears, mongooses**, flying squirrels, porcupines, **turtles**, monitor lizards, **pythons**, **sambar deer**, **pangolins** and more.

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Thenmala Kullan



Recently, the Kerala Animal Husbandry department has decided to conserve dwarf cow, locally known as Thenmala Kullan, and launch studies to register it as a unique indigenous breed.

About Thenmala Kullan:

- Thenmala Kullan is a locally found **breed of dwarf cow** indigenous to Kerala, India.
- Notable characteristics of Thenmala Kullan include a small hump and unique physical traits.
- These cows thrive on **forest-based fodder**, indicating adaptation to local ecological conditions.
- Tribespeople from **Arippa** and **Thenmala** have historically reared these cows, preserving their unique genetic traits over generations.
- Although they produce **nutrient-rich A2 milk**, the quantity is limited, making them primarily valuable for calf rearing and manure production.
- Studies conducted by Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU) involve comprehensive phenotypic and genotypic characterization to ascertain indigenous breed status.

Place in News

Niger

Recently, Niger's ruling junta ended an agreement that allowed the United States to run a drone base in the country.

Niger: (Capital: Niamey)

Location: Niger, officially known as the Republic of the Niger, is a **landlocked** country in West Africa.

Political Boundaries: Niger shares its borders with **Chad** (East), **Mali** (West), **Libya** (Northeast), **Algeria** (Northwest), **Nigeria** (South) and **Benin** and **Burkina Faso** (Southwest).

Physical Features:

- The **Niger River**, one of the longest rivers in Africa, flows through Niger.
- The highest point in Niger is **Mont Idoukal-n-Taghes**, also known as Mount Bagzane, located in the **Air Mountains** (also known as the Air Massif) in northern Niger.
- Niger's mineral resources include **uranium, gold, coal, oil** etc.
- Niger experiences a predominantly **arid climate**.



POINTS TO PONDER

- India's first Oil Palm Processing Mill was inaugurated under which scheme? – **The National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)**
- Which government body has recently conducted a performance audit on the degradation of the Shipra River? – **Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)**
- Which regulatory authority recently approved the launch of the beta version of the T+0 settlement on an optional basis? – **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**
- Which department successfully inaugurated the integration of the Kisan Credit Card Fisheries scheme with the JanSamarth Portal? – **Department of Fisheries**
- NASA recently resolved Voyager 1's communication breakdown issue by discovering a clue. Which boundary did Voyager 1 cross into, marking a significant milestone in its journey? – **Interstellar Space (2012)**

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