

30 September, 2023

Sankalp Saptah

Context: Recently, the Prime Minister is set to inaugurate 'Sankalp Saptah,' a week-long initiative at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

About 'Sankalp Saptah':

- Sankalp Saptah is closely linked to the effective implementation of the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP). D:\Daily Current Affairs - 2023\30-9-2023\Today News
- **ABP Implementation:** It is designed to facilitate the implementation of the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP).
- **Culmination of Brainstorming Sessions:** Chintan shivirs (brainstorming sessions) were conducted at village and block levels across India as a part of ABP preparation. Sankalp Saptah is the culmination of these sessions.
- **Scope:** Sankalp Saptah will be observed in all 500 aspirational blocks.
- **Development Themes:** Each day of Sankalp Saptah focuses on a specific development theme. The themes for the first six days include "Sampoorna Swasthya," "Suposhit Parivar," "Swachhta," "Krishi," "Shiksha," and "Samridhi Diwas."
- **Closing Celebration:** The last day of the week is dedicated to celebrating the work accomplished during the entire week, known as "Sankalp Saptah – Samavesh Samaroh."
- **Participants:** The inaugural program includes approximately 3,000 panchayat and block-level people's representatives and functionaries from across the country at Bharat Mandapam.



About Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP):

- **Launch Date:** It was launched on January 7, 2023, modeled after the Aspirational District Programme initiated in 2018, covering 112 districts across India.
- **Objective:** The primary aim of ABP is to enhance governance and improve the quality of life in 500 Aspirational Blocks spanning 329 districts across India.
- **Concentration in States:** Over half of these blocks are located in six states: Uttar Pradesh (68 blocks), Bihar (61), Madhya Pradesh (42), Jharkhand (34), Odisha (29), and West Bengal (29).
- **Approach:** It achieves its objectives by converging existing schemes, defining outcomes, and maintaining continuous monitoring, thereby enabling holistic development in areas requiring additional assistance.

Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)

Recently, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) has revealed that India is soon set to issue 1,00,000 patents annually, a significant increase from the previous 9,000 per year.

About Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister:

- The EAC-PM is an independent advisory body established to provide economic counsel to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister.
- It was first constituted in September 2017, initially with a term of two years.



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- It advises the Prime Minister on economic and related issues, whether referred by the Prime Minister or taken up suo-motu.
- It addresses macroeconomic concerns and offers views to the Prime Minister.
- It undertakes additional tasks as requested by the Prime Minister.

Composition:

- EAC-PM is headed by a chairperson.
- It comprised of eminent economists as members.
- It is supported by a team of officials and administrators.
- The council's size and structure can change over time.

Administrative Nodal Agency:

- The NITI Aayog serves as the nodal agency for administrative, logistic, planning and budgeting purposes for the EAC-PM.

Patents in India: India is expected to have the capability to issue 1,00,000 patents annually.

What is a Patent?

- A patent grants exclusive rights for an invention, be it a product or process, providing a new technical solution or method.
- To obtain a patent, technical information about the invention must be disclosed publicly in a patent application.
- Patent owners have the sole right to prevent others from commercially using the patented invention without consent.
- Patents are territorial, offering protection only in the country or region where they are filed and granted.
- Protection typically lasts for 20 years from the application filing date.

Social Audit in MGNREGA

Context: Recently, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) Scheme's social audit units are facing challenges and issues in various Indian states.

About Social Audit:

- Social audit is a process of reviewing official records to verify if reported expenditures align with actual on-ground spending.
- It assesses the social impact of government programs, promotes community participation, and ensures government accountability.
- It is different from financial audits, which focus on financial transactions and stability.

Section 17 of MGNREGA:

- It mandates social audit of all works executed under the MGNREGA.
- It empowers gram sabha to monitor work execution.
- Each state has independent social audit units.

Features of Social Audit:

- Social Audit emphasises on fact-finding, not fault-finding.
- It raises awareness about entitlements and processes.
- It fosters dialogue among stakeholders.
- It facilitates timely grievance redressal.
- It strengthens democratic institutions.

Benefits of Social Audit:

- It informs and educates citizens about their rights.
- It provides a platform for expressing needs and grievances.



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- It encourages citizen participation.
- It enhances transparency and government accountability.
- It bolsters decentralized governance.

Issues with Social Audit Units:

- **Malpractice and Recovery:** Social audit units flag malpractice, but recovery and punitive actions rest with state governments, often lacking effectiveness.
- **Training and Personnel:** Many units lack proper training and adequate staff.
- **Low Recovery Rates:** Recovery rates have been dismal, undermining the credibility of audits.
- **Poor Monitoring:** Some states consistently report "zero cases" and make "zero recoveries," indicating inadequate monitoring.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

POCSO Act



Recently, the Law panel advised keeping the age of consent at 18 in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) but suggested a more lenient approach for cases involving adolescents aged 16 to 18.

About:

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) is a crucial legal framework in India addressing child sexual abuse.
- It was enacted in 2012.
- It is administered by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD).
- It is designed to protect children under 18 from sexual assault, harassment, and pornography.
- It establishes Special Courts for trial of such offences and related matters.
- It covers various forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.

Amendment to the Act (2019):

- It enhanced punishments to deter abusers and protect childhood.
- It introduced the death penalty for aggravated penetrative sexual assault of a child.
- It imposes fines and imprisonment up to 20 years to combat child pornography.

Noor-3 Satellite



Origin: Noor-3 is an imaging satellite developed by Iran.

Purpose: It possesses potential spying capabilities, enhancing Iran's space capabilities.

Orbital Position: Noor-3 is placed in an orbit located 450 kilometers (280 miles) above the Earth's surface.

Launch Vehicle: The satellite was launched using the three-stage Qased (messenger) carrier rocket.

Predecessors:

- Two previous satellites, Noor-1 and Noor-2, were launched in April 2020 and March 2022, respectively.
- Noor-1 re-entered Earth's atmosphere in April 2022, while Noor-2 remains operational.

Iran's Space Program:

- Iran's space program includes both regular armed forces and the Revolutionary Guard, with the latter having its own space program.
- The first satellite, Noor-1, was launched into space by Iran in April 2020.

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Kamlang Tiger Reserve



About Kamlang Tiger Reserve:

- Kamlang Tiger Reserve is situated in the south-eastern part of the Lohit District of Arunachal Pradesh, India.
- Kamlang Tiger Reserve is India's 50th Tiger Reserve, contributing to tiger conservation and the preservation of Eastern Himalayan ecosystems.
- It is surrounded by tribal communities like Mishmi, Digaro Mishmi, and Miju Mishmi with deep ties to the region.

History:

- Originally established as Kamlang Wildlife Sanctuary in 1989.
- Upgraded to Kamlang Tiger Reserve in 2016 under India's Project Tiger initiative.

Flora: Diverse flora including tropical evergreen forests, subtropical broadleaf forests, alpine vegetation, bamboo groves and medicinal plants.

Fauna: Rich wildlife diversity including Royal Bengal Tiger, Common Leopard, Asian Elephant, and critically endangered White-bellied Heron.

Pink Bollworm



"Recently, cotton fields in regions stretching from Rajasthan to Haryana have been facing a significant challenge posed by the Pink Bollworm."

Pink Bollworm (*Pectinophora Gossypiella*):

- Pink Bollworm is one of the most destructive pests of cotton, causing significant damage to cotton crops.
- Originally native to India, it is now found in nearly all cotton-growing countries worldwide.

Physical Description:

- Adults are small moths, measuring about 3/8 inch in length.
- They have dark brown coloring with distinctive markings on their forewings.
- The larval stage is the most destructive and recognizable phase.

Distinctive Larvae:

- Larvae of Pink Bollworm are identifiable by their pink bands.
- They can grow up to 1/2 inch in length just before pupation.

Ecological Impact:

- Pink Bollworms pose a significant ecological threat, particularly to cotton crops.
- Adult moths have a short lifespan of approximately 2 weeks but can lay over 200 eggs during this period.

Armageddon Reedtail



Recently a new damselfly species found in the Western Ghats is named "Armageddon Reedtail". The discovery was made by researchers from MIT-World Peace University in Pune, India.

Armageddon Reedtail (*Protosticta Armageddonia*):

- The Armageddon reedtail damselfly has a dark brown to black body with striking greenish-blue eyes.
- Half of its eight abdominal segments are adorned with delicate pale blue markings.
- It exclusively inhabits primary montane streams under dense canopy cover.

Threats: It faces extinction due to habitat loss and environmental changes.

e-Cabinet



What is e-Cabinet?

- e-Cabinet is a software portal for State Governments to conduct Cabinet meetings electronically, reducing paper use and streamlining processes.
- It has developed by the National Information Centre (NIC), under the Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY).

Adoption in Tripura:

- Tripura joins Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh as the fourth state (second in the Northeast) to implement the e-Cabinet system.

Features:

- It maximizes technology usage in meetings.
- It automates workflow for pre, during, and post-meeting activities.

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	Benefits/Impact: ➤ It saves resources (paper, fuel, manpower). ➤ It facilitates online data updates. ➤ It supports quick retrieval of meeting outcomes.
Place in News Hadrian's Wall	Recently a world-famous Sycamore Gap tree, located near Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, was cut down overnight. Geographical Location: ➤ Hadrian's Wall, also known as the Roman Wall, is located in northern England, running from Wallsend on the River Tyne in the east to Bowness-on-Solway in the west. Length: ➤ The wall was approximately 73 miles (117.5 kilometers) long, stretching across the width of the island of Britain. Purpose: ➤ Hadrian's Wall was constructed as a defensive fortification by the Romans in AD 122 during the reign of Emperor Hadrian. ➤ It marked the boundary between Roman Britannia and the unconquered territory of Caledonia (now Scotland). Cultural Significance: ➤ Hadrian's Wall is considered a British cultural icon and one of the major ancient tourist attractions in Britain. ➤ It was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. Sycamore Gap Tree: ➤ The Sycamore Gap tree was about 300 years old and featured in the 1991 film "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves," starring Kevin Costner. ➤ It was considered a local treasure and part of England's identity, inspiring artists, writers and photographers. 

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Who has been recently elected as the Chairman of the Press Trust of India's Board of Directors? - K.N. Shanth Kumar
2. Who will be awarded by the 2023 SASTRA Ramanujan Prize? - Ruixiang Zhang
3. Which international organization collaborated recently with India on the FOWIND (Facilitating Offshore Wind Energy in India) project? - European Union
4. Which prestigious award did Dhaniram receive recently for creating the Toto language script and alphabet? - 'Padma Shri'
5. Which river is located on the western bank of Toto Para? - Torsa River

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