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PERFECT

7

Weekly Current Affairs

May-2021 | ISSUE-03



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DHYEYA IAS : AN INTRODUCTION



Vinay Kumar Singh
Founder & CEO

The guiding philosophy of the institute, throughout, has been creation of knowledge base. Dhyeya IAS inculcates human values and professional ethics in the students, which help them make decisions and create path that are good not only for them, but also for the society, for the nation, and for the world as whole. To fulfill its mission in new and powerful ways, each student is motivated to strive towards achieving excellence in every endeavor. It is done by making continuous improvements in curricula and pedagogical tools.

The rigorous syllabi not only instills in them, a passion for knowledge but also attempts to teach them how to apply that knowledge in real-life situations. The programmes lay emphasis on well-rounded personality development of the students and also in inculcating the values of honesty and integrity in them.



Q.H. Khan
Managing Director

Dhyeya IAS is an institution that aims at the complete development of the student. Our faculty are hand-picked and highly qualified to ensure that the students are given every possible support in all their academic endeavors. It is a multi-disciplinary institution which ensures that the students have ready access to a wide range of academic material.

Our brand of education has broad horizons as we believe in exposure. Our students are encouraged to widen their knowledge base and study beyond the confinements of the syllabus. We aim to lend a gentle guiding hand to make our students recognize their inner potential and grow on their own accord into stalwarts of tomorrow's society.

PERFECT 7 : AN INTRODUCTION



Kurban Ali
Chief Editor

With immense pleasure I would like to inform you that the new version of 'Perfect 7', from the Dhyeya IAS, is coming with more information in a very attractive manner. Heartily congratulations to the editorial team. The 'Perfect 7' invites a wider readership in the Institute. The name and fame of an institute depends on the caliber and achievements of the students and teachers. The role of the teacher is to nurture the skills and talents of the students as a facilitator. This magazine is going to showcase the strength of our Institute. Let this be a forum to exhibit the potential of faculties, eminent writers, authors and students with their literary skills and innovative ideas.

Please do visit our website www.dhyeyaias.com and our youtube channel for regular and updated information on current affairs.



Ashutosh Singh
Managing Editor

We have not only given the name 'Perfect 7' to our magazine, but also left no stone unturned to keep it 'near to perfect'. We all know that beginning of a task is most vital and full of challenges. So we met the same fate.

Publishing 'Perfect 7' provided us various challenges because from the beginning itself we kept our bar too high to ensure the quality. Right from the very first issue we had a daunting task to save aspirants from the 'misinformation' or 'overdose of information'. Focussing on civil services examination 'Perfect 7' embodies in itself perfect friend and guide in your preparation. This weapon is built to be precise yet comprehensive. It is not about bombardment of mindless facts, rather an analysis of various facets of the issues, selected in a systematic manner. We adopted the 'Multi Filter' and 'Six Sigma' approach, in which a subject or an issue is selected after diligent discussion on various levels so that the questions in the examination could be covered with high probability.

Being a weekly magazine there is a constant challenge to provide qualitative study material in a time bound approach. It is our humble achievement that we feel proud to make delivered our promise of quality consistently without missing any issue since its inception.

Your suggestions and popular demands always motivate us and keep our morale high.

May this version of 'Perfect 7' instill a new energy and a new spirit in you. We wish that the bond of affection between you and Dhyeya IAS reaches at a new height.



Send us your suggestions, comment, views and feedback for guiding us on

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PREFACE



Dhyeya family has decided to bring a new colourful and vibrant version of 'Perfect 7' – a panacea for current affairs, which will add positive and dynamic energy in your preparation.

'Perfect7' is an outstanding compilation of current affairs topics as per the new pattern of Civil Services Examination (CSE). It presents weekly analysis of information and issues (national and international) in the form of Articles, News Analysis, Brain Boosters, PIB Highlights and Graphical Information, which helps to understand and retain the information comprehensively. Hence, 'Perfect 7' will build in-depth understanding of various issues in different facets.

'Perfect7' is our genuine effort to provide correct, concise and concrete information, which helps students to crack the CSE. This magazine is the result of the efforts of the eminent scholars and the experts from different fields. 'Perfect 7' is surely a force multiplier in your effort and plugs the loopholes in the preparation.

We believe in environment of continuous improvement and learning. Your constructive suggestions and comments are always welcome, which could guide us in further revision of this magazine.

Omveer Singh Chaudhary

Editor
Dhyeya IAS

As a proud jewel of Dhyeya IAS, 'Perfect 7' now comes in a new coloured avatar. 'Perfect 7' is a quintessential part of your preparation strategy for Civil Services Examination. A regular and manageable dose of current affairs will now reach you in new format, making it more reader friendly. Our humble attempt to serve you is surely rewarded by your appreciations. It encourages us to innovate and provide the best as per our ability.

A dedicated team of experts at Dhyeya IAS toils night and day to make your dream of Civil Services come true. I heartily thank and express my gratitude to the esteemed readers and all the people involved in making this magazine a shining star in the galaxy of Dhyeya IAS.

Rajat Jhingan

Editor
Dhyeya IAS

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Weekly Current Affairs

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Issues of the Week

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GS Paper-1

Indian Heritage and Culture, History and Geography of the World and Society

1. Mongolian Kanjur

Why in News?

- ◆ The Ministry of Culture has taken up the project of reprinting of 108 volumes of Mongolian Kanjur under the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM).

Introduction

- ◆ The Ministry of Culture is planning to reprint 108 volumes of Mongolian Kanjur under the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) by March 2022 which would help in boosting bilateral ties between India and Mongolia.
- ◆ This work is being carried out under the supervision of eminent Scholar Prof. Lokesh Chandra.
- ◆ Every volume will have contents indicating the original title of the sutra in Mongolian.
- ◆ The first set of five volumes of Mongolian Kanjur published under the NMM was presented to the President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind on the occasion of Guru Purnima, also known as Dharma Chakra Day, on 4th July 2020.
- ◆ A set was then handed over to His Excellency Mr. Gonching Ganbold, Ambassador of Mongolia to India.

National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)

- ◆ Launched in February 2003, the NMM has the mandate of documenting, conserving and disseminating the knowledge in manuscripts.
- ◆ It aims to publish rare and unpublished manuscripts for researchers, scholars and the general public.
- ◆ It works under Ministry of Culture, Government of India

About Mongolian Kanjur

- ◆ Mongolian Kanjur, the Buddhist canonical text in 108 volumes is considered to be the most important religious text in Mongolia.
- ◆ In the Mongolian language 'Kanjur' means 'Concise Orders'- the words of Lord Buddha in particular.
- ◆ It is held in high esteem by the Mongolian Buddhists and they worship the Kanjur at temples and recite the lines of Kanjur in daily life as a sacred ritual.
- ◆ The Kanjur are kept almost in every monastery in Mongolia.
- ◆ Mongolian Kanjur has been translated from Tibetan.

- ◆ The language of the Kanjur is Classical Mongolian.
- ◆ The Mongolian Kanjur is a source of providing a cultural identity to Mongolia.

India and Mongolia

- ◆ Historical interaction between India and Mongolia goes back centuries.
- ◆ Buddhism was carried to Mongolia by Indian cultural and religious ambassadors during the early Christian era.
- ◆ As a result, today, Buddhists form the single largest religious denomination in Mongolia.
- ◆ India established formal diplomatic relations with Mongolia in 1955.
- ◆ Since then, the overwhelming relationship between both the countries has now reached a new height.
- ◆ Now, the publication of Mongolian Kanjur by the Government of India for the Government of Mongolia will act as a symbol of cultural symphony between India and Mongolia and will contribute to furtherance of bilateral relations during the coming years.

2. Talkative Dinosaur found in Mexico

Why in News?

- ◆ The Palaeontologists recently identified a new species of dinosaur called the Talkative Dinosaur in the northern Mexico.

Key Points

- ◆ The specimen, which has been named Tlatolophus galorum, is thought to have died around 72 million years ago

in what is now Mexico's northern state of Coahuila.

- ◆ The name Tlatolophus is derived from tlahtolli—which means word in the indigenous Nahuatl language—and lophus, meaning crest in Greek.
- ◆ A new species of dinosaur is believed to have been "very communicative" and used low-frequency sounds like elephants to talk to each other.

- ◆ These "peaceful, but talkative" dinosaurs could also have had the ability to emit loud sounds to scare off predators.
- ◆ As excavations continued, scientists eventually discovered 80 per cent of its skull, its 1.32-meter crest and bones such as its femur and shoulder, which allowed researchers to finally realize this year that they had a new species of dinosaur on their hands.

3. Cyclone 'Tauktae'

Why in News?

- ◆ A 'very severe' category Cyclone Tauktae, has made landfall in Gujarat recently.
- ◆ Tauktae is the strongest cyclone to strike the coast of Gujarat since 1998.
- ◆ The cyclone has also left a trail of destruction as it brushed past the coastal states of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra.

About Tauktae

- ◆ Cyclone Tauktae has been named by Myanmar.
- ◆ The word 'Tauktae' (pronounced as Tau'te) means a particular type of gecko or a distinctively vocal lizard, in the Burmese language.

What is a Tropical Cyclone?

- ◆ A tropical cyclone is an intense circular storm that originates over warm tropical oceans and is characterised by low atmospheric pressure, strong winds followed by heavy rainfall. Tropical cyclones always have an eye, a central region of clear skies and warm temperatures.



Naming of Cyclone

- ◆ Tropical cyclones are officially named by one of its warning centres spread across the globe under the aegis of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).
- ◆ The World Meteorological Organisation and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UN ESCAP) led Panel on Tropical Cyclones – a global body which also includes regional specialised meteorological centres (RSMC) as well as tropical cyclone warning centres -- prepares the names of the cyclones.
- ◆ Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) is among six RSMCs in the

world, is mandated to issue advisories and name tropical cyclones in the north Indian Ocean region.

- ◆ The panel comprising 13 countries, including India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Maldives, Oman, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, name cyclones in the region.
- ◆ In 2020, a new list of names was released that had 169 names of cyclones, having 13 suggested names each from 13 countries.

Name of the Next Cyclones

- ◆ The next cyclone in the region will be called 'Yaas', a name given by Oman, while the one after that will be called 'Gulab' as recommended by Pakistan.

4. China's Population Growth is slowing: Census Data

Why in News?

- ◆ According to the official census data, in the decade up to 2020, China's population grew at its slowest rate since the 1950s.
- ◆ China's slowing population growth is part of a trend seen in many countries in Asia and the West.
- ◆ Last year, South Korea saw its population decline for the first time in history. In the United States too, the birth rate has dropped to 1.6, the lowest on record.
- ◆ It now stands at 141.2 crore people, with the rate of growth falling for the fourth consecutive year.
- ◆ As per the 2020 national census, China's seventh since 1953, the country's population has grown from 134 crore in 2010 by 5.34 per cent over the past decade.
- ◆ The rate of population growth, however, has been steadily falling. Annually, the country grew 0.53 per cent in the last 10 years, down from 0.57 per cent between 2000 and 2010, and was the slowest of any decade since the 1950s.
- ◆ The country's working population — between ages 15 and 59 — is now 89.43 crore or 63.35 per cent of the total, down by 6.79 per cent from 2010. The number of people above age 60 has also gone up to 26.4 crore or 18.7 per cent of the population, up 5.44 per cent from the last census.
- ◆ A ray of hope, though, is the greater proportion of children 14 years or younger, who are now 25.38 crore or 17.95 per cent of the population, up by 1.35 per cent from 2010.
- ◆ This rise has been credited to China relaxing its strict one-child policy in 2016 and allowing two children per family.
- ◆ The Chinese government in November said it expects the population to peak in 2027, and that the annual gap between the number of newborns and number of deaths will shrink to around 10 lakh over the next five years.
- ◆ However, the United Nations (UN) has estimated that the population will begin falling after 2030.

Key Points

- ◆ Last year, 1.2 crore babies were born in China, down from 1.465 crore in 2019 — a fall of 18 per cent in one year.
- ◆ The country's fertility rate has dropped to 1.3, far below the replacement level of 2.1 required for a generation to have enough children to replace it.

Related Concerns

- ◆ When the young population in a country declines, it creates labour shortages, which have a major detrimental impact on the economy.
- ◆ More older people also means that demands for healthcare and pensions can soar, burdening the country's social spending system further when fewer people are working and contributing to it.
- ◆ In an effort to tide over this challenge, the Chinese government announced this year that it would increase the retirement age by a few months every year.

GS Paper-2

Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations

1. Article 311 of the Indian Constitution

Why in News?

- Recently, a suspended police officer was dismissed from service by Mumbai Police Commissioner under Article 311 (2)(b) of the Indian Constitution without a departmental enquiry (DE).

What is Article 311?

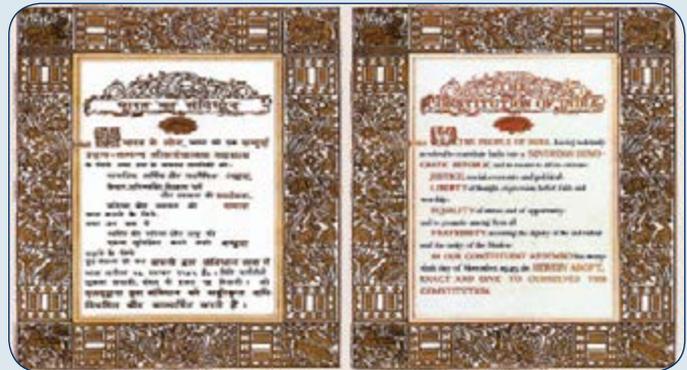
- While Article 311 is meant to act as a safeguard for civil servants that gives them a chance to respond to the charges in an enquiry so that he/she is not arbitrarily dismissed from service.
- The article also provides exceptions to these safeguards under sub-clause 2 provision b.
- It states “when an authority empowered to dismiss or remove a person or to reduce him in rank is satisfied that for some reason, to be recorded by that authority in writing, it is not reasonably practicable to hold such enquiry”.

Safeguards provided by the Article 311

- Article 311 says that no government employee either of an all India

service or a state government shall be dismissed or removed by an authority subordinate to the one that appointed him/her.

- Section 2 of the article says that no civil servant shall be dismissed or removed or reduced in rank except after an inquiry in which s/he has been informed of the charges and given a reasonable opportunity of being heard in respect of those charges.
- As per Article 311 sub-clause 2 provision a, if a government employee is convicted in a criminal case, he can be dismissed without DE.
- Apart from this, under 311 (2) (c), a government employee can be dismissed when the President or the Governor, as the case may be, is satisfied that in the interest of the security of state it is not expedient to hold such an enquiry, the employee can be dismissed without DE.



Other Cases

- The Jammu & Kashmir administration recently set up a Special Task Force (STF) to “scrutinise cases of employees suspected of activities requiring action under article 311(2) (c).
- Three government employees, including two teachers, have already been fired. The move has been opposed by rights activists.

Options for Government Employees

- The government employee dismissed under these provisions can approach either tribunals like the state administrative tribunal – in Maharashtra’s officer case it would be the Maharashtra Administrative Tribunal — or Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) or the courts.

2. Child Marriages during Corona Pandemic

Why in News?

- Recently, child right activists of Karnataka have raised the issue of child marriages in corona pandemic.
- According to the reports of the Childline, a total of 2,180 child marriage cases were reported in Karnataka from April 2020 to January 2021.

Key Points

- Child Marriage is defined as a marriage of a girl or boy before the age of 18 and refers to both formal marriages and informal unions in which children under the age of 18 live with a partner as if married.
- As per the study of Lancet, around 2.5 million more girls (below the age of 18) around the world are at risk of marriage in the next 5 years because of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- In another study of United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), ten million additional child marriages may occur before the end of the decade.
- At least 1.5 million girls under 18 get married in India, which makes it home to the largest number of child brides in the world - accounting for a third of the global total.

In South Asia

- South Asia has the highest rates of child marriage in the world.
- India has the largest number of brides in the world – one-third of the global total.
- Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriage in Asia (the fourth highest rate in the world).



- Nepal has also one the highest rates of child marriage in Asia for both boys and girls.

Reason behind

- The COVID-19 pandemic is raising the risk of child marriage through five main pathways:

◆ Interrupted education:

- School closures increase marriage risk by 25% per year
- Closures result in a loss of 0.6 learning adjusted years of schooling per child
- Some girls (2%) will never return to school, and will continue to face a higher marriage risk throughout childhood.

◆ Economic Shocks

- In countries where bride price is common, loss of household income increases the probability of marriage by 3%.
- In countries where dowry is common, the impact ranges from a decreased risk of 4% to an increased risk of 1%.

◆ Disruptions to Programmes and Services

- Delayed programmes to prevent child marriage are estimated to

result in a oneyear loss of gains from such programmes.

- Mobilization of effective programming, widely applied, could reduce risk by 33% in the mitigation scenario.

◆ Pregnancy

- The increased risk of marriage due to pregnancy is accounted for through the impact of school closure and dropout

◆ Death of a Parent

- Death of a parent is expected to have little direct impact on the risk of child marriage, largely due to the relative rarity of death among age groups that are most likely to be parents.

◆ Child Marriage and the Global Development Agenda

- The importance of ending child marriage has been recognized by the international community through its inclusion in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Target 5.3 seeks to end child, early and forced marriage by 2030.
- Child marriage also hinders the realization of many other SDGs, especially those related to education and health.

3. Demand for Independent Collegium for Election Commission

Why in News?

- ◆ Recently, a petition was filed in the Supreme Court (SC) seeking the constitution of an independent collegium to appoint members of the Election Commission (ECI).

Need

- ◆ The Election Commission is not only responsible for conducting free and fair elections, but it also renders a quasi judicial function between the various political parties including the ruling government and other parties.
- ◆ In such circumstances the Executive cannot be the sole participant in the appointment of members of the Election Commission as it gives unfettered discretion to the ruling party to choose someone whose loyalty to it is ensured and thereby renders the selection process vulnerable to manipulation.

Previous Recommendations

- ◆ The recommendation to have a neutral collegium to fill up vacancies in the Election Commission have been given by several expert committees, commissions from 1975.

- ◆ The recommendation was also part of the Law Commission in its 255th report in March 2015.
- ◆ In 2015, 255th Law Commission Report recommended that the appointment of all the Election Commissioner should be made by the President in consultation with a three-member collegium or selection committee, consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition of the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India.
- ◆ In 2007, 4th Report of the Second Administrative Reform Commission also recommended for the constitution of a neutral and independent collegium headed by the Prime Minister with the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, the Law Minister and the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha as its members for making recommendations for consideration of the President for appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners.
- ◆ Similarly, Dr. Dinesh Goswami Committee in its Report of May 1990 recommended for the effective

consultation with neutral authorities like Chief Justice of India and the Leader of the Opposition for the appointment in Election Commission.

- ◆ Justice Tarkunde Committee in its Report of 1975 also recommended that the members of Election Commission should be appointed by the President on the advice of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India.

Present System

- ◆ Article 324(2) states that the President shall, with aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, appoint Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs), till Parliament enacts a law fixing the criteria for selection, conditions of service and tenure.
- ◆ Each of them holds their offices for a period of 6 years or up to the age of 65 years, whichever comes first.
- ◆ The only way a Chief Election Commissioner can be removed from office is upon an order of the President supported by the Parliament.

GS Paper-3

Technology, Economic Development, Biodiversity, Environment, Security and Disaster Management

1. Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22

Why in News?

- ◆ The Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, has decided to issue Sovereign Gold Bonds.
- ◆ The Sovereign Gold Bonds will be issued in six tranches from May 2021 to September 2021.

What is Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme?

- ◆ The scheme was launched in November 2015 with an objective to reduce the demand for physical gold and shift a part of the domestic savings -- used for the purchase of gold -- into financial savings.
- ◆ In other words, it offers an alternative to holding gold in physical form.
- ◆ These bonds are issued by Government of India in the form of Government of India Stock in accordance with Section 3 of the Government Securities Act, 2006 (GS Act 2006).

Key Points of the Scheme

- ◆ The Bonds will be sold through Scheduled Commercial banks (except Small Finance Banks and Payment



Banks), Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post offices, and recognised stock exchanges viz., National Stock Exchange of India Limited and Bombay Stock Exchange Limited.

- ◆ The bonds are restricted for sale to resident individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), trusts, universities and charitable institutions.
- ◆ Gold bond prices are linked to the price of gold of 999 purity (24 carats) published by India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA), Mumbai.
- ◆ The bonds will be denominated in multiples of gram(s) of gold with a

basic unit of 1 gram. The tenor of the bond will be for a period of 8 years with exit option after 5th year to be exercised on the next interest payment dates.

- ◆ Minimum permissible investment is 1 gram of gold. The maximum limit of subscription is 4 kg for individual, 4 kg for HUF and 20 Kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal (April-March).
- ◆ Bonds can be used as collateral for loans. The loan-to-value (LTV) ratio is to be set equal to the ordinary gold loan mandated by the Reserve Bank from time to time.

2. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture

Why 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), a centrally sponsored scheme.

About 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.
- ◆ Under MIDH, Government of India 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%.

Role of MIDH

- ◆ MIDH has played a significant role in increasing the area under horticulture crops. Area and production during the years 2014 – 15 to 2019 – 20 has increased by 9% and 14% respectively.
- ◆ The mission has also boosted best practices to be followed in farms which have significantly improved the



- quality of produce and productivity of farmland.
- ◆ The initiative of MIDH has not only resulted in India's self-sufficiency in the horticulture sector but also contributed towards achieving sustainable development goals of zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, no poverty, gender equality etc.

Challenges

- ◆ The sector is still facing a lot of challenges in terms of high post-harvest loss and gaps in post-harvest management and supply chain infrastructure.

Scope

- ◆ There is tremendous scope for enhancing the productivity of Indian horticulture which is imperative

- to cater to the country's estimated demand of 650 Million MT of fruits and vegetables by the year 2050.
- ◆ Some of the new initiatives like focus on planting material production, cluster development programme, credit push through Agri Infra Fund, formation and promotion of FPOs are the right steps in this direction.

Sub Schemes

- ◆ National Horticulture Mission (NHM)
- ◆ Horticulture Mission for North East & Himalayan States (HMNEH)
- ◆ National Bamboo Mission (NBM)
- ◆ National Horticulture Board (NHB)
- ◆ Coconut Development Board (CDB)
- ◆ Central Institute for Horticulture (CIH)

3. Beema Bamboo

Why in News?

- ◆ The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has designed an ‘oxygen park’ within its premises at Coimbatore with Beema Bamboo.

What is Beema Bamboo?

- ◆ Beema or Beema Bamboo has been developed by N Bharathi of Growmore Biotech Ltd, the agri-technology company based at Hosur, Tamil Nadu. This clone is thorn-less and sterile.
- ◆ Bheema Bamboo is a superior clone, selected from Bambusa balcooa, a higher biomass yielding bamboo species. This bamboo clone has been developed by the conventional breeding method.
- ◆ This species is considered to be one of the fastest-growing plants.
- ◆ It grows one-and-a-half feet per day under tropical conditions. It is said to

be the best ‘carbon sink’ to mitigate carbon dioxide emissions.

- ◆ A fully-grown bamboo tree may generate over 300 kilograms of oxygen annually and it may be sufficient for one person for one year.
- ◆ A four-year-old bamboo may absorb over 400 kg of carbon dioxide per annum from the surrounding areas.
- ◆ Bamboo raised on one acre can sequester 80 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

Significance

- ◆ As it is sterile, this bamboo does not produce any seed and does not die also for several hundred years and keeps growing without death. As a result, this particular bamboo species can be able to establish permanent green cover.
- ◆ Since the plants are produced through tissue culture, the culms grow almost

solid and adapt to different soil and climatic conditions. After every harvest cycle, it re-grows and does not require replanting for decades.

- ◆ A culm is the hollow stem of a grass or cereal plant, especially that bearing the flower.
- ◆ As its rhizome and root formation provide a strong foundation, the plant becomes robust against natural forces and plays a major role in mitigating global warming and climate change.
- ◆ The bamboo’s calorific value is equal to that of coal. Cement industries are buying this bamboo species for their boilers.
- ◆ Bamboo fibre is used by the textile industry for making fabric and garments.
- ◆ The Beema Bamboo can be an excellent choice for making the earth greener and mitigating climate change.

4. Red-eared Slider Turtle

Why in News?

- ◆ According to the researchers, a ‘cute’ American turtle popular as a pet is threatening to invade the natural water bodies across the Northeast.

About Turtle

- ◆ The red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) derives its name from red stripes around the part where its ears would be and from its ability to slide quickly off any surface into the water.
- ◆ Native to the U.S. and northern Mexico, this turtle is an extremely

popular pet due to its small size, easy maintenance, and relatively low cost.

Concerns

- ◆ The red-eared slider turtles are considered a major threat to native turtle specials, as they mature fast, grow larger, and produce more offspring, and are very aggressive.
- ◆ They can out-compete native turtles for food, nestling, and basking sites.
- ◆ The red-eared slider presents a Catch-22 situation.
- ◆ People who keep it as pets become sensitive about turtle conservation

but endanger the local ecosystem, probably unknowingly, by releasing them in natural water bodies after they outgrow an aquarium, tank or pool at home.

- ◆ As they eat plants and animals, they can finish off a wide range of aquatic species, including fish and rare frogs. Studies show that they can also transfer diseases and parasites to native reptile species.
- ◆ They can also impact human health when these species may accumulate toxins in their tissues which pass on with the food chain upto humans.

5. China's Zhurong Rover

Why in News?

- ◆ China's uncrewed 'Tianwen-1' spacecraft landed safely on the surface of Mars, making the country only the second in the world to send a rover to explore the mysterious Red Planet.

Background

- ◆ 'Tianwen-1' was launched in July 2020.
- ◆ It consists of an orbiter, a lander and a golf cart-sized rover called 'Zhurong', after an ancient fire god from Chinese folk tales.
- ◆ The Chinese spacecraft landed on a large plain located in the northern hemisphere of Mars, known as Utopia Planitia.
- ◆ The mission aims to make full use of the window that emerges once every two years, when Earth and Mars are closest together during their journey around the Sun.

About Rover

- ◆ The 'Zhurong' rover will not immediately be offloaded from the lander. The probe will first survey the Utopia plane and take several high-resolution images to locate the safest spot to put the rover down.
- ◆ If 'Zhurong' is deployed without a hitch, China will become the first country to successfully orbit, land and offload a rover during its maiden Mars mission.
- ◆ The Chinese rover is powered by retractable solar panels and fitted with seven primary instruments — cameras, ground-penetrating radar, a magnetic field detector and a weather station.
- ◆ The purpose of the radar is to look for signs of ancient life as well as subsurface water.

Other Attempts

- ◆ Apart from China, only the United States has been able to deploy rovers to study the surface of the Red Planet.
- ◆ The first successful landing was made by NASA in July 1976, when the Viking 1 rover touched down on Mars. Shortly after that, Viking 2 arrived on the Red Planet.
- ◆ In the decades that followed, the US successfully sent the Opportunity and Spirit rovers to explore Mars.
- ◆ In 1971, the former Soviet Union managed to launch a Mars probe, however, communication was lost within seconds of it landing.
- ◆ Most recently, in February this year, NASA's Perseverance rover landed at the Jezero Crater on the Red Planet, after which it resumed work to look for signs of past life.

6. New Species of Skink

Why in News?

- ◆ Recently, a group of herpetologists has found a new species of skink, an Asian gracile skink, from the Anaikatti hills in Coimbatore.

About the Species

- ◆ Named *Subdoluseps nilgiriensis*, after the Nilgiris, the reptile has a slender body of just about 7 cm and is sandy brown in colour. Based on genetic studies, the team writes the new species is closely related to *Subdoluseps pruthi* that is found in parts of the Eastern Ghats.
- ◆ This species is only the third skink species discovered from mainland India in the last millennium.

- ◆ Skinks are non-venomous, their inconspicuous limbs make them resemble snakes.
- ◆ Most skinks are diurnal and are usually secretive in their habits. Because of their elusiveness, not much is known about their natural and evolutionary history. Therefore, most of the species are placed under the data-deficient category.
- ◆ Though skinks are non-venomous, they resemble snakes because of the often-inconspicuous limbs and the way they move on land. Such resemblance has led to confusion often resulting in humans killing this lowly harmless creature.

- ◆ Researchers are yet to study the breeding and feeding habits of this new species. Other skinks are known to feed insects such as termites, crickets and small spiders, and we assume our new species has a similar diet.

Threats

- ◆ *Subdoluseps nilgiriensis* is currently considered a vulnerable species as there are potential threats from seasonal forest fires, housing constructions and brick kiln industries in the area.
- ◆ Rapid urbanisation, which has increased the road networks in the area, has also threatened the small geographical range of the species.

7. Wholesale Price Index for April 2021

Why in News?

- ◆ The Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has released index numbers of Wholesale Price in India for the month of April, 2021.

Key Points

- ◆ The wholesale inflation across the country rose to an all-time high of 10.49 per cent in April.
- ◆ The wholesale price index (WPI) grew 7.39 per cent during the month of March, while the WPI for February was revised to 4.83 per cent from 4.17 per cent.
- ◆ The WPI in April 2020 was at (-)1.57 per cent.
- ◆ The annual rate of inflation in April 2021 is high primarily because of rise in prices of crude petroleum, mineral oils viz petrol, diesel etc, and

manufactured products as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year.

- ◆ The food articles segment witnessed a 4.92 per cent rise in April led by a rise in pulses, fruits, egg, meat and fish prices. In the month prior to that, this was 3.24 per cent.
- ◆ Vegetable prices contracted (-) 9.03 per cent in April, against (-) 5.19 per cent in March. Pulses prices grew 10.74 per cent last month, while that of fruits rose 27.43 per cent. Eggs, meat and fish prices rose 10.88 per cent in April.
- ◆ The fuel and power segment rose a whopping 20.94 per cent in April with petrol prices jumping by 42.37 per cent, HSD (High-Speed Diesel) gaining by 33.82 per cent and LPG prices rising by 20.34 per cent.
- ◆ The manufactured products segment also climbed 9.01 per cent last month

led by a 43.28 per cent jump in vegetable and animal oils and fats.

About WPI

- ◆ WPI measures the changes in the prices of goods sold and traded in bulk by wholesale businesses to other businesses.
- ◆ The numbers are released by the Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- ◆ It is the most widely used inflation indicator in India.
- ◆ The base year of WPI has been revised from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in 2017.
- ◆ While WPI keeps track of the wholesale price of goods, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the average price that households pay for a basket of different goods and services.

8. Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools

Why in News?

- ◆ With a vision to build an inclusive, skills-based economy, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MTA) has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Microsoft to support the digital transformation of schools such as Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) and Ashram Schools, among others under the Ministry.

Key Highlights

- ◆ Under affirmative action initiative, Microsoft will make AI curriculum available to tribal students in both English and Hindi at all EMRS schools

under the Ministry to skill educators and students in next-generation technologies including Artificial Intelligence.

- ◆ Under this program in the first phase, 250 EMRS schools have been adopted by Microsoft out of which 50 EMRS schools will be given intensive training and 500 master trainers would be trained in the first phase.
- ◆ Teachers across states in India will be trained in a phased manner for using productivity technologies like Office 365 and AI applications in teaching.

- ◆ The program will also offer opportunities for teachers to earn professional e-badges and e-certificates from the Microsoft Education Centre.
- ◆ Under the partnership, students from schools under the Ministry will be mentored on projects that involve AI applications for societal good and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Expected Benefits

- ◆ This program will ensure that tribal students get chance to change their future, their environment, their village, and overall community.

- ◆ This program will prove beneficial in terms of readiness, preparedness of our students at various international forums.

About EMRS

- ◆ EMRS started in the year 1997-98 to impart quality education to Schedule Tribes (ST) children in remote areas.
- ◆ EMRS are being set up by grants provided under Article 275(1) of the

Indian Constitution and 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.

About Ashram Schools

- ◆ Ashram schools are residential schools, in which free boarding and

lodging along with other facilities and incentives are provided to the students.

- ◆ Apart from formal education, there is emphasis put upon physical activities, meditation, sight-seeing, play, sports, games, and other.
- ◆ The Ministry of Tribal Affairs provides construction costs and the State Government is responsible for running and overall maintenance of these Ashram schools including selection of medium of instruction.



Persons of the Week

Rafael Nadal



Andrea Meza



**Dr. Shakuntala
Haraksingh Thilsted**



Nuklu Phom



Shaheed Sukhdev



Bhavani Devi



Neera Tanden



Rafael Nadal

- ◆ Rafael Nadal has won 10th Italian Open in 2021. Nadal has now won at least 10 titles at 4 different tournaments, including Roland Garros (11 in Monte Carlo, 12 in Barcelona and 13 in Paris). With the 10th Italian

Open, Nadal also equalled Djokovic's record for the most number of Masters 1000 titles. The two gladiators of the sport have 36 Masters 1000 titles each while Roger Federer is in the third spot with 28 wins.



Andrea Meza

- ◆ Andrea Meza from Mexico has been crowned Miss Universe 2020. Miss Brazil, Julia Gama, was the runner-up while Miss Peru, Janick Maceta Del Castillo, secured the third position, among 73 other women representing different countries.
- ◆ Meza, a software engineer, clinched the title at the pageant that was held after a gap of a year due to covid-19.

She was presented the crown by her predecessor Miss Universe 2019 Zozibini Tunzi at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood, Florida, United States.

- ◆ India was represented by Adline Castelino, a model and beauty pageant titleholder, and came fourth. She was crowned as Miss Diva Universe 2020.



Dr. Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted

- ◆ Dr. Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted, a global nutrition expert of Indian descent has won the prestigious 2021 World Food Prize for her groundbreaking research in developing holistic, nutrition-sensitive approaches to aquaculture and food systems.
- ◆ Thilsted's trailblazing research on small native fish species in Bangladesh led to the development of nutrition-

sensitive approaches to aquatic food systems at all levels, from the farm to food processing to final consumers, resulting in improved diets for millions of the most vulnerable people in Asia and Africa.

- ◆ Thilsted, who is a native of Trinidad and Tobago and a citizen of Denmark, was born in 1949 in the Caribbean island of Trinidad in the small village of Reform.



Nuklu Phom

- ◆ A church worker from Nagaland has won the Whitley Award for 2021, also known as the 'Green Oscar', for his efforts to create a network of community-owned forests in the state and protect the rare Amur falcon.
- ◆ Nuklu Phom is the only Indian to win the prestigious award — awarded annually to individuals from the Global South by UK-based

charity the Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN)—this year.

- ◆ When Phom embarked on his conservation efforts in 2007, he formed a team called Lemsachenlok, a community development society, to augment the initiative.
- ◆ The Lemsachenlok was recognised by the United Nations Environment Programme in 2015 for its efforts



towards conserving the Amur falcon; it was a recipient of the India Biodiversity Award in 2018; and a Governor's Gold Medal Award in 2021.

Shaheed Sukhdev

- ◆ The 114th birth anniversary of Shaheed Sukhdev Thapar was celebrated at his birthplace in Mohalla Naughara in Ludhiana on May 15. His full name is Sukhdev Thapar and he was born on 15th May, 1907.
- ◆ Sukhdev Thapar was a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), and organized revolutionary cells in Punjab and other areas of North India.
- ◆ Sukhdev was a famous Indian revolutionary who played a major role in the India's struggle for Independence. He is amongst those great Indian freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of their country.
- ◆ On 23rd March, 1931, the three brave revolutionaries, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar and Shivaram Rajguru were hanged, whilst their



bodies were secretly cremated on the banks of the River Sutlej.

Bhavani Devi

- ◆ Bhavani Devi has become the first ever Indian fencer to qualify for the Olympics. The sabre fencer secured an Olympic spot due to events in the ongoing Fencing World Cup. In July 2021, she will represent India at the Tokyo Olympic games.
- ◆ The Tamil Nadu fencer competes in the sabre category. The eight-time national champion had failed to qualify for the Rio Olympics.
- ◆ The Tokyo Olympics scheduled to be held in 2020 were put off owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and are scheduled to take place from July 23 to August 8 this year.



Neera Tanden

- ◆ Indian-American Neera Tanden has been appointed senior adviser to US President Joe Biden. Tanden is currently the president and CEO of a progressive think-tank, Center for American Progress (CAP).
- ◆ She has been entrusted with two tasks — launch a review of the US Digital Service, and plan contingencies that could result from the Supreme Court's consideration of Republican lawsuits seeking to strike down the Affordable Care Act.
- ◆ Tanden was the director of domestic policy for the Obama-Biden presidential campaign, where she managed all domestic policy proposals. Tanden also served as policy director for Hillary Clinton's first presidential campaign.



Places of the Week

Farzad-B Gas Field



**Winchcombe,
United Kingdom**



Nigeria



**Democratic Republic
of Congo**



Southern Sulawesi



Colombo Port City

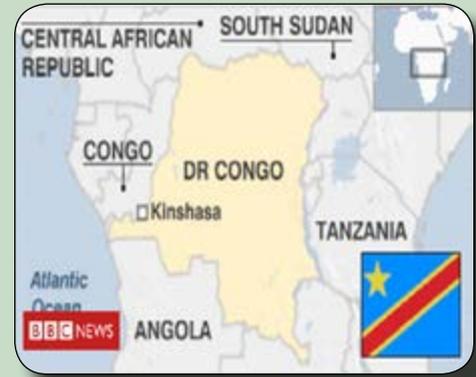


Antarctica Iceberg



Democratic Republic of Congo

- ◆ Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi has declared a state of siege over the worsening violence in the eastern provinces of Ituri and North Kivu that has killed hundreds this year and displaced more than 1.5 million.
- ◆ A surge in attacks by armed militias and inter-communal violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo have killed over 300 people since the start of the year as government troops and U.N. peacekeepers struggle to stabilize the mineral-rich territory.
- ◆ A Ugandan insurgent faction active in eastern Congo since the 1990s called the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) is believed to be responsible for much of the recent bloodshed.
- ◆ According to the United Nations (UN), it has committed a spate of brutal reprisal attacks on civilians since the army began operations against it in late



2019, killing around 850 people last year.

Nigeria

- ◆ Researchers have discovered a 3,500 year-old honeypot from Africa, presenting the oldest direct evidence for honey collection in the continent.
- ◆ Archaeologists from the Goethe University in Germany in cooperation with chemists at the University of Bristol in the UK identified beeswax residues in 3,500 year-old potsherds of the Nok culture.
- ◆ The Nok culture in central Nigeria dates between 1,500 BCE and the beginning of the Common Era and is known particularly for its elaborate terracotta sculptures -- representatives of the oldest figurative art in Africa.
- ◆ Pottery is one of the best ways to learn about the Nok people and their diet, as the region's soil is so acidic that bones



and other organic remains typically aren't preserved.

Southern Sulawesi

- ◆ Researchers have reported that Pleistocene-era rock paintings dating back to 45,000-20,000 years ago in cave sites in southern Sulawesi, on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, are weathering at an alarming rate due to environmental degradation.
- ◆ A team of Australian and Indonesian archaeological scientists, conservation specialists, and heritage managers examined 11 caves and rock-shelters in the Maros-Pangkep region in Sulawesi.
- ◆ The artwork in the area includes what is believed to be the world's oldest hand stencil (almost 40,000 years ago), created by pressing the hand on a cave wall, and spraying wet red-mulberry pigments over it.
- ◆ A nearby cave features the world's oldest depiction of an animal, a warty pig painted on the wall 45,500 years ago.



- ◆ The cave art of Sulawesi is much older than the prehistoric cave art of Europe.

Farzad-B Gas Field

- ◆ State-owned ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) lost development rights for the Farzad-B giant gas field in Iran to Iranian Petropars Group.
- ◆ OVL owns 40 per cent participating interest (PI) in the block in which gas discovery was first made by a consortium led by Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC).
- ◆ OVL and its partners had offered to invest up to \$11 billion for the development of the discovery, which was later named Farzad-B.
- ◆ The 3,500 square kilometer Farsi block sits in a water depth of 20-90 metres on the Iranian side of the Persian Gulf.
- ◆ The Farzad B gas field holds 23 trillion cubic feet of in-place reserves, of which about 60% is recoverable. It



also holds gas condensates of about 5,000 barrels per billion cubic feet of gas.

Colombo Port City

- ◆ The Sri Lankan Parliament has passed a controversial Bill on laws governing the China-backed Colombo Port city.
- ◆ The Bill officially has declared 269 hectares of land reclaimed from the ocean and annexed to the city of Colombo as the country's first special economic zone (SEZ) for services-oriented industries.
- ◆ The \$1.4 billion-Colombo Port City, was launched in 2014 during the previous term of the Rajapaksa government, when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the island nation.
- ◆ The mega infrastructure project is currently being built on land reclaimed alongside Colombo's iconic sea front,



while environmentalists and fisher folk opposed the move.

Winchcombe, United Kingdom

- ◆ A piece of the Winchcombe meteorite that touched down in the town of Winchcombe in Gloucestershire in the UK in February 2021 will be displayed at the National History Museum.
- ◆ Winchcombe is also significant because it is the meteorite to have fallen and recovered from the UK in about 30 years. Further, this type of meteorite is known as a carbonaceous meteorite and out of about 65,000 known meteorite types, only about 1,000 are of this particular type.
- ◆ Meteoroids are objects in space that range in size from dust grains to small asteroids. But when meteoroids enter the Earth's atmosphere they are called meteors. But if a meteoroid enters



the Earth's atmosphere and hits the ground, it is called a meteorite.

Antarctica Iceberg

- ◆ A giant slab of ice bigger than the Spanish island of Majorca has sheared off from the frozen edge of Antarctica into the Weddell Sea, becoming the largest iceberg afloat in the world.
- ◆ The newly calved berg, designated A-76 by scientists, was spotted in recent satellite images captured by the Copernicus Sentinel-1 mission.
- ◆ Its surface area spans 4,320 square km (1,668 square miles) and measures 175 km (106 miles) long by 25 km (15 miles) wide. By comparison, Spain's tourist island of Majorca in the Mediterranean occupies 3,640 square km (1,405 square miles).
- ◆ The U.S. state of Rhode Island is smaller still, with a land mass of just 2,678 square km (1,034 square miles).
- ◆ Some ice shelves along the Antarctic



peninsula, farther from the South Pole, have undergone rapid disintegration in recent years, a phenomenon scientists believe may be related to global warming.

International/National Days of the Week

World Agri-Tourism Day 2021



International Day of Families



International Day of Living Together in Peace 2021



International Day of Light 2021



World Hypertension Day 2021



World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2021



6th UN Global Road Safety Week 2021



1. International Day of Families

- ◆ International Day of Families is annually observed by the United Nations across the world on May 15. The day is commemorated to highlight the important affairs central to the welfare of families, such as health, education, gender equality, rights for children, and social inclusion among others.
- ◆ The theme for International Day of Families 2021 is 'Families and new technologies. It focuses on the impact of new technologies on the well-being of families.
- ◆ United Nations is preparing for the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2024, which aims to raise awareness of megatrends and responsive family-oriented policies to tackle their effects.
- ◆ On September 25, 2015, the 193 member states of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a set of 17 goals aiming towards eliminating poverty, discrimination, abuse, and preventable deaths, addressing



environmental destruction, and usher in an era of development for all people.

2. International Day of Living Together in Peace 2021

- ◆ International Day of Living Together in Peace is observed every year on May 16. The UN General-Assembly, declared 16 May the International Day of Living Together in Peace, as a means of regularly mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding and solidarity.
- ◆ The Day aims to uphold the desire to live and act together, united in differences and diversity, in order to build a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony.
- ◆ The United Nations General Assembly decided to celebrate 16th May as the International Day of Living Together in Peace on 8th December 2017.



3. International Day of Light 2021

- ◆ The International Day of Light is celebrated on 16 May each year, the anniversary of the first successful operation of the laser in 1960 by physicist and engineer, Theodore Maiman.
- ◆ This day is a call to strengthen scientific cooperation and harness its potential to foster peace and sustainable development.
- ◆ The message of the International Day of Light 2021 — Trust Science — encourages both scientists and

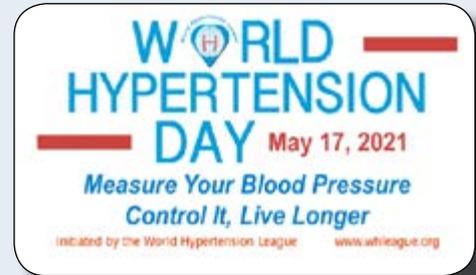


the public alike to sign and support a declaration affirming their trust in

science and the importance of public confidence in the scientific process.

4. World Hypertension Day 2021

- World Hypertension Day 2021 is observed every year on May 17. This year's theme is "Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer", focusing on combatting low awareness rates worldwide, especially in low to middle income areas, and accurate blood pressure measurement methods.
- The world started observing this day from 14 May, 2005 when it was launched. The World Hypertension League dedicated 17 May as World Hypertension Day.



5. World Telecommunication and Information Society Day 2021

- World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is observed every year on May 17.
- The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the critical role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and brought to the fore startling digital inequalities between and within countries.
- This year it has come together, throwing light on the urgency of accelerating digital transformation and advancing the goals of the Connect 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.
- The theme for this year is "Accelerating Digital Transformation in challenging times", throughout the year with national, regional, and international initiatives to accelerate digital transformation.



6. 6th UN Global Road Safety Week 2021

- "Streets for Life" is the slogan chosen for the 6th United Nations (UN) Global Traffic Safety Week, which this year is celebrated between 17 and 23 May, to call for 30 km/h (20 mph) speed limits to be the norm for cities, towns and villages worldwide.
- The UN General Assembly mandated World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UN regional commissions to plan and host periodic UN Global Road Safety Weeks. Held since 2007, the #Love30 campaign of the 6th UN Global Road Safety Week.
- The Week also launched the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 and its Global Plan, which will align with the Stockholm Declaration, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to road safety and calls for improvements ongoing design of roads and vehicles; improving laws



and law enforcement on behavioral risks, such as speeding and alcohol and driving; and providing timely emergency care for the injured.

7. World Agri-Tourism Day 2021

- Every year the World Agri-Tourism Day is celebrated on May 16. The theme for 2021 is "Rural Women sustainable Entrepreneurship Opportunities through Agri Tourism."
- On the fourteenth World Agri-Tourism Day, Government of Maharashtra and Agri-Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) have organised International Conference on Agri-Tourism.
- Agri tourism has tremendous potential for increasing farm incomes and stimulating the development of a dynamic, diversified rural economy. In many developed countries, Agri tourism has become an integral part of the tourism industry



Brain Boosters

01

Supreme Court on Overcrowding of Prisons

1. Why in News?

- ◆ In the wake of "unprecedented surge" in COVID-19 cases, the Supreme Court (SC) has ordered the immediate release of prisoners who were granted bail or parole last year.



2. Key Observations of the Court

- ◆ The bench observed that the decongestion of prisons housing around 4 lakh inmates across the country is a matter concerning "health and right to life of" prisoners and police personnel.
- ◆ The bench said that, those who were allowed to go out on bail in March last year by the high-powered committees (HPCs) of states and Union Territories (UTs) be granted the same relief without any reconsideration to avoid delay.
- ◆ Further the bench also directed that, those inmates who were granted parole, pursuant to our earlier orders, should be again granted parole for a period of 90 days in order to tide over the pandemic.
- ◆ There is a serious concern about the spread of COVID-19 in overcrowded prisons where there is lack of proper sanitation, hygiene and medical facilities and there is a requirement for effective management of pandemic from within the prison walls so as to defeat this deadly virus.

3. Background

- ◆ In March 23, 2020, the SC had directed all states and UTs to constitute HPC to consider releasing on parole or interim bail prisoners and the under trials for offences entailing up to 7-year jail term to decongest prisons in the wake of coronavirus pandemic.

4. Overcrowding of Indian Prisons

- ◆ According to the National Crime Records Bureau, as on 31 December, 2019, there were 4,78,600 inmates lodged in different prisons in India while they had a collective capacity to house only about 4,03,700 inmates.
- ◆ This means the number of prisoners was 118.5% of the prison capacity, the highest since 2010.
- ◆ Prisons in Delhi were the most overcrowded among all states and union territories – there were about 17,500 prisoners lodged in jails with a collective capacity of about 10,000, which is a prison overcrowding rate of 175%.
- ◆ Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand followed next in overcrowding at 168% and 159% respectively.
- ◆ In 2019, 69% of all prisoners were undertrials.

1. Why in News?

- ◆ COVID-19 infections are being reported among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

2. Key Highlights

- ◆ As many as 21 tribals across eight different PVTGs in the State have so far tested positive, including two from the Bonda tribe.
- ◆ Bondas live in highlands, 3,500-feet above sea level, in Malkangiri, the southern-most district of Odisha.
- ◆ Four members of Dongria Kondh, another PVTG, have tested positive.



3. Tribals in Odisha

- ◆ Odisha has among the largest and most diverse tribal populations in the country.
- ◆ Of the 62 tribal groups residing in Odisha, 13 are recognised as PVTGs.
- ◆ According to the 2011 Census, Odisha's share of the country's total tribal population was 9%.
- ◆ Tribals constitute 22.85% of State's population. In terms of numbers of its tribal population, Odisha occupies the third position in India.
- ◆ The PVTGs such as Bonda, Birhor, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Dongaria Kandha, Hill Kharia, Juang, Kutia Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankirdia, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora have been identified on the basis of stagnant or diminishing populations, subsistence level of economy associated with pre-agricultural stages of hunting, food gathering and shifting cultivation, and relative physical isolation.

4. PVTGs in India

- ◆ In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups. However, in 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as PVTGs.
- ◆ Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12).
- ◆ According to the Census 2011, tribal population makes up for 8.6% of the total population in India.

1. Why in News?

- ◆ World Bank has released its latest Migration and Development Brief.



2. Key Highlights of the Report

- ◆ Despite COVID-19, remittance flows remained resilient in 2020, registering a smaller decline than previously projected.
- ◆ Officially recorded remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries reached \$540 billion in 2020, just 1.6 percent below the 2019 total of \$548 billion.
- ◆ India received over USD83 billion in remittances in 2020, a drop of just 0.2 per cent from the previous year, despite a pandemic that devastated the world economy.
- ◆ In 2019, India had received USD83.3 billion in remittances.
- ◆ China is second in terms of global remittances in 2020. China received USD 59.5 billion in remittances in 2020.
- ◆ India and China are followed by Mexico (USD42.8 billion), the Philippines (USD34.9 billion), Egypt (USD29.6 billion), Pakistan (USD26 billion), France (USD24.4 billion) and Bangladesh (USD21 billion).
- ◆ Remittance outflow was the maximum from the United States (USD68 billion), followed by UAE (USD43 billion), Saudi Arabia (USD34.5 billion), Switzerland (USD27.9 billion), Germany (USD22 billion), and China (USD18 billion).
- ◆ Remittances outflow from India in 2020 was USD7 billion, against USD7.5 billion in 2019, according to the World Bank.

3. Drivers for the Steady Flow

- ◆ The main drivers for the steady flow included fiscal stimulus that resulted in better-than-expected economic conditions in host countries.
- ◆ Shift in flows from cash to digital and from informal to formal channels.
- ◆ Cyclical movements in oil prices and currency exchange rates.

4. About the Report

- ◆ It is prepared by the Migration and Remittances Unit, Development Economics (DEC)- the premier research and data arm of the World Bank.
- ◆ The brief is produced twice a year.
- ◆ The brief aims to provide an update on key developments in the area of migration and remittance flows and related policies over the past six months.
- ◆ A remittance is money sent to another country by an immigrant.

Militarisation of the Arctic

1. Why in News?

- ◆ A day after Russia defended its military activities in the Arctic region, the United States wanted to avoid a military build-up in the Arctic.

2. Concerns

- ◆ As climate change makes the Arctic more accessible, interest in the region's natural resources, its navigation routes and its strategic position has grown among countries bordering the Arctic as well as China.
- ◆ That increases the dangers or prospects of accidents and undermines the shared goal of a peaceful and sustainable future for the region.



3. Background

- ◆ President Vladimir Putin has in recent years made Russia's Arctic region a strategic priority and ordered investment in military infrastructure and mineral extraction, exacerbating tensions with Arctic Council members.

4. About 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 by the Ottawa declaration.
- ◆ In the Ottawa Declaration, the eight Arctic States, Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States, established the Council as a high-level forum to provide means for promoting cooperation and coordination.
- ◆ The Council has members, ad hoc observer countries and "permanent participants"
- ◆ As of May 2019, thirteen non-Arctic states have Observer status. These are: Germany, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, France, Spain, China, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Switzerland.

05

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana

1. Why in News?

- ◆ 13 states have started distributing foodgrains under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY).

2. Key Highlights

- ◆ On April 23, the government had announced its decision to restart the PMGKAY to provide free-of-cost additional 5 kg foodgrains per person per month to the beneficiaries, who are covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA, 2013) over and above their monthly entitlement for two months, May and June.
- ◆ However, the new version of the PMGKAY lacks one of its important components—free-of-cost 1 kg pulses per month to each household covered under the NFSA.



3. Background

- ◆ The PMGKAY was first announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as part of the government's Rs 1.70 lakh crore relief package under "Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the poor to help them fight the battle against coronavirus" on March 26, 2020.
- ◆ Initially, the scheme was for three months — May, June and July – but later it was extended till November 2020.
- ◆ The Centre had also launched a separate scheme to provide free 5 kg foodgrain per person per month to stranded migrants for two months.
- ◆ However, the ministry has ruled out possibility of a similar scheme this time.

4. About One Nation One Ration Card Scheme

- ◆ Under the scheme, public distribution system (PDS) beneficiaries will be able to draw ration from any biometric verification-enabled fair price shop across states and Union territories covered by it.
- ◆ According to the ministry, all states and union territories except four — Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and West Bengal — have implemented the scheme.

1. Why in News?

- ◆ The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has called for "the full adherence to the ceasefire" in the 11-day conflict between Israel and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.
- ◆ It is UNSC's first statement on the conflict that erupted between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza.



2. Key Highlights of the Statement

- ◆ It stressed the immediate need for humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly in Gaza.
- ◆ That draft also "expressed concern about the tensions and violence in east Jerusalem, especially in and around the holy sites, and urged for the respect of the historic status quo at the holy sites."
- ◆ The statement also recognized "the important role Egypt (and) other regional countries" played in it, as well as the so-called Middle East Quartet, comprising the US, Russia, the European Union and the UN.

3. Background

- ◆ According to figures released by the UN humanitarian coordination office, OCHA, for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and verified by the UN human rights office (OHCHR), there were 242 Palestinians killed overall since 10 May.
- ◆ According to Israeli sources, OCHA reported that 12 Israelis had been killed by Palestinian rocket, or other fire – or when running for shelter during strikes.

4. About Gaza Strip

- ◆ The Gaza Strip is an entirely artificial creation that emerged in 1948 when roughly three-fourths of Palestine's Arab population was displaced, in some cases expelled, during the course of Israel's creation.
- ◆ most of the refugees, they were sort of scattered across the region in neighboring countries like Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Some went to the West Bank, which came under Jordanian rule after 1948.
- ◆ And a very large number went to the Gaza Strip, which is this tiny little coastal strip between Egypt and what is now Israel.
- ◆ Today, the population of Gaza, about 70% of Gaza's population are refugees.

5. India's Stand

- ◆ In its statement at the UNSC "open debate" on the escalating Israel-Palestine violence, India took a balanced stand on the Israel-Palestine conflict and said that "recent incidents once again underscored need for immediate resumption of dialogue between Israel and Palestinian authorities".
- ◆ The statement appears to implicitly hold Israel responsible for triggering the current cycle of violence by locating its beginnings in East Jerusalem rather than from Gaza.
- ◆ India's policy on the longest running conflict in the world has gone from being unequivocally pro-Palestine for the first four decades, to a tense balancing act with its three-decade-old friendly ties with Israel.
- ◆ In recent years, India's position has also been perceived as pro-Israel.

Data on Death of Elephants

1. Why in News?

- ◆ According to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), 186 elephants were killed after being hit by trains across India between 2009-10 and 2020-21.



2. Key Points

- ◆ As per the data furnished by the Project Elephant Division of the Ministry, Assam accounted for the highest number of elephant casualties on railway tracks (62), followed by West Bengal (57), and Odisha (27). Uttar Pradesh saw a single death.
- ◆ According to the data collected through Right to Information (RTI) Act, trains claimed the highest number of pachyderms in 2012-13, when 27 elephants were killed in 10 States.

3. Government Initiatives

- ◆ Various measures had been taken by the government to avoid elephant casualties on railway lines.
- ◆ A Permanent Coordination Committee has been constituted between the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) and the MoEFCC for preventing elephant deaths in train accidents; clearing of vegetation along railway tracks to enable clear view for loco pilots; signage boards at suitable points to alert loco pilots about elephant presence; moderating slopes of elevated sections of railway tracks; underpass/overpass for safe passage of elephants; regulation of train speed from sunset to sunrise in vulnerable stretches; and Regular patrolling of vulnerable stretches of railway tracks by frontline staff of the Forest Department and wildlife watchers.
- ◆ The MoEFCC also stated that it released ₹212.49 crore to elephant range States under Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) of Project Elephant to protect elephants, their habitat and corridors.

4. Project Elephant

- ◆ Project Elephant was launched in 1992 to provide financial and technical support of wildlife management efforts by states for their free ranging populations of wild Asian Elephants.
- ◆ The Project is being mainly implemented in 16 States / UTs , viz. Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal.

5. Elephants in India

- ◆ As per the census 2017, elephant population in the country is estimated at 29,964 in wild.
- ◆ Karnataka has the highest number of elephants, followed by Assam and Kerala.
- ◆ India has nearly 2700 captive elephants.
- ◆ Today, India has 32 elephant reserves, covering an area of around 65,000 sqkm in 14 states.

Self Assessment (Objective Questions)



1. Mongolian Kanjur

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Mongolian Kanjur:

1. Mongolian Kanjur is related to the Mongolian shamanism.
2. Mongolian Kanjur has been translated from Tibetan.

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

Ans: (b)

2. Talkative Dinosaur found in Mexico

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. A new species of dinosaur called the Talkative Dinosaur, identified in the northern Mexico.
2. A new species of dinosaur is believed to have been "very communicative" and used low-frequency sounds like elephants to talk to each other.

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

Ans: (c)

3. Cyclone 'Tauktae'

Q. With reference to the 'Cyclone Tauktae', consider the following statements:

1. It has been named by Bangladesh.
2. It was originated in Bay of Bengal.

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

Ans: (d)

4. China's Population Growth is slowing: Census Data

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. China's fertility rate has dropped to 1.3, far below the replacement level of 2.1.
2. The United Nations (UN) has estimated that the population will begin falling after 2030.

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

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

Ans: (c)

5. Article 311 of the Indian Constitution

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Article 311 of the Indian Constitution':

1. Only all India services employee shall be dismissed or removed by an authority subordinate to the own that appointed him/her.
2. The government employee dismissed under Article 311 cannot approach either tribunals like the state

administrative tribunal or Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) or the courts.

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

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

Ans: (d)

6. Child Marriages during Corona Pandemic

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the child marriage during corona pandemic:

1. South Asia has the highest rates of child marriage in the world.
2. India has the largest number of brides in the world – one-third of the global total.

3. Bangladesh has the highest rate of child marriage in Asia (the fourth highest rate in the world).

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

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

Ans: (d)

7. Demand for Independent Collegium for Election Commission

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 324(2) states that the President shall, with aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, appoint Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioner (ECs).
2. Each of them holds their offices for a period of 5 years or up to the age of 65 years, whichever comes first.

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

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

Ans: (a)

8. Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Sovereign Gold Bonds Scheme':

1. The scheme was launched in 2018 with an objective to reduce the demand for physical gold.
2. These bonds can be sold through Scheduled Commercial banks only.
3. These bonds can be used as collateral for loans.

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

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

Ans: (c)

9. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector.
2. It does not cover spices and bamboo.
3. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare is the implementing agency for the mission.

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

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 3 only

Ans: (c)

10. Beema Bamboo

Q. With reference to the 'Beema Bamboo', consider the following statements:

1. It is said to be the best 'carbon sink' to mitigate carbon dioxide emissions.
2. The bamboo's calorific value is equal to that of coal.
3. Bamboo fibre is used by the textile industry and cement industries.

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

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

Ans: (d)

11. Red-eared Slider Turtle

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'red-eared slider turtle':

1. It is native to northern eastern states of India.
2. This turtle is an extremely popular pet due to its small size, easy maintenance, and relatively low cost.

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

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

Ans: (b)

12. China's Zhurong Rover

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'China's Zhurong Rover':

1. China has become the third country in the world to send a rover to explore the mysterious Red Planet.
2. Apart from China, the United States and India have been able to deploy rovers to study the surface of the Red Planet.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (d)

13. New Species of Skink

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. A group of herpetologists has found a new species of skink, an Asian gracile skink, from the Anaikatti hills in Coimbatore.
2. This species is only the third skink species discovered from mainland India in the last millennium.
3. Skinks are non-venomous, their inconspicuous limbs make them resemble snakes.

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

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

Ans: (d)

14. Wholesale Price Index for April 2021

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Wholesale Price Index':

1. WPI measures the changes in the prices of goods sold and traded in bulk by wholesale businesses to other businesses.
2. The numbers are released by the Ministry of Finance.
3. It is the most widely used inflation indicator in India.

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

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1 and 3 only

Ans: (d)

15. Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs provides construction costs and the State Government is responsible for running and overall maintenance of Eklavya Model Residential Schools.
2. Ashram Schools are being set up by grants provided under Article 275(1) of the Indian Constitution and funded by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

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

Ans: (d)



Self Assessment (Subjective Questions)





- 01 Discuss how the publication of Mongolian Kanjur by the Government of India for the Government of Mongolia will act as a symbol of cultural symphony between India and Mongolia.
- 02 Write a short note on newly identified species of dinosaur called the talkative dinosaur in the northern Mexico.
- 03 What is tropical cyclone? How are tropical cyclones named? Explain.
- 04 Discuss the reasons behind the slow down of population growth in China.
- 05 What is Article 311 of the Indian Constitution? Discuss the safeguards provided by the Article 311 to the government employees.
- 06 Discuss the economics of India's high prevalence of child marriage.
- 07 Will a politically independent collegium for the appointment of members of Election Commission of India bring an atmosphere of neutrality? Do you agree? Justify your answers.
- 08 Write a short note on 'Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme'.
- 09 Discuss the role played by Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture towards the self-sufficiency in the horticulture sector in India.
- 10 Discuss the significance of Beema Bamboo to mitigate carbon dioxide emissions.
- 11 Red-eared slider turtle is threatening to invade the natural water bodies across the Northeast. Shortlist the reasons.
- 12 Write a short note on China's Mars probe 'Tianwen-1'.
- 13 The new species of skink was found in a dry deciduous area, showing that even the dry zones of India are home to unrealised skink diversity which needs to be further explored. Elaborate.
- 14 Write a short note on India's widely used inflation indicator 'Wholesale Price Index'.
- 15 The digital transformation of tribal schools in India will help in creating the talent pool that will be an asset to the country in the future. Explain.

AN INTRODUCTION

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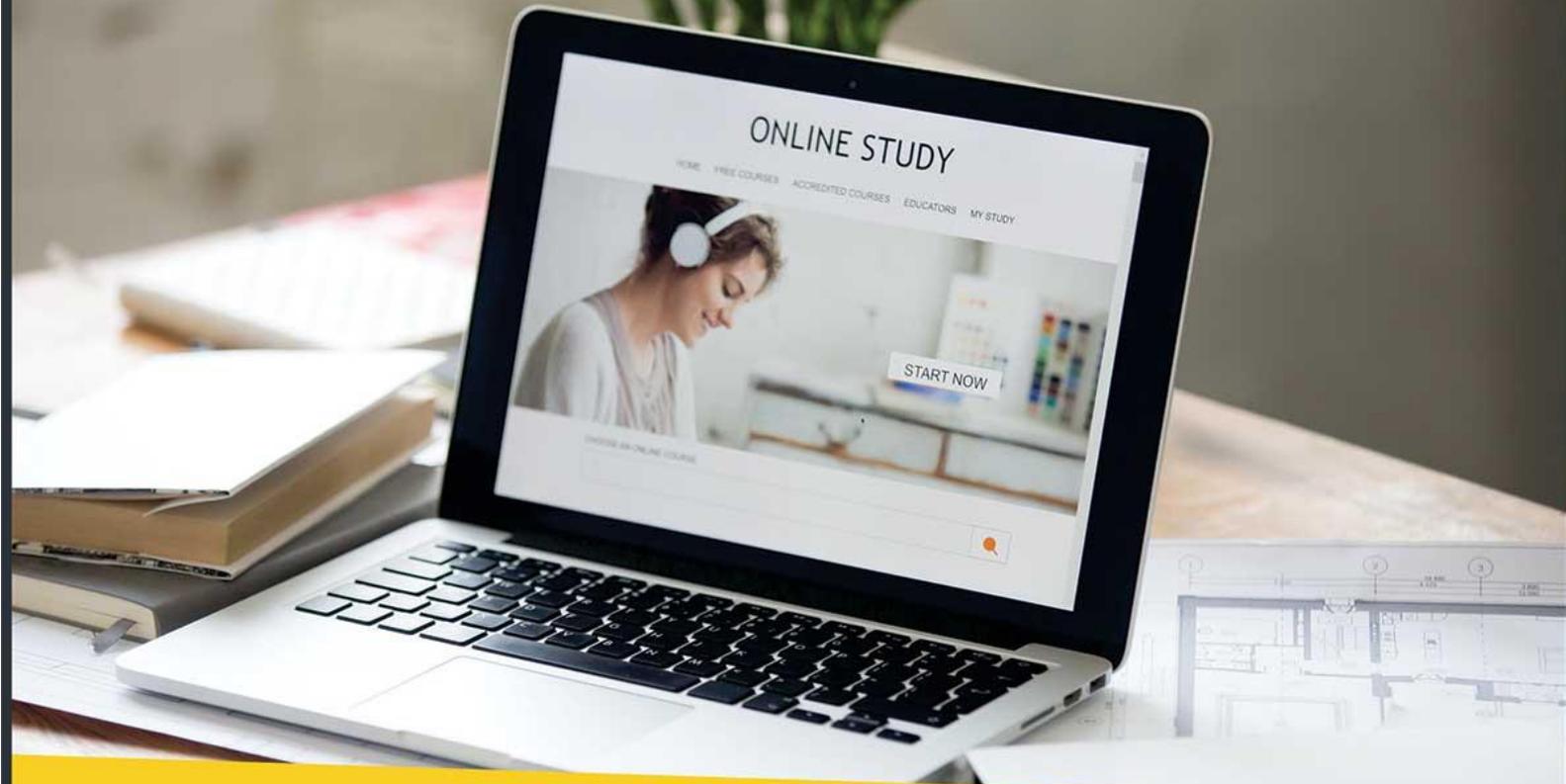
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