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CIVIL SERVICES ACHIEVERS' POINT

A ONE STOP SOLUTION FOR UPSC/APSC/SSC & BANKING

THE ASSAM TRIBUNE ANALYSIS

DATE - 6TH APRIL 2021

For Preliminary and Mains examination

As per new Pattern of APSC

(Also useful for UPSC and other State level government examinations)

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ADKJ #DID YOU KNOW ?



Land of Bhoodan

Pochampally, a town in Telangana, is known for its sarees made in the traditional Ikat style. Did you know that Acharya Vinoba Bhave's iconic land reform movement, Bhoodan Movement, was initiated from Pochampally in 1951?



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NEWS ARTICLES

India joins multilateral naval drill in eastern Indian Ocean

- India and three other Quad member nations on Monday joined France in kick-starting a three-day mega naval exercise in the eastern Indian Ocean, in reflection of their growing strategic cooperation in the region.
- Officials said the Indian naval ships Satpura and Kiltan along with P-8I long range maritime patrol aircraft are participating in multilateral exercise 'La Perouse'.
- The Indian Navy ships and aircraft will exercise at sea with ships and aircraft of navies of France, Australia, Japan and the United States during the exercise, they said.
- Indian Navy Spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said the exercise will witness complex and advanced naval operations, including surface warfare, anti-air warfare and air defence exercises. He said it will also feature weapon firing exercises, cross deck flying operations and tactical manoeuvres among others.
- "The exercise will showcase high levels of synergy, coordination and interoperability between the friendly navies," he said. "Participation by the Indian Navy in the exercise demonstrates the shared values with friendly navies ensuring freedom of seas and commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific and a rules-based international order," he said.
- Besides host France, the four other participants are members of the Quad or Quadrilateral coalition.
- India has been expanding cooperation with navies of the US, Japan, Australia and France in the last few years.
- On March 28 and 29, India and the US navies carried out a two-day naval exercise in the eastern Indian Ocean Region.
- The Indian Navy deployed its warship Shivalik and long range maritime patrol aircraft P8I in the 'PASSEX' exercise, while the US Navy was represented by USS Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group.
- A carrier battle group or carrier strike group is a mega naval fleet comprising an aircraft carrier, accompanied by a large number of destroyers, frigates and other ships.

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- The PASSEX exercise came over a week after US Defence Secretary Austin flew into India as part of his three-nation first overseas tour that signalled the Biden administration's strong commitment to its relations with its close allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. PTI

UNDP India, Spices Board ink MoU

- UNDP India's Accelerator Lab today said it has signed an agreement with the Spices Board India to build a blockchain-based traceability interface for Indian spices to enhance transparency in trading.
- Under this memorandum of understanding, UNDP and Spices Board India are working towards integrating the blockchain traceability interface with e-Spice Bazaar portal developed by Spices Board India for connecting spices farmers with markets, according to a statement.
- The design of the blockchain interface is expected to be completed by May 2021, and the project will be piloted with over 3,000 farmers engaged in chilli farming in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, it stated.
- UNDP India has independently secured support from the Cabinet Office of Japan for this initiative under the Japan SDGs Innovation Challenge, the statement said.
- Blockchain is a decentralised process of recording transactions on an open and shared electronic ledger.
- This allows for ease and transparency in data management across a complex network, including farmers, brokers, distributors, processors, retailers, regulators, and consumers, thus simplifying the supply chain.
- This blockchain-powered platform for Indian spices will enhance the quality assurance of agricultural export commodities.
- It will also allow farmers, just as all other members of the supply chain, to access the information, which further makes the entire supply chain more efficient and equitable.
- "We are confident that the blockchain interface will help connect these farmers with international markets and add to their income. The technology can also help in rebuilding pandemic-affected supply chains by providing trading partners and consumers with trusted and secured data on goods and transactions, UNDP India Resident Representative Shoko Noda said.
- Spices Board India Secretary D Sathiyam said the changing order in the global spices and food sector has increased the relevance of infrastructure development for value-addition, certification

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for quality and food safety, promotion of spices highlighting the immunity boosting properties, among others and the Board has been working towards strengthening the spices value chain in India.

- “This UNDP-Spices Board joint initiative to build a blockchain-powered traceability interface for Indian spices is another significant milestone in our journey to make the spices value chain efficient, transparent and equitable for all stakeholders. We plan to integrate this blockchain-based traceability interface with the e-Spice Bazaar portal already developed by the Board,” he added. – PTI

Govt amends IBC, introduces pre-packaged resolution process for MSMEs

- The government has amended the insolvency law to provide for a pre-packaged resolution process for micro, small and medium enterprises.
- An ordinance was promulgated to amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) on April 4, according to a notification.
- The latest move comes less than two weeks after the suspension of certain IBC provisions ended. The suspension – wherein fresh insolvency proceedings were not allowed for a year starting from March 25, 2020 – was implemented amid the coronavirus pandemic disrupting economic activities.
- As per the ordinance, it is considered necessary to urgently address the specific requirements of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) relating to the resolution of their insolvency, due to the unique nature of their businesses and simpler corporate structures.
- According to the ordinance, it is considered expedient to provide an efficient alternative insolvency resolution process to MSMEs to ensure a quicker, cost-effective and value-maximising outcomes for all stakeholders, in a manner which is least disruptive to the continuity of their businesses and which preserves jobs.
- “... in order to achieve these objectives, it is considered expedient to introduce a pre-packaged insolvency resolution process for corporate persons classified as micro, small and medium enterprises,” it added.
- Soumitra Majumdar, Partner at J Sagar Associates, said the IBC Amendment Ordinance 2021, makes available the pre-packaged route to genuine and viable cases, to ensure least business disruption.

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- “While modelled on debtor-in-possession approach, it vests significant consent rights to the financial creditors, such that the mechanism cannot be misused by errant promoters.
- “Further, adopting the plan evaluation process akin to Swiss Challenge, it retains competitive tension such that promoters propose plans with least impairment to rights and claims of creditors,” Majumdar noted.
- IBC provides for a market-linked and time-bound resolution of stressed assets. – PTI

Arch of world's highest railway bridge on Chenab river in J&K completed

- The construction of the arch of the world's highest railway bridge that soars 359 metres above the bed of the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir was completed on Monday, with the Northern Railways terming the achievement a milestone.
- The 1.3-km-long bridge aims to boost connectivity to the Kashmir Valley and it is being constructed at a cost of Rs 1,486 crore as part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link (USBRL) project. The bridge, which is 35-metre higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris, is expected to be completed within a year, officials said.
- “It is a historic day for the Northern Railways and a milestone in the completion of the USBRL project, connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country. The project will be completed within two and a half years,” Northern Railway General Manager Ashutosh Gangal told reporters at the work site here in Reasi district.
- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal watched the lowering of the closure segment of the arch by cable crane through a video link from Delhi. Senior officers, including Gangal and Konkan Railway Chairman and Managing Director Sanjay Gupta, attended the function here.
- “The self-supporting arch is an engineering marvel and has brought us closer to our goal of the dream project. After the completion of the arch, we will move further, and are hopeful of completing the bridge within a year,” Gangal said.
- The Railway Ministry said that the 5.6-metre last piece of metal (closure segment) was fitted at the highest point of the arch on Monday. It joined the two arms of the arch that currently stretch towards each other from both banks of the Chenab, it said. “This completed the shape of the arch. After completion of the arch work, removal of the stay cables, filling of the concrete in the arch rib, erection of the steel trestle, launching of the viaduct and track laying work will be taken up,” the ministry said.
- Gangal said that the construction of the bridge involves fabrication of 28,660 metric tonnes of steel, 10 lakh cubic metres earthwork and 66,000 cubic metres of concrete. “The arch consists of

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steel boxes in which concrete will be filled to improve stability. The stay cables which are presently holding the arch will be removed as it has become self-supporting after the installation of the last piece,” Gangal said.

- He said the overall weight of the arch is 10,619 metric tonnes and “the erection of members of the arch by overhead cable cranes was done for the first time by the Indian Railways”.
- The bridge is designed to withstand high wind speed of up to 266 kmph and earthquake forces of highest intensity, Gangal said. “Approximately 584 km of welding was done to join the different parts of structure, which is to the tune of distance between Jammu Tawi to New Delhi,” the ministry said. – PTI



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EDITORIALS

Maoist menace

- When PC Chidambaram was the Home Minister in the Manmohan Singh-led Congress Government, he had stated that the biggest threat that India faced in the future stemmed from internal sources such as the Maoists, which was even graver than cross-border terrorism from Pakistan.
- He and his successors, including those of the Narendra Modi-led NDA regime such as Amit Shah, had been waging a protracted campaign against the Maoist menace, but without much success, if the massacres in the jungles of Chhattisgarh last Sunday were any indication.
- Twenty-two security personnel from the District Reserve Guard, the CRPF's Commando Battalion for Resolute Action, the Special Task Force and the 'Bastariya' battalion of the CRPF were massacred in an ambush at a remote spot in Bijapur district in the Bastar division where Maoists, entrenched in deep forests since late 1980s, hold sway. With dozens being grievously wounded, the possibility of casualties becoming higher is great.
- The manner in which the ambush was devilishly executed speaks volumes about the ingenuity of the Maoists as also the complacency of the security authorities, and the Home Ministry has a lot to answer for this tragedy. Apparently, the anti-Maoists authorities had received intelligence from their sources that Madvi Hidma, a dreaded Maoist commander responsible for the killing of scores of *jawans*, was holed up in a hilly site within the Bastar jungles along with colleagues.
- Notwithstanding past experience that the insurgents carry out most of their attacks on security forces during the comparatively dry months between February and June, since the onset of the monsoons makes terrorist operations difficult, the security bigwigs took this information at face value, and did not reconfirm it with other sources!
- The end result was that a huge force of 1000 security personnel were sent on a wild goose chase on information planted by the Maoist themselves and were caught in a well-planned ambush as they were returning after not finding the intended target.

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- Ominously, the Maoist guerrillas were equipped with sophisticated weapons including rocket launchers, testifying to the resources they command within the areas over which they hold sway.
- The reality that in the last decade almost 200 security personnel and civilians have been killed in the Chhattisgarh region hints that the administration has not yet succeeded in containing the Maoist threat.
- It must be borne in mind that these insurgents feed on deprivation and poverty amongst the people and their areas of operation are amongst the most backward in the nation.
- Lack of roads and other means of communication, and education and health facilities are some of the basic reasons why the Maoists with their violent ideology continue to enjoy support of the people.
- Thus economic and educational advancement, rather than aggressive operations by security forces, might work better in containing the Maoist menace.

Perversity of competitive populism

- Come election, every political party offers freebies and makes fancy promises irrespective of the affordability of a State's fiscal capacity or their feasibility in the context of the State's realities.
- The ruling party lays the ceremonial foundation stone of numerous schemes adding to the bulge of incomplete projects. While this is a general behaviour, this is an attempt to highlight the perniciousness of such political behaviour in Assam's context.
- Just to illustrate, way back in 2014, the Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi promised in one of his electoral rallies that when he comes to power in May 2014, all infiltrators must pack their bags and be ready to leave Assam, ignoring the absurdity of such an action. It was also promised that the bane of annual floods over the years would be a thing of the past. The general election came again and went in 2019.
- Now the State Assembly election is in full swing, credulous voters who lapped up such absurd promises never cared to know how many of such promises were indeed delivered. It is now time for new promises and new rainbows. The Prime Minister came and ceremoniously laid the foundation stone of several new projects, leaving them to their fate.
- The ruling party of the State has promised to establish *Goshalas* in every district of Assam ignoring the fact of a dwindling cattle population and offered several other lures. Competing parties are not sitting tight. Each of them has made promises keeping in view the power of luring voters.

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- These typical cases are cited merely to highlight their serious consequences in the context of the State's economic realities. Such populist promises ignore the economic realities and evade the much-needed priorities in resource allocation.
- Despite the Centre's special attention, the State's per capita income at constant price (Rs 60,695) accounts for only 66% of all-States average per capita income even in 2018-19. Significantly, the State's GSDP at current price declined from the peak at 16.5% in 2015-16 to almost at a constant pace of a little above 11% in the following three years. More important, per capita NSDP of Assam recorded a marginally higher growth as compared to all-India average in 2014-15 over 2013-14 (Assam's 4.2% against all-India's 6.2%) and in 2019-20 over 2018-19 (3.5% and 3.1% respectively). This is still worse, if it is compared with the eight NE States' average growth of 9.2% and 7.0% in the respective years.
- The population below the poverty line stands at 31.98% in 2017-18. More than half (52%) of Assam's population are below the age of 25. But Assam is one among the four most malnourished States in India, according to a recent study by *Lancet Child and Health* (for children below the age of 5). This means that the State should adequately invest on human development to reap the demographic dividend, the opportunity for which will not exist beyond a decade or two.
- But the fact is that life expectancy is 66.2 as against all-India average of 69.0 while infant mortality is 41.0 as compared to the national average of 32.0 per 1000 live births while 27.8 % of 31.2 million of Assam's population are still illiterate. This requires high priority on investment on human development as a State policy.
- Given the low rate of urbanization in Assam (14.1% against 31.1% for all-India), poverty reduction greatly depends on improvement in agriculture which supports 45.7% of workers as cultivators and agricultural labour in 2011.
- Agriculture in the State is characterized by low cropping intensity, low diversity and low productivity as measured by yield rates. Primary sector contributes 30% of GSDP. Even in 2019-20 it contributes 28% as compared to 17% for all-India. All this suggests the importance of investment in agriculture in the State's policy matrix.
- The *Economic Survey 2020-21* of India has constructed a composite index to measure the progress of delivery of bare necessities between 2012 and 2018 using 26 comparable indicators of five dimensions: water (6), sanitation (5), housing (3), micro environment (4), and other facilities (8) such as ventilation of dwelling type and kitchen type. The value of the index ranges between 0 and 1. Higher value of the index indicates better access of the household to the basic necessities. Assam scored between 0.50-0.70 in 2012 indicating the lowest access and, remained in the same range even in 2018.
- Twenty-seven per cent of the youth (15-29 years old) in Assam as against 17.8% for all-India are unemployed in 2018-19. What is more, for lack of opportunities in the State, a growing number of

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educated and uneducated people (8.7% of the labour force in 2011) are migrating out for eking out their livelihood.

- All this have happened despite the State being rich in nature's bounties in terms of water, forest, mines and minerals, and huge biodiversity. Instead of sustainably harnessing these resources for prosperity, these are becoming a source of human miseries as in the case of recurring floods, fast disappearing water-bodies or land degradation.
- These realities suggest themselves what the priorities in limited resource allocation should be for overall development and economic improvement of the people of the State. Yet the State's per capita spending is one of the lowest at Rs 19,996 which is 85% of all-States average in 2018-19. Of the total expenditure as percentage of GSDP of the State at 21.6%, only 3.6% is allocated for capital expenditure which contributes to the State's productive capacity. Despite such low spending, the State offers various fancy freebies to the people instead of developing the economy that would create income and jobs for the people on a sustained basis.
- This takes us to the Constituent Assembly debates on the issue of conferring voting right. One section of the members argued for giving voting right only to the educated people. Dr Ambedkar prevailed upon in conferring universal suffrage on the ground of empowering people to choose their representatives every five years.
- In hindsight, one can argue that the political class by explicit or implicit design kept a large section of the population eternally poor and vulnerable so to make them susceptible to lures and false promises at the time of every election. They are not economically empowered to demand accountability of those who make false promises to manipulate their choice.

Water-logging

- The downpour on Sunday evening made it very apparent that the Smart City concept is only an attempt to make the residents of the capital city Guwahati have a feel good factor.
- The smart shower threw normal life out of gear. Vehicular traffic came to a grinding halt at several parts of the city due to water-logging.
- The water-logging made it evident that the civic authorities of the city have failed to perform their duties. If Sunday's plight is of any indication, the condition of the city during the rainy season can well be imagined.
- During monsoons every year, after flash floods create havoc in the premier city of the Northeast, grandiose plans are announced to tackle the problem. But in most of the cases the plans are seldom implemented.

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- The flood scene in the city is increasingly getting worse with every passing year. Life comes to a standstill in several parts of the city due to the flash floods. But nothing tangible has been done so far to mitigate this never-ending problem.
- Lack of a proper drainage system is one of the root cause behind the city floods. Though at places the authorities have initiated work to construct new drains and improve the existing network of drains, that hasn't helped much to ease the problem.
- Utter lack of civic sense and given the chance making the drains an extension of garbage dump at many places have choked the drains. For many, the Bharalu river has become a convenient place to dump the waste and garbage.
- As a result the river fails to effectively drain away the water during the flash floods and ends up deluging a number of areas during the rainy season.
- The ad hoc approach with which the drains of the city are being cleared will negate the very need of tackling water logging. The silt and waste materials scooped up from the drains are invariably dumped near them.
- As a result after a shower the waste materials go back to the drains again. Unless a comprehensive plan is formulated and implemented in the right earnest, the residents of the city have no way out but to endure the menace of water-logging during the rainy season.
- It's hoped that the stakeholders are able to chalk out strategies to tackle the problem. And the decisions which are taken instead of being on the paper should be implemented. It would be unfair to blame the authorities alone for the present plight of the city.
- The residents of the city too are equally responsible for it. A coordinated approach by all the stakeholders including the residents is a must to tackle the artificial flood problem of the city head on.

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