



INNOVATIVE IAS

Daily News Analysis

27th January 2020

General studies-2

Fund crunch hits MGNREGA scheme

Why in news?

- Lack of funds for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme.

Background:

- 2019's budget allocation was ₹60,000 crore for the MGNREGA scheme
- The allocated amount for MGNREGA for the present fiscal was lesser than the amount spent under MGNREGA in the previous fiscal.

Key points:

- More than 96% of the allocated money for MGNREGA has already been spent or is needed to pay pending dues, with less than ₹2,500 crores left to sustain the scheme for the next two months.
- January, February, and March are months with little agricultural activity when rural workers desperately need employment.

Concerns:

- The Centre is on the verge of running out of funds for the crucial MGNREGA scheme.
- With the Centre yet to release pending dues to the states, fifteen States are already facing negative net balances as per the scheme's financial statements. Worryingly, these states will enter next year with pending liabilities.
- States are unable to pay the workers on time. For example, in Rajasthan, workers' wages have not been paid since October-end 2019. This is contrary to the spirit of the Act and violates the principle of rights-based implementation of the MGNREGA scheme.
- There is a high demand for work this fiscal year, as the rural economy is in distress and informal employment has also collapsed. The lack of funds is a cause of concern.

Significance:

- Given the backdrop of economic slowdown, many economists have recommended that putting money into the hands of rural consumers via MGNREGA is key to kickstarting the economy

UN says 'blatant' violations of Libya arms embargo continue

Why in news?

- Review of the outcomes of the recent UN summit on Libya.

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Background:

- Libya sits on Africa's Mediterranean coast and is divided between rival governments, each supported by different armed militias and foreign backers.
- The UN-recognized government in the capital Tripoli is backed by Turkey, Qatar, and Italy. Rival forces loyal to military commander Khalifa Haftar receive support from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, France and Russia.
- There were United Nations-led talks in Berlin, wherein leaders present at the summit made a fresh push for peace in Libya.

Key points:

- Libya has the ninth-largest known oil reserves in the world and the biggest oil reserves in Africa.
- The United Nations has expressed concern regarding the continued blatant violations of the arms embargo on war-torn Libya. A few countries were supplying advanced weapons, armoured vehicles and foreign fighters into Libya.
- The UN warned that continuing to supply arms into the conflict threatens the fragile truce reached in Tripoli.

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development has approached the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to take notice of the alleged corruption in the implementation of the Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).
- The alleged acts of corruption in the implementation of RUSA were discovered in July, 2019 after Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) director pointed out serious irregularities in the utilisation of funds.

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan

- RUSA is the centrally sponsored scheme launched in October 2013 that aims at providing strategic funding to higher education institutions throughout the country.
- The scheme is being operated in mission mode for funding state universities and colleges to achieve the aims of equity, access and excellence.
- Funding is provided by the central ministry through the State governments and Union Territories (UTs), which in coordination with the Central Project Appraisal Board monitors the academic, administrative and financial advancements taken under the scheme.
- Since 2016-17, the government has spent an average of Rs 1,500 crore every year on RUSA.

Objectives

- Improve the overall quality of state institutions by conforming to the prescribed norms and standards.
- Adoption of accreditation (certification of competency) as a mandatory quality assurance

framework.

- Promoting autonomy in state universities and improving governance in institutions.
- Ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination system.
- Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
- Create an enabling atmosphere for research in the higher education system.
- Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by setting up institutions in unserved and underserved areas.
- Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities to the disadvantaged.

Dubious decision: On NIA takeover of BhimaKoregaon case

Why in news?

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) took over the BhimaKoregaon case in which several activists were booked for making provocative speeches at the ElgaarParishad event organised at Shaniwar Wada in Pune in 2017, which then allegedly escalated tensions leading to riots in Pune and Mumbai.
- The activists were arrested and booked under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).
- The transfer of the case to the NIA is now being looked at as a “misuse” of the powers conferred upon the agency.

Procedures for NIA to investigate a case

- According to the rules, for the NIA to take over a case from a state, formal communication is usually sent to the MHA by the state requesting for a transfer of the case to the agency, following which a notification is issued and the investigation is formally transferred.
- The state police then formally hands over all the files related to the case to the agency.
- But in this case, Section 6(5) of the NIA Act was invoked that permits the central government to direct the agency (NIA), suomotu, to investigate any offence if it feels that a crime is a scheduled offence fit to be probed by the NIA.

Background

- The Pune police have filed a charge sheet against activists on the charge of being part of a Maoist plot against the government, basing their claim on purported material seized from computers during raids.
- It was believed that a sinister plot was devised to overthrow the government, allegedly at the behest of the Communist Party of India (Maoist).
- Despite its inter-State ramifications, the State government opposed a petition in the Supreme Court for a court-monitored independent probe.
- At that time, the Centre expressed no inclination to hand over the probe to the NIA, even though sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) were invoked.
- The Union government cannot now turn around and claim that it is a fit case for an NIA

probe.

Issue Area

- It is an unwarranted interference in the police powers of the State as policing and law and order are state subjects.
- The Pune police report to the state government, the NIA is answerable only to the Union Home Ministry.
- It threatens to undermine the spirit of federalism.
- The Elgar Parishad case has gone through the investigation process and reached the courts — bail pleas in the case have been heard by the Supreme Court.
- For the Union Home Ministry to intervene at this juncture and change the investigating agency is tantamount to undermining this process.
- Even if the state government orders a review of the case, it will have to pass the test of the courts.
- The credibility of the NIA as an independent investigative agency itself is being questioned.

An impression has formed that the agency, set up in 2008 following the Mumbai attacks to probe acts of terrorism, is just another arm of the Centre, another “caged parrot” meant to serve its political masters.

General studies-1

Nagardhan excavations

Why in news?

- Recently, archaeological excavations were carried out at Nagardhan village in Ramtek Taluk near Nagpur, Maharashtra.
- The area surrounding the Nagardhan Fort in the village has the archaeological remains.

Key points:

- The Nagardhan Fort was constructed during the Gond Raja period and later renovated and re-used by the Bhosales of Nagpur during the late 18th and 19th centuries.
- The excavations have provided evidence on the life, religious affiliations and trade practices of the Vakataka dynasty.
- Nagardhan is understood to have served as a capital of the Vakataka kingdom.

Vakataka Dynasty

- It originated in the central Deccan in the mid-3rd century CE and its empire is believed to have extended from Malwa and Gujarat in the north to the Tungabhadra in the south and from the Arabian Sea in the west to the Bay of Bengal in the east.
- The Vakataka rulers followed the Shaiva sect of Hinduism.
- Animal rearing was one of the main occupations of the people. Remains of domestic animals like cattle, goat, sheep, pig, cat, horse and fowl were traced in an earlier study.
- The Vakataka rulers forged several matrimonial alliances with other dynasties of their times.



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One of the key alliances was with Prabhavatigupta of the Gupta dynasty (Vaishnavites), which was then ruling north India.

- Prabhavatigupta was the chief queen of the Vakataka king Rudrasena II and took over as queen after the sudden death of her husband. She ruled for about 10 years until her son Pravarasena II succeeded.

Findings and their Significance

- It is the first time clay sealings have been excavated from Nagardhan. The oval-shaped sealing belongs to the period when Prabhavatigupta was the queen of the Vakataka dynasty.
- It bears her name in the Brahmi script, along with the depiction of a conch. The presence of the conch is a sign of the Vaishnava affiliation that the Guptas held.
- The sealings were introduced and issued under Prabhavatigupta's rule which shows her importance and stature as a woman.
- The Vakataka rulers followed the Shaiva sect of Hinduism while the Guptas followed Vaishnava sect. Queen's powerful personality allowed her to follow the sect of her choice.
- The sealing was traced on top of a mega wall which could have been part of a royal structure at the capital city.
- The copperplate issued by Queen Prabhavatigupta starts with a genealogy of the Guptas, mentioning the Queen's grandfather Samudragupta and her father Chandragupta II.
- Vakatakas traded with Iran and beyond, through the Mediterranean Sea and the sealings are believed to be used as official royal permission issued from the capital.

Padma Awards

- The Padma Awards are announced annually on the eve of Republic Day (26th January).
- Instituted in the year 1954, it is one of the highest civilian honours of India.
- The Award seeks to recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines where an element of public service is involved.
- The Awards are given in three categories:
 - Padma Vibhushan (for exceptional and distinguished service),
 - Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of higher-order) and
 - Padma Shri (distinguished service).
- The Awards are given in various disciplines/ fields of activities, viz.- art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc.
- The Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year.
- The awards are presented by the President of India usually in the month of March/April every year.
- The award does not amount to a title and cannot be used as a suffix or prefix to the

awardees' name.

- The total number of awards to be given in a year (excluding posthumous awards and to NRI/foreigners/OCIs) should not be more than 120.
- In 2020, the President has approved conferment of 141 Padma Awards including 4 duo cases (in a duo case, the Award is counted as one).
- The list comprises of 7 Padma Vibhushan, 16 Padma Bhushan and 118 Padma Shri Awards.

Bharat Parv

- The annual event Bharat Parv is being celebrated from 26th to 31st January, 2020 in New Delhi.
- Objective: To encourage Indians to visit different tourist places of India and to inculcate the spirit of 'DekhoApnaDesh'.
- Theme for the Year 2020: 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and 'Celebrating 150 Years of Mahatma'.
- It is organised by the Ministry of Tourism.
- It includes highlights of the Republic Day Parade Tableaux, performances by the Armed Forces Bands, theme pavilions of different States and Central Ministries and cultural performances from different regions of the country.

General studies-3

A-sat missile

Why in news?

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) displayed its Anti-Satellite (A-SAT) missile and the Air Defence Tactical Control Radar (ADTCR) during the 71st Republic Day parade.
- Additionally, the Indian Air Force 's (IAF) latest inductions, Chinook heavy-lift helicopters and Apache attack helicopters took part in the Republic Day flypast.
- Moreover, the Army showcased its recent induction, the 155-mm Dhanush towed howitzer and K9-Vajra self-propelled artillery gun.

A-SAT Missile

- It is an interceptor missile that destroys or jams satellites in space.
- There are two types of A-SATs:
 - Kinetic A-SATs, like ballistic missiles, physically strike an object in order to destroy it.
 - Non-Kinetic A-SATs are the ones that use non-physical means to disable or destroy space objects, which include frequency jamming, blinding lasers or cyber-attacks.
- The theoretical maximum range of A-SATs is limited which means satellites above 20,000 km are out of range.



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India's Test of A-SAT Missile

- On 27th March, 2019, India successfully conducted a Kinetic Anti-Satellite (A-SAT) missile test from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island launch complex (Odisha).
- The A-SAT missile was developed by the DRDO under Mission Shakti.
- Mission Shakti seeks to defend India's space assets and thus aims at strengthening India's overall security.
- India became the fourth country to acquire such technology after USA, Russia, and China.
- The A-SAT technology has a 'hit to kill' feature which is developed for the first time in India. It enables to destroy an enemy satellite by directly colliding with it with pinpoint accuracy.

