



**Daily Current Affairs Dated On 07-May-2018**  
**General Studies-1**

**Aranmula snakeboat Festival**

The famous Aranmula snakeboat regatta in **Kerala** will not be a competitive race in the Pampa river waters at this year's Onam festival, and will instead return to its roots as a spectacle of colour and song.

Ruling in favour of regalia, the Palliyoda Seva Sanghom (PSS), which conducts the show, has decided to do away with the race format during the Uthrattadhi Vallamkali in August.

What caused concern was the influence of competitive sport on the legacy of style and colour.

"The Aranmula Vallamkali has strong moorings in the traditions of the centuries-old Sree Parthasarathy temple at Aranmula, regarded as one of the 101 Vaishnava Tirupatis.

The Vallamkali marks the anniversary of the idol installation at the Aranmula temple, with the participation of about 50 units called Palliyoda Karayogams in and around Aranmula, which have their own snakeboats (Palliyodams) .

The oarsmen consider it a holy mission to take part, and the boats are treated as those of the deity.

The race was not part of Aranmula Vallamkali earlier, and the high-crested boats that take part are distinct from those used in races elsewhere in Kerala.

They are meant to be paddled, in tune with the rhythmic Vanchippattu, which are verses in praise of Lord Krishna, Mr. Krishnakumar said. The dhoti-and-shawl dress code of the oarsmen is also a special feature.

The Mannam Trophy will thus go to the snakeboat that is adjudged the best in terms of paddling style, discipline, costume of the oarsmen, and Vanchippattu singing.



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**Passionate practitioners persevere into the night to save 'Tholu Bommalata' for posterity**

The show goes on till late in the night as passion for puppetry is still strong among select families in Prakasam district, which are determined to practice the ancient art form even while doing odd jobs for a living during day time.

**Tholu Bommalata** is the [shadow puppet](#) theatre tradition of the state of [Andhra Pradesh](#) in [India](#).

Its performers the part of a group of wandering entertainers and peddlers who pass through villages during the course of a year and offer to sing ballads, tell fortunes, sell amulets, perform acrobatics, charm snakes, weave fishnets, tattoo local people and mend pots.

This ancient custom, which for centuries before radio, movies, and television provided knowledge of [Hindu epics](#) and local folk tales, not to mention news, spread to the most remote corners of the subcontinent.

Tholu Bommalata literally means "the dance of leather puppets" (*tholu* – leather and *bommalata* – puppet dance),

The skin of wild animals including the antelope and the spotted deer was used to make puppets. We have settled for goat skin in view of the ban on hunting wild animals.

**General Studies-2**

**Gram swaraj Abhiyaan:**

At the end of a three-week drive to bring seven flagship schemes to 16,850 villages with a high number of poor, SC (Scheduled Caste) and ST (Scheduled Tribe) households, less than 30% of the target households received an electricity connection, while less than 40% got a gas connection, according to government data.

**About the Abhiyan:**

The Prime Minister has announced that on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti a "Gram Swaraj Abhiyan" would be organised starting from 14<sup>th</sup> April to 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2018.



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This Abhiyan is being undertaken for reaching out to poor households, spreading awareness about government welfare schemes and other people centric initiatives.

As a special initiative during the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, universal coverage under seven welfare programmes including Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) in 21058 identified villages with large number of underprivileged households across the country has been contemplated.

Highest importance is given to saturate these villages with the benefits of seven welfare programmes.

### **Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction**

#### **Why in News?**

A committee set up by the Centre to prepare a report on the issue of inter-country parental child abduction has questioned one of the basic principles of the Hague Convention by arguing that the return of the child to his or her habitual residence may not necessarily be in the best interest of the child.

There is immense pressure on India from the U.S. to accede to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which is a multi-national treaty that seeks to protect children wrongfully removed by one of the parents from the custody of the other parent.

At the heart of this treaty is the criterion of "habitual residence" of the child, which is used to determine whether the child was wrongfully removed by a parent as well as to seek the return of the child.

#### **Observation of Committee:**

The Committee feels that the concept of habitual residence is not synchronous with the best interest of the child.

It adds that returning a child to the place of habitual residence may result in sending the child to an inharmonious set-up as well as overlook the fact that a mother is the primary caregiver of the child.

The panel has also prepared a draft law to safeguard the interest of the children, as well as those of the parents, particularly mothers.



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The proposed legislation lays down nine exceptions under which a child will not be returned to the country of habitual residence.

#### **Conditions for refusal**

The important conditions under which a child's return can be refused are — best interest of the child, domestic violence or mental or physical cruelty or harassment against the parent who fled with the child, the parent claiming the return of the child was not exercising the custody rights at the time of removal, and if there is a grave risk that the child would be exposed to physical or psychological harm.

#### **Indian family system**

The panel has also emphasised the importance of the "Indian family system" in ensuring the best interest of the child, seemingly to question the logic behind returning the child to a place of habitual residence outside India.

The report also requires the setting up of an Inter-Country Parental Child Removal Disputes Resolution Authority, which will be the nodal body to decide on the custody of the child, mediate between the warring parties, as well as order the return of the child to the country of habitual residence.

The Committee submitted its report to Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi last month.

The Ministry will be circulating the report to the Ministries of External affairs and Home Affairs for their inputs.

The Justice Rajesh Bindal Committee was set up last year to suggest a model legislation to safeguard the interest of the child as well those of the parents when an NRI (Non Resident Indian) marriage goes sour and one of the parents flees from one country to another with the child.

Once the Central government decides to set-up the Authority and frames a law on the issue, it is expected to take a decision on whether it should accede to the Hague Convention.

In 2016, the government had decided not to be a signatory to the treaty on the ground that it can be detrimental to the interest of the women fleeing an abusive marriage.



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**About the Convention:**

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or Hague Abduction Convention is a multilateral treaty developed by the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) that provides an expeditious method to return a child internationally abducted by a parent from one member country to another.

The Convention was concluded 25 October 1980 and entered into force between the signatories on 1 December 1983. The Convention was drafted to ensure the prompt return of children who have been abducted from their country of habitual residence or wrongfully retained in a contracting state not their country of habitual residence.

The primary intention of the Convention is to preserve whatever status quo child custody arrangement existed immediately before an alleged wrongful removal or retention thereby deterring a parent from crossing international boundaries in search of a more sympathetic court.

The Convention applies only to children under the age of 16.

As of September 2017, 98 states are party to the convention.

**African Continental Free Trade Area**

The African Continental Free Trade Area is the result of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement among all 55 members of the African Union

If ratified, the agreement would result in the largest free-trade area in terms of participating countries since the formation of the World Trade Organization.

African heads of state gathered in Kigali, Rwanda in March 2018 to sign the proposed agreement.

Forty-four of the 55 members of the African Union signed it on 21 March 2018.



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The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) is a continent-wide free-trade agreement brokered by the African Union (AU) and initially signed on by 44 of its 55 member states in Kigali, Rwanda on March 21, 2018.

The agreement initially requires members to remove tariffs from 90% of goods, allowing free access to commodities, goods, and services across the continent.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa estimates that the agreement will boost intra-African trade by 52 percent by 2022.

The proposal will come into force after ratification by 22 of the signatory states.