



C.A from 26th June to 27th June 2019

GS-1

Hero Stone:

Why In News?:

A team of archaeologists discovered two hero stones near Avinashi (Coimbatore) recently, the age of which is speculated to be around 400 years.

About the Discovery:

- The first hero stone measured 100 cm in height and 50 cm in width, while the second one was 90 cm high and 50 cm wide.
- The heroes were seen to be wearing ornaments on their neck, shoulder, hands, and legs.
- The unique feature of these is that in both the stones the hero is seen in a worshipping posture while a tiger is seen attacking him from the right side.
- The hero is generally seen to be attacking the tigers in all the previously discovered hero stones in the Kongu Region.
- A V-shaped spear named *kavai* is seen on the left side of the hero in both the stones and no inscriptions were found.

In Literature:

- According to Sangam literature, the people from the ancient Kongu Region were engaged in rearing of cattle and the *kavai* is understood to be used to cut leaves to feed the cattle.
- Hence, these hero stones may have been erected for the heroes who died during cattle herding.
- Since there were no inscriptions on the stones, the age of the hero stones were deduced as 400 years by comparing other stones from the period.

Heat waves:

Why in News?

Large parts of western and central Europe sweated under blazing temperatures on June 26, with authorities in one German region imposing temporary speed limits on some stretches of the autobahn, the federal controlled-access highway system designed for high-speed vehicular traffic, as a precaution against heat damage.

Authorities have warned that temperatures could top 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in parts of the continent over the coming days as a plume of dry, hot air moves north from Africa.

What is a Heat wave?

- A **heat wave** is a period of excessively hot weather, which may be accompanied by high [humidity](#), especially in [oceanic climate](#) countries.
- While definitions vary, a heat wave is usually measured relative to the usual weather in the area and relative to normal temperatures for the season.
- Temperatures that people from a hotter climate consider normal can be termed a heat wave in a cooler area if they are outside the normal [climate](#) pattern for that area.

Effects:

- Severe heat waves have caused catastrophic crop failures, thousands of deaths from [hyperthermia](#), and widespread power outages due to increased use of air conditioning.
- A heat wave is considered [extreme weather](#), and a danger because heat and sunlight may overheat the human body.

Heat waves can usually be detected using [forecasting](#) instruments so that a [warning call](#) can be issued.

GS-2

APEDA :

Why in News?

Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) in association with North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC) organised the second Conference cum International Buyers-Sellers Meet in Imphal, Manipur on 19th June 2019.

Background:

- India's total agricultural product exports is valued at 38 billion USD for the financial year 2017-18, out of which 50% is contributed through APEDA's products. .
- This conference in Imphal provided a platform for B2B and B2G meetings with international buyers, exporters and progressive farmers / growers to explore opportunities and prospects from the North East Region particularly from Manipur.

About APEDA:

- APEDA, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, promotes export of agricultural and processed food products from India.
- In its endeavour to promote export of agricultural products from NER, APEDA has been organising various buyers- sellers meets to facilitate market linkages of the exporters with international buyers.
- The first international buyers – sellers meet for NER was organized by APEDA in Guwahati in March this year.

Major Functions:

- APEDA is conducting regular promotional activities in the area of agriculture exports.
- It provides support to exporters to set up infrastructure like pack houses and cold storages.
- APEDA also helps exporters to exhibit their products in several national and international expos and exhibitions.

Atal Pension Yojana:

Why in News?

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has submitted a proposal to increase the limit of pension and age under Atal Pension Yojana (APY). The same is under examination in consultation with PFRDA.

About APY:

- **Atal Pension Yojana (previously known as Swavalamban Yojana)** is a government-backed pension scheme in [India](#) targeted at the [unorganised sector](#).
- It was mentioned in the [2015 Budget speech](#) by Finance Minister [Arun Jaitley](#).
- It was launched by Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) on 9 May in [Kolkata](#).
- As of May 2015, only 20% of India's population has any kind of pension scheme, this scheme aims to increase the number.

Main features of scheme:

- In Atal Pension Yojana, for every contribution made to the pension fund, The [central government](#) would also co-contribute 50% of the total contribution or ₹1,000 (US\$14) per annum, whichever is lower, to each eligible subscriber account, for a period of 5 years.
- The minimum age of joining APY is 18 years and maximum age is 40 years.
- The age of exit and the start of pension would be 60 years. Therefore, a minimum period of contribution by the subscriber under APY would be 20 years or more.
- The national [Aadhaar](#) ID number is the primary "[know your customer](#)" document for identification of beneficiaries, spouses, and nominees to avoid entitlement-related disputes in the long-term.
- The subscribers are required to opt for a monthly pension from ₹1,000 (US\$14) to ₹5,000 (US\$72) and ensure payment of the stipulated monthly contribution regularly.
- The subscribers can opt to decrease or increase pension amount during the course of the accumulation phase, as per the available monthly pension amounts. However, the option to switch is only provided once a year during the month of April.
- This scheme will be linked to the bank accounts opened under the [Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana](#) scheme and the contributions will be deducted automatically. Recently Centre has allowed small finance Banks to offer APY.

Eligible beneficiary:

- Atal Pension Yojana(APY) is open to all citizens of India between 18-40 years of age.

- Accordingly, Mudra beneficiaries, Self Help Group (SHG) members and Anganwadi workers who are citizen of India and fall between 18-40 years of age are eligible to join APY.

A Report on Malnutrition :

Almost one in three Indian [children](#) under five years will still be stunted by 2022 going by current trends, according to an analysis of the country's food and nutrition security released on Tuesday.

Over the last decade, child stunting — which is a measure of chronic malnutrition — has reduced at a rate of about 1% per year, the slowest decline among emerging economies.

At this rate, 31.4% of children will still be stunted by the 2022 deadline. India must double its rate of progress to reach the target of 25% by that time, says the report.

Analysis of progress

- The report, which is a baseline analysis of the country's progress in achieving the second Sustainable Development Goal to end hunger, was prepared by the UN World Food Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- Foodgrain yields have risen 33% over the last two decades, but are still only half of 2030 target yields, says the report.
- Even so, the Indian farmer is producing more foodgrains than ever before, making the country self-sufficient in this regard.
- Unfortunately, the consumer's access to rice, wheat and other cereals has not increased at the same rate, due to population growth, inequality, food wastage and losses, and exports.
- As a result, the average per capita consumption of energy among the poorest 30% of the population is 1811 kilo calories, much lower than the norm of 2155 kilo calories per day.

Variation Between States:

- The signs of unequal access are starkest among children.

- In States like Bihar (48%) and Uttar Pradesh (46%), almost one in two children are stunted, while it is only one in five children in Kerala and Goa (20% each).
- There are high rates of stunting among children in the poorest wealth quintile (51.4%), Scheduled Tribes (43.6%) and Scheduled Castes (42.5%), and children born to mothers with no education (51%).

India and UNSC membership:

Context:

India has won the unanimous support of all countries in the 55-member Asia-Pacific Group at the [United Nations](#) in support of its bid for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council (UNSC) for a two-year term in 2021-22.

The development is particularly significant given that [Pakistan](#) and China, both countries with which India has had diplomatic challenges at the UN, supported the move.

Election Process:

- No challenges to India's candidacy are expected with regard to acquiring the support of other UN members.
- India will need the vote of two-thirds of the 193 UN General Assembly members to win a non-permanent seat on the UNSC.

Earlier Membership:

- India has already held a non-permanent seat on the UNSC for seven terms: 1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and 2011-2012.
- It announced its candidacy for the 2021-22 seat at the end of 2013, with Afghanistan, a potential contender, withdrawing its nomination to accommodate India's candidacy based on the "long-standing, close and friendly relations" between the two countries, as per what Afghanistan's UN mission had said at the time.
- India has been keen to hold the seat in 2021-22 to coincide with the 75th anniversary of Independence in 2022.

About Non-Permanent membership:

- Each year, the **General Assembly elects five non-permanent members** (out of ten in total) for a two-year term.
The ten non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis:
 - five for African and Asian countries;
 - one for Eastern European countries;
 - two for Latin American and Caribbean countries;
 - two for Western European and other countries.
- Article 23 of the **UN Charter** concerns the composition of the Security Council.

Jal Shakti Abhiyan:

Why in news?

The Centre is set to initiate the Jal Shakti Abhiyan to ramp up [rainwater harvesting](#) and conservation efforts in 255 water-stressed districts from July 1, in line with the government's promise to focus on water.

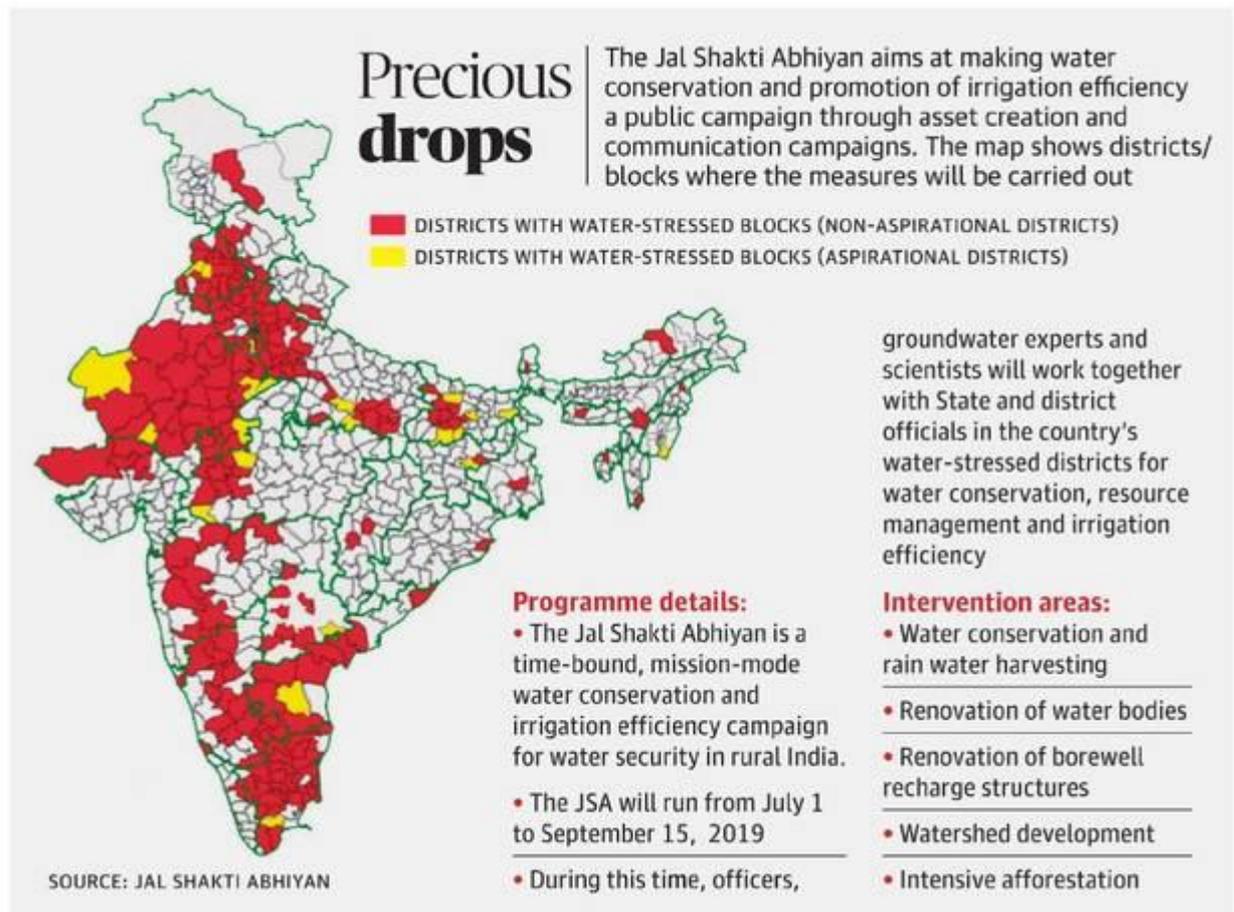
About the Campaign:

- The campaign seems to follow the model of last year's Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, where central officials monitored the implementation of seven flagship development schemes in 117 aspirational districts across the country.
- The campaign would run from July 1 to September 15 in States receiving rainfall during the south-west monsoon, while States receiving rainfall in the retreating or north-east monsoon would be covered from October 1 to November 30.
- Overall, 313 blocks with critical groundwater levels would be covered, along with 1,186 blocks with over-exploited groundwater and 94 blocks with low groundwater availability.

Aim of Abhiyaan:

- The Jal Shakti Abhiyan would aim to accelerate water harvesting, conservation and borewell recharge activities already being carried out under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme and the Integrated Watershed Management Programme of the Rural Development Ministry.

- Progress would be monitored in real time through mobile applications and an online dashboard at indiawater.gov.in.
- Block and district-level water conservation plans would be drafted, and Kisan Vigyan Kendras would hold melas to promote better crop choices and more efficient water use for irrigation.
- A major communications campaign on TV, radio, print, local and social media would be carried out, with celebrities mobilised to generate awareness for the campaign.



GS-3

Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Bill:

Why in News?

The [Lok Sabha](#) on Wednesday passed the Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Bill, 2019, making a trust or any entity notified by the Central government eligible for consideration of grant of permission to set up a unit in special economic zones.

About the Bill:

- It amends the Special Economic Zones Act, 2005 and replaces an Ordinance that was promulgated on March 2, 2019.
- The Act provides for the establishment, development and management of Special Economic Zones for the promotion of exports.
- The Bill had paved the way for trusts to set up units in these zones
- **Definition of person:** Under the Act, the definition of a person includes an individual, a Hindu undivided family, a company, a co-operative society, a firm, or an association of persons. The Bill adds two more categories to this definition by including a trust, or any other entity which may be notified by the central government.

What is a SEZ?

- A **special economic zone (SEZ)** is an area in which the business and trade laws are different from the rest of the country.
- SEZs are located within a country's national borders, and their aims include increased trade balance, employment, increased investment, job creation and effective administration.
- To encourage businesses to set up in the zone, financial policies are introduced.
- These policies typically encompass investing, [taxation](#), trading, quotas, [customs](#) and [labour regulations](#).
- Additionally, companies may be offered [tax holidays](#), where upon establishing themselves in a zone, they are granted a period of lower taxation.

SEZ's in India:

- SEZs were introduced to [India](#) in 2000, following the already successful SEZ model used in China.
- Prior to their introduction, India relied on [export processing zones](#) (EPZs) which failed to make an impact on foreign investors.
- By 2005, all EPZs had been converted to SEZs.
- As of 2017, there are 221 SEZs in operation, with a further 194 approved for 2018.
- For developers to establish an SEZ in India, applications can be made to the Indian Board of Approval. Companies, partner firms, and individuals may also apply by completing Form-A which is available on the Department of Commerce's website.

Types of SEZ's:

- There are four types of SEZs in India, which are categorised according to size: Multi-sector (1,000+ hectares); Sector-specific (100+ hectares); Free Trade & Warehousing Zone (FTWZ) (40+ hectares); and Tech, handicraft, non-conventional energy, gems & jewellery (10+ hectares)

Committee for MSME:

Why in News?

A committee formed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), headed by former SEBI Chairman U.K. Sinha, has recommended a ₹5,000 crore distressed asset fund for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

About the Fund:

- The fund will assist units in a cluster where there is a change in the external environment such as plastic ban, which had resulted in large number of such entities becoming non-performing. "
- This would be of significant size which makes equity investments that help unlock debt or help revive sick units.
- It is a variation of venture capital fund , meant for equity investment of ₹1 lakh to ₹10 lakh in proprietary or partnership MSMEs, which will not or cannot list on the stock exchanges.
- "The structure would recognise that exits will not be big bang but through a percentage of revenues or profits over a period of 3-5 years.
- The onus of creating this fund would lie with the governmentt.

Other suggestions by Panel:

- The panel also suggested that the RBI should increase the limit for non-collateralised loans to ₹20 lakh, and this would address a significant proportion of the sector needs.
- In addition, it also suggested revision in loan limit sanctioned under MUDRA by the Finance Ministry to ₹20 lakh from ₹10 lakh.
- The committee has also recommended banks that wish to specialise in MSME lending, their sub-targets for farm loans under the priority sector lender could be waived off, and instead can be given a target for loans to the SME sector.
- The targets, committee said, could be of 50% of the net bank credit for universal banks and 80% for small finance banks.
- Commercial banks have been suggested that they should develop customised products to assess the financing requirements based on expected cash flows moving away from traditional forms of assessment.

Current situation:

- At present, the overall priority sector lending target for a universal bank is 40% of their net bank credit and 75% for small finance bank.

Global warming:An effect in Himalayas:

Context:

Comparing data obtained by Cold War-era spy satellites with images from modern stereo satellites, scientists have shown that Himalayan glaciers have lost more than a quarter of their ice mass since 1975, with melting occurring twice as fast after the turn of the century as average temperatures rose.

Background:

- In the 1970s, at the height of the Cold War, the U.S. had deployed spy satellites that orbited the globe and took thousands of photographs, using a telescopic camera system, for reconnaissance purposes.
- Film recovery capsules would be ejected from the KH-9 Hexagon military satellites and parachuted back to Earth over the Pacific Ocean.
- More than four decades later, scientists are using those same images to show the devastating impact of a warming earth on the Himalayan glaciers.
- The overlapping images, each covering 30,000 square kilometres with a ground resolution of six to nine metres, have been pieced together to form digital elevation models of the Himalayas of that era.

Salient Observation:

- "Our observed annual mass losses suggest that of the total ice mass present in 1975, about 87% remained in 2000 and 72% remained in 2016," the study's authors wrote. "
- Similar mass loss rates were found across subregions and a doubling of the average rate of loss during 2000–2016 relative to the 1975–2000 interval.

Reasons Behind:

- The study goes on to assert that rising temperatures are responsible for the accelerating loss.
- This is consistent with the available multidecade weather station records scattered throughout HMA [High Mountain Asia which includes all mountain ranges surrounding the Tibetan Plateau].
- It indicate quasi-steady mean annual air temperatures through the 1960s to the 1980s with a prominent warming trend beginning in the mid-1990s and continuing into the 21st century, with an average increase of 1° celsius since 2000.