

16 January 2020: PIB Summary & Analysis

Cellular Jail

Context:

The Vice President has called for organizing student visits to Cellular Jail and other historic places linked to the freedom struggle. He stated that this visit to the Cellular Jail would inspire the youth to strive for greater glory to the country while reminding them of how hard-won and precious India's freedom is.

About "Cellular Jail":

- The cellular jail derives its name from the small and individual cells which housed the prisoners.
- It is also known as '**Kala pani**' or the 'black waters', as reaching the jail required crossing the sea.
- It was a colonial prison in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Today, however, it serves as a national memorial monument.
- The prison was used by the British especially to exile political prisoners to the remote archipelago. The jail was used to subject the prisoners to the three-pronged punishment of hunger, torture and isolation.
 - The primary ideology of the Cellular Jail was isolation from fellow human beings, as it was the harshest form of punishments to the inmates.
- Many notable independence activists such as Batukeshwar Dutt, Yogendra Shukla among others and the famous Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, were imprisoned here during the struggle for India's independence.
- The purpose of solitary confinement was to demoralize freedom fighters. The jail, surrounded by hundreds of miles of ocean on all sides, provided little scope or hope for inmates to escape.
- The construction of the prison started in 1896 and was completed in 1906. It is estimated that the Britishers held a total of 80,000 political prisoners, however very few of them survived.

International conclave on "Globalizing Indian Thought"

Context:

The Prime Minister addressed the international conclave on "Globalizing Indian Thought" happening in Kozhikode. He said that compassion, harmony, justice, service and openness are the ideals on which Indian values are based and that India is surging ahead on the path of development while proudly being rooted to Indian systems and traditions.

About "Indian Thought":

- Indian thought is vibrant and diverse. There are certain ideals that have remained central to Indian values. They are compassion, harmony, justice, service and openness.
- The virtues that draw global attention to Indian values are:
 - **Peace, harmony & brotherhood-** The Prime Minister attributed the existence and prosperity of the country through the generations, to the prevalence of harmony and peace, whereas many other civilizations have failed due to the absence of the same.

- He also pointed out that India has a composite mixture of multiple cultures, dialects, customs, traditions and religions, which as a whole contributes to the prevalence of peace and harmony in the country.
- India's strengths are that their traditions are guided by simplified and relatable practices which contribute overall wellbeing of an individual. These practices are neither rigid nor unidimensional.
- The Prime Minister also pointed out that, Non-Violence forms the core of these traditions and these were further moulded by Mahatma Gandhi during the country's struggle to Independence.
- **Love for Environment-** India led the world in forming the “**International Solar Alliance**”, to harness solar energy for a cleaner future.
- **Protecting the tiger and the lion-** India has achieved the goal of doubling the population of lions and tigers. These goals were set in 2010 and the world had agreed to double the tiger population by 2022.
- **Focus on increasing the Forest Cover**
- **Focus on the welfare of women-**
 - India is ahead of the world by giving women the voting rights from the very beginning although it took a few centuries for the rest of the world to grant the same right to women.
 - India also has the highest number of women as Members of Parliament (MPs).
- **The celebration of openness.**
- The Prime Minister commented that the “Indian Thought” has the potential to solve some of the most leading challenges the planet faces.

Multilateralism & Strengthening the World Trade Organization

Context:

The Union Minister for Commerce and Industry & Railways commented that India believes in Multilateralism and strengthening the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**.

Larger Background:

- India has been at the receiving end of unfair trade practices for a very long time and therefore believes in the creation of a more reformed rules-based trading system.
- India also believes in the strengthening of WTO and is one of the first four countries to pay all its dues to the World Trade Body.
- India allows e-commerce companies to work on the marketplace model where buyers and sellers are free to buy and sell. They have to follow the rules of the marketplace and the laws of the country.
- The Commerce and Industry Minister stressed the importance of making trade policies that are people-centric. They would enable the country to become sustainable, to eliminate poverty and raise prosperity levels for all citizens.
 - He also informed that India is in dialogue with the EU and the U.S. to sort out pressing trade issues and further expand engagements with them.

About WTO:

- The World Trade Organization is an intergovernmental organization that is concerned with the regulation of international trade between nations.
- The WTO's global system lowers trade barriers through negotiations and operates under the principle of non-discrimination.
- The WTO's system deals with the issues in two ways.
 - One is by dialogues where countries negotiate rules that are acceptable to all.
 - The other is by settling disputes about whether the countries are playing by the agreed rules.
- The WTO has 164 members (including European Union) and 23 observer governments (like Iran, Iraq, Bhutan, Libya etc).

Commerce Secretary-level meeting held in New Delhi

Context:

India and Bangladesh held a Commerce Secretary-level meeting in New Delhi.

Details of the meeting:

- Both India and Bangladesh held extensive discussions on a variety of issues of mutual interest, like:
 - Border Haats,
 - Joint study for the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CPEA)
 - India-Bangladesh CEOs' Forum
 - Sharing of trade data
 - Regional connectivity initiatives
 - Harmonization of standards
 - Up-gradation of border trading infrastructure and,
 - Facilitation of business visas.

About the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):

- CEPA is a free-trade agreement between two countries.
- It covers the trade in services, investment and other areas of economic partnership.
- Some countries which have entered into a CEPA are:
 - India and South-Korea
 - India and Japan
 - Indonesia and the European Union
- CEPA is a wider term than CECA and has the widest coverage.
- CECA stands for **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement**.
- CECA involves only tariff reduction/elimination in a phased manner on listed items / all items except the negative list and tariff-rate quota (TRQ) items.

India-Norway Dialogue on Trade & Investment Held in New Delhi

Context:

The first Session of India-Norway Dialogue on Trade & Investment (DTI) was convened in New Delhi.

Details:

- The session was based on the Terms of Reference (ToR) signed between India and Norway in January 2019. It was the first meeting after the signing of DTI.
- The first session was preceded by an industry interaction where discussions were held on various areas of mutual interest such as shipping & maritime, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and renewable energy. Both sides exchanged views on investment opportunities available in the respective countries.
 - The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** and the Department of Economic Affairs highlighted the various policy initiatives of the Government for promoting investment in the country.

While economic exchanges between India and Norway remain satisfactory, there are ample opportunities for further intensification and diversification in mutually beneficial areas and their complementarities.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Voluntary Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2017

Context:

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) amends the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Voluntary Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2017.

Details:

- The amendment provides that a Liquidator shall deposit the amount of unclaimed dividends if any, and undistributed proceeds, if any, in a liquidation process along with any income earned thereon into the Corporate Voluntary Liquidation Account before submission of an application for dissolution of the corporate person.
- It also provides a process for a stakeholder to seek withdrawal from the Corporate Voluntary Liquidation Account.

Implementation of Assam Inland Water Transport Project

Context:

The Government of India, the Government of Assam and the World Bank have signed a loan agreement of \$88 million for the implementation of the Assam Inland Water Transport Project. The Assam Inland Water Transport Project will help develop a modern, efficient and safe river transport system for the large volume of passengers and cargo carried by the vessels.

Details:

- A majority of Assam's ferry routes cross the Brahmaputra, providing a crucial means of transport to thousands of commuters in both the urban and rural areas of the Brahmaputra Valley.

- The **Assam Inland Water Transport Project (AIWTP)** will help Assam improve the passenger ferry infrastructure and its services and strengthen the capacity of the institutions running the inland water transport.
 - Technically better-designed terminals and energy-efficient vessels (both new and retrofitted) will make the ferry services more sustainable with least disruption to nature.
- The Government of Assam has taken on the challenge of modernizing the ferries sector which, though vital to the state, remains largely informal.
- The project will support the Government of Assam's efforts to corporatise its own ferry activities.
- The Assam Shipping Company (ASC) will operate the government ferries and the Assam Ports Company (APC) will provide terminals and terminal services on a common-user basis to both public and private ferry operators.
- Loan of \$88 million from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) has a final maturity of 14.5 years including a grace period of five years.

Significance:

- The project will improve facilities for people using the ferry services and give special attention to the safety and security of women and girls.
- The terminals will have better access, lighting and signages while the new vessels will allow for individual seats and separate toilets.
- Inland Water Transport is also a more sustainable mode of transport.
- It provides low-carbon and low-cost options when compared to the cost of constructing and maintaining flood-resilient roads and bridges across the long stretches of the Brahmaputra river.

Bru-Reang Refugee Crisis

Context:

Union Minister for Home Affairs, presided over the signing of an agreement between the Government of India, Governments of Tripura and Mizoram and Bru-Reang representatives to end the 23-year old Bru-Reang refugee crisis.

Details:

- This historic agreement is in line with PM Modi's vision for the progress of the North East and the empowerment of the people of the region.
- Under the new agreement, around 34,000 Bru refugees will be settled in Tripura and would be given aid from the Centre to help with their rehabilitation and all-round development.
- These people would get all the rights that normal residents of the States get and they would now be able to enjoy the benefits of social welfare schemes of Centre and State governments.
- The settlement has been reached after detailed discussions held by the Union government with the State governments of Mizoram and Tripura and the representatives of Bru tribes.
- The Home Minister informed that under the new arrangement, each of the displaced families would be given residential plots, in addition to the aid under an earlier agreement of a fixed deposit of Rs. 4 lakhs, Rs. 5,000 cash aid per month for 2 years, free ration for 2 years and Rs. 1.5 lakhs aid to build their house.
 - The government of Tripura would provide the land under this agreement.

Bru-Reang Refugee Crisis:

- Around 5,000 families consisting of around 30,000 Bru-Reang tribals were forced to flee Mizoram and seek shelter in Tripura following ethnic tension.
- These people were housed in temporary camps in North Tripura.
- The Union government had been assisting the two-State governments for taking care of the refugees.
- An agreement was signed between the Union government, the two-State governments and representatives of Bru-Reang refugees in 2018, as a result of which the aid given to these families was increased substantially and 328 families consisting of 1369 individuals returned to Mizoram under the agreement.

Fuel conservation mega campaign of PCRA Saksham 2020 launched**Context:**

Saksham, an annual one-month long fuel conservation mega campaign of Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, has been launched.

Larger Background:

- Prosperity and higher living standards are driving energy demand in India. By mid-2020s India will be the world's largest growth market accounting for 25% of global energy demand growth.
- Presently 83% of India's crude oil requirement is met through imports.
- The earnest efforts for petroleum conservation could help India to reduce the huge import burden.

Saksham:

- 'Saksham' is a flagship program of **Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA)** and Oil PSUs under the guidance of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- It is an initiative for adding value to the various efforts being made in the country for saving fuel.
- "Saksham" has a primary objective of delivering a strong message that a sustainable future demands the conservation of natural resources.

During Saksham-2020, various interactive programs and activities are being planned by the PCRA.

Missed Call Alert Facility for NHAI prepaid Wallet FASTag balance enquiry**Context:**

Indian Highways Management Company Ltd. (IHMCL), a company promoted by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), has announced the introduction of missed call alert facility for NHAI Prepaid Wallet balance enquiry.

Details:

- Being a bank-neutral tag, NHAI FASTag can be linked either to a savings bank account or NHAI Prepaid Wallet.
- There are now 13 banks whose bank account can be linked to NHAI FASTag.

- It is an effort to provide hassle-free and convenient services to FASTag users linked to NHAI prepaid wallet.

Mega-science exhibition Vigyan Samagam

Context:

Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Department of Science and Technology (DST) have jointly organised a multi-venue mega-science exhibition, called Vigyan Samagam.

Details:

- It has been organised to highlight the value and impact of fundamental research to a broad cross-section of an audience including students, academicians and industry, and to further strengthen India's participation in mega-science projects.
- Vigyan Samagam exhibition is showcasing India's contribution to international collaborations on fundamental science and research and providing a common interactive platform for mega-science projects, industry, academia and institutions.
- It is a science communication platform for policymakers, representatives of print and electronic media along with members of civil society.
- The exhibition is also ushering fundamental science and research as a strong career option for youngsters. Such a wide spectrum of audience is expected to pave the way for greater interaction between all stakeholders resulting in cross-fertilisation of ideas.
- Mega-science collaborations proposed to be showcased in Vigyan Samagam include the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), and India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) amongst many other collaborations.
- The Vigyan Samagam is being hosted in a caravan mode at four cities – Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Delhi.
- National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), Ministry of Culture, as a venue partner is providing the required venues at selected cities, exhibition stalls and necessary infrastructural and logistic support to conduct the exhibition