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## PUNE



**PUNE Address:**

301/5 3<sup>rd</sup> Flr, Pinnacle Prestige (Near Durvankur Hotel), Above Cosmos Bank, Opp. Maharashtra Electronics, Tilak Road, Sadashiv Peth, Pune - 411 030  
Mob.: 91453 39324 / 25

## THANE



**THANE Address:**

201/202, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Laizer Arcade, Raghoba Shankar Road, Chendani, Thane(W) - 400 601.  
Mob.: 75060 10635

**Email :** [pioneeracademypace@gmail.com](mailto:pioneeracademypace@gmail.com)

**Website:** [www.pioneeracademypace.com](http://www.pioneeracademypace.com) / .in

**IVR Number :** 8080 046 046

## ANDHERI



**ANDHERI Address:**

3<sup>rd</sup> Flr, Syndicate Chamber, Above Vaibhav Restaurant, Next To Better Home Hotel, Opp. Andheri (E) Station, Andheri (E) - 400 601  
Mob. 84518 55673 / 70302 92316

## DADAR



**DADAR Address:**

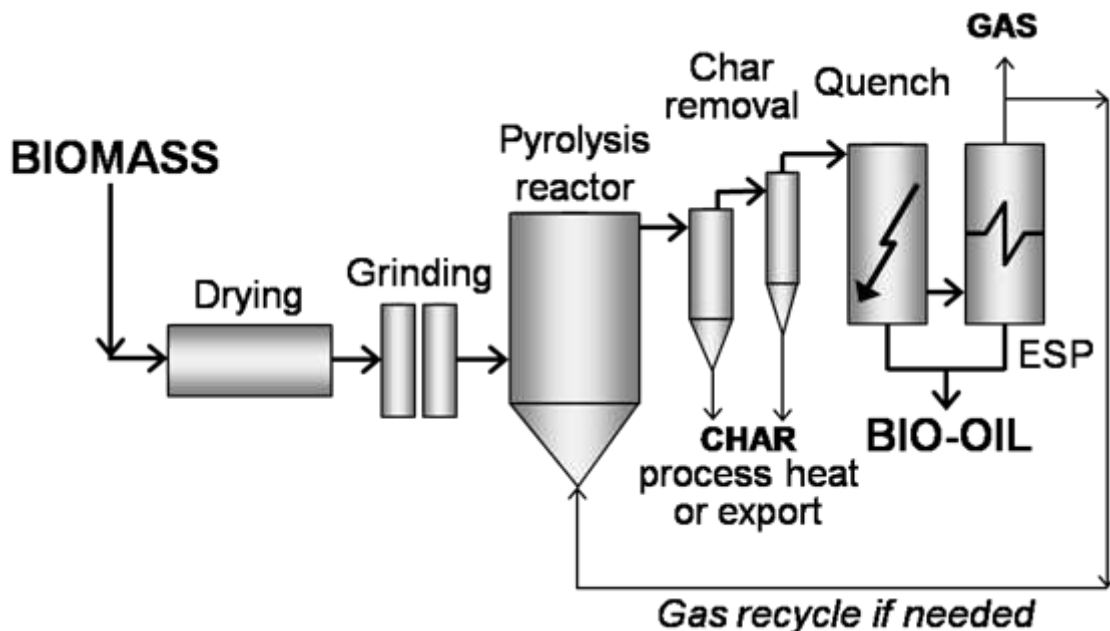
306/7/8, 3<sup>rd</sup> Flr, Blue Pearl Society, Senapati Bapat Road, Plot No. 14, Near Janata Cloth Market, Near Dadar Railway Station, Dadar (W), Mumbai-400 028  
Mob : 93241 69627 / 91375 41508

*Success is born of action...*

## Topic 1: Biofuel

*Importance for Prelims: Environment/ Science and Technology*

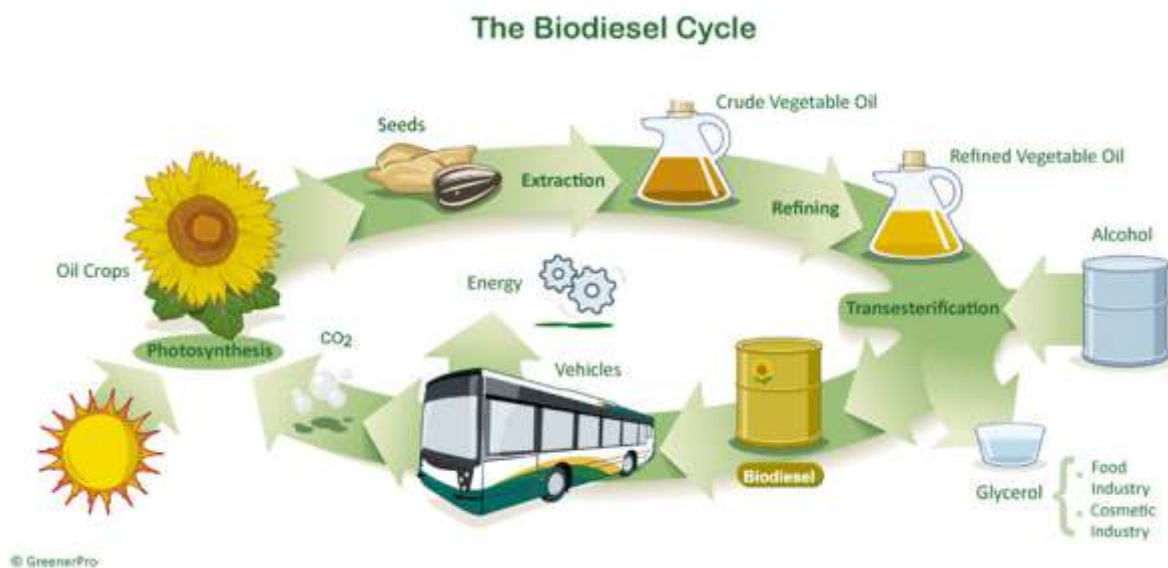
*Importance for Mains: Science and Technology*



Plastic from used personal protective equipment (PPE) can be transformed into renewable liquid fuels, according to a new study in the journal

- **PPE waste to be converted into fuel using chemical a process called pyrolysis.**
- This breaks down plastic at **high temperature** – between 300-400°C for an hour – **without oxygen.**
- Biofuels are transportation fuels such as **ethanol and biodiesel that are made from biomass materials.**
- These fuels are usually blended with petroleum fuels (gasoline and diesel fuel), but they can also be used on their own.

- Using ethanol or biodiesel **reduces the consumption of gasoline and diesel fuel made from crude oil**, which can reduce the amount of crude oil imported from other countries. Ethanol and biodiesel are also cleaner-burning fuels than pure gasoline and diesel fuel.
- **Ethanol is an alcohol fuel made from the sugars** found in grains such as corn, sorghum, and barley.
- **Biodiesel is a fuel made from vegetable oils, fats, or greases**—such as recycled restaurant grease. Biodiesel fuel can be used in diesel engines without changing the engine.
- Pure biodiesel is non-toxic and biodegradable.





## Topic 2: International Court of Justice (ICJ)

*Importance for Prelims: International Relations*

*Importance for Mains: International Relations*



India approached the International Court of Justice against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the **principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN)**.
- It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.
- The seat of the Court is at the **Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands)**.
- The Court's role is to settle, in accordance with international law, **legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions** referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.
- The Court is **composed of 15 judges, who are elected for terms of office of nine years by the United Nations General**

## Assembly and the Security Council.

- In order to ensure a degree of continuity, one third of the Court is elected every three years.
- Judges are eligible for re-election.
- It is assisted by a Registry, its administrative organ. Its official languages are English and French.


### INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ) AND INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC) DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

	ICJ	ICC
Year Established	1946	2002
Languages	English, French	English, French
UN-Relationship	Official court of the UN commonly referred to as "World Court"	Independent; may receive case referrals from UN Security Council; Can initiate prosecutions without UN action or referral
Location	The Hague, NL	The Hague, NL
Jurisdictions	Member-states	individuals
Types of cases	1. Contentions between parties; 2. Advisory Opinions	Criminal prosecution of individual
Subject Matter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sovereignty</li> <li>• Boundary disputes</li> <li>• Maritime disputes</li> <li>• Trade</li> <li>• Natural resources</li> <li>• Human rights</li> <li>• Treaty violations</li> <li>• Treaty interpretations</li> <li>...and more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genocide</li> <li>• Crimes against humanity</li> <li>• War crimes</li> <li>• Crimes of aggression</li> </ul>
Authorizing Legal Mechanism	States that ratify the UN Charter become parties to the ICJ Statute under Art. 93. Non UN-member states can also become parties to the ICJ by ratifying the ICJ Statute. Each state must provide consent to any contentious case by explicit agreement, declaration, or treaty clause	Rome Statute

## Topic 3: City gas distribution and CNG

Importance for Prelims: Economy

### TOWARDS CLEANER ENERGY

<p>➤ H-CNG is a cleaner version of CNG. It is a mixture, 82% CNG and 18% hydrogen</p> <p>➤ Tests conducted by Pune-based research organisation Automotive Research Association of India have shown that using H-CNG in BS-IV vehicles helped cut down carbon emissions by nearly 70%</p>		<p>➤ In New Delhi, H-CNG is considered as an intermediary step before finally moving to fuel-cell buses</p> <p>➤ In fuel-cell buses, hydrogen is used to produce electricity resulting in zero emissions</p>
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Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) set to notify regulations to allow competition for city gas distribution companies

### **CNG Vs H-CNG**

- CNG is compressed natural gas. With natural gas mainly composed of methane, CNG emits less air pollutants — carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and particulate matter — than petrol or diesel.

### **Environmental Benefits:**

- No impurities, No Sulphur (S), No lead (Pb) and Very low levels of polluting gaseous emissions without smell and dust. Molecular structure compactness prevents the reactive processes which lead to the formation of Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) in the troposphere

### **Safety Benefits:**

- Lighter than air – in case of leak no dangerous puddles
- Unlikely to ignite due to: **High ignition temperature, Narrow range of ignition. H-CNG is a blend of hydrogen and CNG, the ideal hydrogen concentration being 18%. Compared to conventional CNG, use of H-CNG can reduce emission of carbon monoxide up to 70%, besides enabling up to 5% savings in fuel.**
- While recommending the use of H-CNG as an alternative fuel, the NITI Aayog-CII Action Plan for Clean Fuel notes that physical blending of CNG and hydrogen involves a series of energy-intensive steps that would make **H-CNG more expensive than CNG.**

### **City gas distribution network**

- Purpose for development of CGD networks is **to increase the availability of cleaner cooking fuel** (i.e. Piped Natural Gas) and **transportation fuel**(i.e. CNG) in the country.
- The **Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) authorizes entities to develop Natural Gas Distribution Network** as per PNGRB Act, 2006 and the Regulations notified thereunder.
- PNGRB identifies the Geographical Areas (GAs) for the development of City Gas Distribution (CGD) network depending on the natural gas pipeline connectivity/natural gas availability and techno-commercial viability



## Topic 4: Ammonium nitrate

### *Importance for Prelims: Science and tech*



The catastrophic explosion at Beirut port has so far killed at least 100 people and injured around 4,000

- Ammonium nitrate ( $\text{NH}_4\text{NO}_3$ ) is a **white, crystalline chemical which is soluble in water.**
- It is **common chemical ingredient of agricultural fertilisers**, the nitrogen rich compound is also the **main component of the explosive composition** known as ANFO — ammonium nitrate fuel oil. Large quantities **of stored ammonium nitrate are regarded as a major fire hazard**, with multiple reported cases across the world. The explosion of large storage can happen primarily in two ways.
- One is by some **type detonation or initiation because the storage comes in contact with explosive mixture.**
- Second, the **blast can result due to a fire which starts in the ammonium nitrate store** because of the heat generated due to the oxidation process at large scale.

## Topic 5: Indian theatre

### *Importance for Prelims: Arts and culture*



Theatre director Ebrahim-Al-kazi, who revolutionised Indian theatre and was the longest-serving director of the National School of Drama, passed away

- **Traditional art forms reflect the ideals of the society**, its determination to survive, its ethos, emotions, fellow-feelings, and so on. Drama in itself is a complete form of arts. It includes in its framework acting, dialogue, poetry, music, etc.
- Development of traditional theatre forms is **based on such local and regional peculiarities which are not bound and restricted by social and economic divisions**, limitations, etc. Traditional art forms have influenced classical art forms and vice-versa. It is an eternal journey in the sphere of ‘culture’.

Some theatre forms are:

- **Therukoothu**, the most popular form of folk drama of Tamil Nadu, literally means “street play”. It is mostly performed at the time of annual temple festivals of Mariamman (Rain goddess) to achieve rich harvest.

- **Yakshagaana**, traditional theatre form of Karnataka, is based on mythological stories and Puranas. The most popular episodes are from the Mahabharata
- **Koodiyaattam**, one of the oldest traditional theatre forms of Kerala, is based on Sanskrit theatre traditions
- **Mudiyettu**, traditional folk theatre form of Kerala is celebrated in the month of Vrischikam (November-December). It is usually performed only in the Kali temples of Kerala, as an oblation to the Goddess.
- **Krishnattam**, folk theatre of Kerala, came into existence in the middle of 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. under the patronage of King Manavada of Calicut. Krishnattam is a cycle of eight plays performed for eight consecutive days.
- **Dashavatar** is the most developed theatre form of the Konkan and Goa regions. The performers personify the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu-the god of preservation and creativity.
- **Tamaasha** is a traditional folk theatre form of Maharashtra. It has evolved from the folk forms such as Gondhal, Jagran and Kirtan. Unlike other theatre forms, in Tamaasha the female actress is the chief exponent of dance movements in the play.
- **Maach** is the traditional theatre form of Madhya Pradesh. The term Maach is used for the stage itself as also for the play. In this theatre form songs are given prominence in between the dialogues.

- **Bhaona** is a presentation of the AnkiNaat of Assam. In Bhaona cultural glimpses of Assam, Bengal Orissa, Mathura and Brindavan can be seen. The Sutradhaar, or narrator begins the story, first in Sanskrit and then in either Brajboli or Assamese.
- **Bhavai** is the traditional theatre form of Gujarat. The centers of this form are Kutch and Kathiawar.
- **Nautanki** is usually associated with Uttar Pradesh. The most popular centres of this traditional theatre form are Kanpur, Lucknow and Haathras.
- **Raasleela** is based exclusively on Lord Krishna legends; it is believed that Nand Das wrote the initial plays based on the life of Krishna. In this theatre form the dialogues in prose combined beautifully with songs and scenes from Krishna's pranks.
- **BhandPather**, the traditional theatre form of Kashmir, is a unique combination of dance, music and acting. Satire, wit and parody are preferred for inducing laughter. In this theatre form, music is provided with surnai, nagaara and dhol. Since the actors of BhandPather are mainly from the farming community, the impact of their way of living, ideals and sensitivity is discernible.



## Topic 6: The Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN)

### *Importance for Prelims: Science and Tech*



eVIN has now been adapted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare under the National Health Mission for use in coronavirus pandemic.

- eVIN is a system a system used to track information on vaccine supply chain and stocks across the country. It provides real-time information on vaccine stocks and flows, and storage temperatures across all cold chain points in the country.
- It has been used in the past to track immunization for children and pregnant mothers against vaccine preventable diseases. Now it will be customized for use during the coronavirus pandemic.
- eVIN combines state-of-the-art technology, a strong IT infrastructure and trained human resource to enable real time monitoring of stock and storage temperature of the vaccines kept in multiple locations across the country. 32 Indian states and UTs are already established under eVIN, .The remaining states and UTs – Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Ladakh and Sikkim are soon going to join the network as well.

## Topic 7: CRISPR

### *Importance for Prelims: Science and Tech*



### **What is Gene Editing?**

- Genome editing (also called gene editing) is a group of technologies that give scientists the ability to change an organism's DNA.
- These technologies allow genetic material to be added, removed, or altered at particular locations in the genome. Several approaches to genome editing have been developed.
- A recent one is known as CRISPR-Cas9, which is short for clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats and CRISPR-associated protein 9.
- CRISPR technology was **adapted from the natural defense mechanisms of bacteria and archaea** (the domain of single-celled microorganisms).
- These organisms use CRISPR-derived RNA and various Cas

proteins, including Cas9, to **foil attacks by viruses and other foreign bodies**. They do so primarily by chopping up and destroying the DNA of a foreign invader. When these components are transferred into other, more complex, organisms, it allows for the manipulation of genes, or “editing.”

- The CRISPR-Cas9 system has generated a lot of excitement in the scientific community because it is **faster, cheaper, more accurate, and more efficient** than other existing genome editing methods.
- Its many **potential applications include correcting genetic defects, treating and preventing the spread of diseases and improving crops**.

## Topic 8: Time Capsule

### *Importance for Prelims: Science and Tech*



A time capsule will be placed around 2,000 feet underground at the Ram Temple construction site in Ayodhya.

- It is a container of any size or shape, which accommodates documents, photos and artefacts typical of the current era and is buried underground, for future generations to unearth.
- The time capsule requires special engineering so that the contents don't decay, even if pulled out after a century. Material such as aluminium and stainless steel are used for encasing, and documents are often reproduced on acid-free paper.
- While the term "time capsule" was coined in the 20th century, among the **earliest examples of one dates back to 1777**, found by historians inside the statue of Jesus Christ in a church in Spain during restoration work in December 2017.
- The International Time Capsule Society (ITCS), based in the US and formed in 1990, is now defunct but continues estimating the number of time capsules in the world. As per its database, there are 10,000-15,000 times capsules worldwide.



## Topic 9: Disincentivising savings

*Importance for Prelims: Economy*



There has been a sharp fall in deposit rates due to aggressive rate cuts by banks in response to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) reduction in the benchmark rates. This coupled with a rise in consumer prices have pulled **real interest** rates into negative territory, disincentivising savings.

### **Real interest Vs Nominal Interest**

- A real interest rate is an interest rate that has been adjusted to remove the effects of inflation to reflect the real cost of funds to the borrower and the real yield to the lender or to an investor. A nominal interest rate refers to the interest rate before taking inflation into account

### **What has happened?**

- Since this March, fixed deposit rates have fallen by 100-125 basis points across many banks, even higher in some cases. In fact, deposit rates fell significantly in 2019 and were on a free fall in the beginning of this year, even before the RBI embarked on its fast-paced rate easing cycle since March.

### **Why banks are reducing deposit rates?**

- In a falling rate scenario, banks are often more quick to cut deposit rates than lending rates. In the current scenario, when there is surplus liquidity and weak credit growth Banks have reduced deposits rate to cushion themselves.
- Banks have turned highly risk averse to lending and even cautious to investing in government bonds (fearing mark-to-market loss).
- Hence, to cushion the impact of lower interest income on margins, banks have been cutting deposit rates significantly. For eg: SBI had cut its savings deposit rate to 2.7 per cent last month (for deposits up to ₹1 lakh).

### **What's the effect?**

- Savers are stuck with bank deposit rates that are at near two-decade low levels.
- Currently (as of mid-June), public sector banks (PSBs) on an average offer 5.2-5.45 per cent on their 3-5 year deposits. The last time deposit rates were near around these levels were in 2003 and 2004.

## Topic 10: Seed Terrorism

### Importance for Prelims: Science and Tech



The National Seed Association of India (NSAI) has asked the Centre to put its agencies on high alert against Chinese seeds penetrating into Indian fields. It has suggested the government to have in place adequate plans to deal with the ‘**seed terrorism**’.

### **What has happened?**

- Mysterious seed packets, often labelled with a misleading description were received in mails in India, Japan, Canada, the United States of America and United Kingdom over the past week. These packets have arrived from China and have raised a “seed terrorism” alarm.
- International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) has warned countries about the threat of such seed contamination. NSAI has issued an alert on the basis of an International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) warning on the entry of suspicious seeds in the Indian market.

### **What can be the adverse effects?**

- It can adversely affect India’s biodiversity.

- Emergence of new invasive species and weeds It can threaten the food security of India.

### **Why is china sending these seeds?**

- These are seeds of an invasive species and it is an attempt by China to introduce pathogens or disease.
- US authorities claim that these packets are a part of China's brushing scam.
- China has much-advanced biotechnology and has the capacity to destroy Indian food production.
- It is alleged that China is trying to use these spurious seeds as bio weapon.

### **What can be done?**

- The Custom department has been put on alert and has been asked to confiscate illegal seeds coming from China or other countries.
- It wants courier companies and those receiving seed packets even when they have not ordered for it, to report it to the police and other government agencies.



## Topic 11: Abanindranath Tagore

*Importance for Prelims: Historical personality*

*Importance for Mains: History*



National Gallery of Modern Art is going to organise the virtual tour titled “The Great Maestro Abanindranath Tagore” to commemorate the **150th Birth Anniversary of Abanindranath Tagore** on 7th August 2020.

- He was the **first major supporter of swadeshi values in Indian art.**
- Abanindranath first created the ‘**Indian Society of Oriental Art**’ and later went on to establish Bengal school of art.

- His sole aim for establishing the school was to counter the English influence on Indian artists. He did that by incorporating Indian elements in his works and achieved success when British art institutions gave in and accepted to teach and propagate his style of works in their organizations.
- His idea of modernizing Mughal and Rajput paintings eventually gave rise to modern Indian painting, which took birth at his Bengal school of art.
- Abanindranath is also regarded as a proficient and accomplished writer. Most of his literary works were meant for children. Some of his books like '**BudoAngla**', '**KhirerPutul**' and '**Rajkahini**' are best examples of Bengali children's literature.
- Abanindranath Tagore believed in the traditional Indian techniques of painting.
- He **rejected the materialistic art of the West and emphasized on returning to the Indian traditional art forms**. He believed that Indian art and its art forms gave importance to spirituality as opposed to the West which stressed on materialism.
- He was very much influenced by the Mughal School of painting as well as Whistler's Aestheticism.
- In his later works, **Abanindranath started integrating Chinese and Japanese calligraphic traditions into his style**. The intention behind this move was to construct an amalgamation of the modern pan-Asian artistic tradition and the common

elements of Eastern artistic and spiritual culture.

- **Bharat Mata painting:** This beautiful painting was completed in the year 1905.
- The painting depicts Bharat Mata (Mother India). She is portrayed as having four hands, carrying important elements in each of her hand. The painting reflects Indian tradition, which features in most of his works.

## Topic 12: Assam accord

### Importance for Prelims: History



Architect of Assam accord and Veteran bureaucrat Governor RD Pradhan has passed away

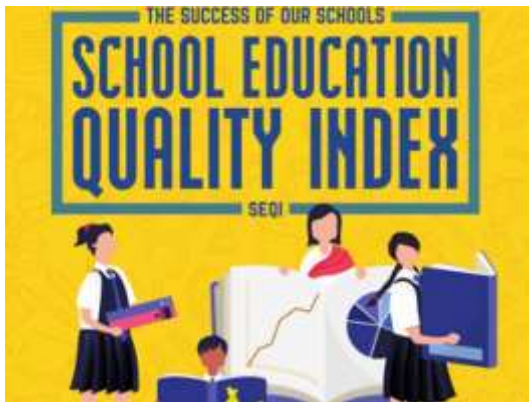
- The Assam Accord was a **Memorandum of Settlement (MoS)** signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement in New Delhi on 15 August 1985.
- Six year agitation **demanding identification and deportation of illegal immigrants** was launched by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) in **1979** concluded with the signing of the Assam Accord.
- In the **15 clauses of the Assam Accord**, the key focus areas were:
  - ✓ **Foreigners issue**
  - ✓ **Economic development**

- ✓ Restricting acquisition of immovable property by foreigners
  - ✓ **Prevention encroachment of government lands**
  - ✓ Registration of births and deaths
- This was done to **ensure protection of political, social, economic and cultural identity of the local people.**
  - The foreigners were classified under three heads for identification and differential treatment under Clause 5 of the Assam Accord.
  - “All persons who **came to Assam prior to 1.1.1966, including those amongst them whose name appeared on the electoral rolls used in 1967 elections, shall be regularised.**
  - “Foreigners, who **came to Assam after 1.1.1966 (inclusive) and upto 24th March, 1971** shall be detected in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order 1964 and were **to be disenfranchised.**
  - This group of people was required to register themselves as foreigners in accordance the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939. The Assam Accord does not call for their deportation but they were to get **voting rights only after expiry of 10 years from the date of their detection or declaration as foreigner.**  
The rest had to be expelled.



## Topic 13: Educational reforms

### *Importance for Prelims: Government schemes*



Systemic reform in education sector has gained ground in recent years through initiatives such as the NITI Aayog's School Education Quality Index (SEQI), the Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital in Education (SATH-E) and even the Aspirational Districts programme

### **School Education Quality Index (SEQI)**

- The School Education Quality Index (SEQI) was developed by NITI Aayog to **evaluate the performance of States and Union Territories (UTs) in the school education sector.**
- The index aims to bring an **outcomes focus to education policy** by providing States and UTs with a platform to **identify their strengths and weaknesses and undertake** requisite course corrections or policy interventions.
- **Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital in Education (SATHE)** 'SATH' the programme for Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital (SATH) focuses on

two main sectors — **Education and Health** and to **build three ‘Role Model’ States.**

- SATH programme will be **implemented by NITI Aayog** along with global consultancy McKinsey & Company and IPE Global consortium in the three selected States after the signing of MoUs.

### **Aspirational Districts programme**

- Transformation of Aspirational Districts’ programme which was launched in January 2018 aims to **quickly and effectively transform some of the most underdeveloped districts of the country.**
- The broad contours of the programme are **Convergence** (of Central & State Schemes), **Collaboration** (of Central, State level ‘Prabhari’ Officers & District Collectors), and **Competition** among districts driven by a Mass Movement.
- With States as the main drivers, this program will **focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement,** measure progress, and rank districts.
- The Government is committed to raising the living standards of its citizens and ensuring inclusive growth for all – SabkaSaath, SabkaVikas.
- To enable optimum utilization of their potential, this program **focuses closely on improving people’s ability to participate fully in the burgeoning economy. Health & Nutrition,**

## Education, Agriculture & Water Resources,

- Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure are this programme's core areas of focus.
- After several rounds of consultations with various stakeholders, **49 key performance indicators have been chosen to measure progress of the districts.**
- Districts are prodded and encouraged to first catch-up with the best district within their state, and subsequently aspire to become one of the best in the country, by competing with, and learning from others in the **spirit of competitive & cooperative federalism**



## Topic 14: Bharat Air Fibre Services

*Importance for Prelims: Schemes*



Union Minister of State for Communication has inaugurated “Bharat Air Fibre Services” at Akola in Maharashtra.

- The Bharat Air Fibre services are **introduced by BSNL as part of digital India** initiates by the Government of India and it aims of **providing Wireless Connectivity in the range of 20**

**KMs from the BSNL Locations** and thus customers at remote places also will be benefitted as BSNL comes with cheapest services with support of Telecom Infrastructure Partners (TIPs).

- BSNL is providing the “Bharat Air Fibre Services” through local business partners of BSNL and these services will **give fastest internet connectivity in quick time.**
- These services are special and different from other operators as BSNL is providing unlimited free voice calling.
- When BSNL will be increasing its customer base with this high Technology services, at the same time BSNL is giving a great opportunity to local residents to join hands with BSNL as Telecom Infrastructure Partners. They will earn regular monthly income of about one lakh per month thereby becoming self-reliable under “AtmaNirbhar Bharat” initiatives of Govt of India.



## Topic 15: Saint Ravidasa

### Importance for Prelims: Arts and culture



Earth and water have been collected from each sacred river and important pilgrimage centre like birthplace of Sant Ravidas in Kashi and from Delhi's Jain Lal Mandir and Gurudwara Sis Gunj for construction temple at Ayodhya.

- Ravidas of **15th or 16th century**, was a **mystic and poet** who was one of the most renowned of the saints of the **North Indian bhakti movement**. He was born in Varanasi.
- He belonged to **nirgun bhakti tradition** that valued the **worship of a formless God**
- He was considered as a **spiritual Guru of the Meera Bai**
- He formed his distinct identity so his disciples came to be known **Ravidaspanthis**.
- The **AdiGranth of Sikhs**, and **Panchvani of the Hindu DaduPanthis** are the two oldest attested sources of the literary works of Ravidas.

## Topic 16: Khurja pottery

### Importance for Prelims: Arts and culture



Artisans in Khurja is in need of government support to overcome drop in demand, revenue and want technology upgrade in manufacturing and sales

- Khurja pottery is **an Indian pottery work manufactured in Khurja** of the Bulandshahr district in **Uttar Pradesh**.
- A huge portion of the ceramics used in the country is supplied by Khurja hence it is sometimes called “**The Ceramics City**“.
- There are at least **two conflicting versions of the origins of the pottery manufacturing** sector in Khurja.
- In one version there was a historical cluster of traditional

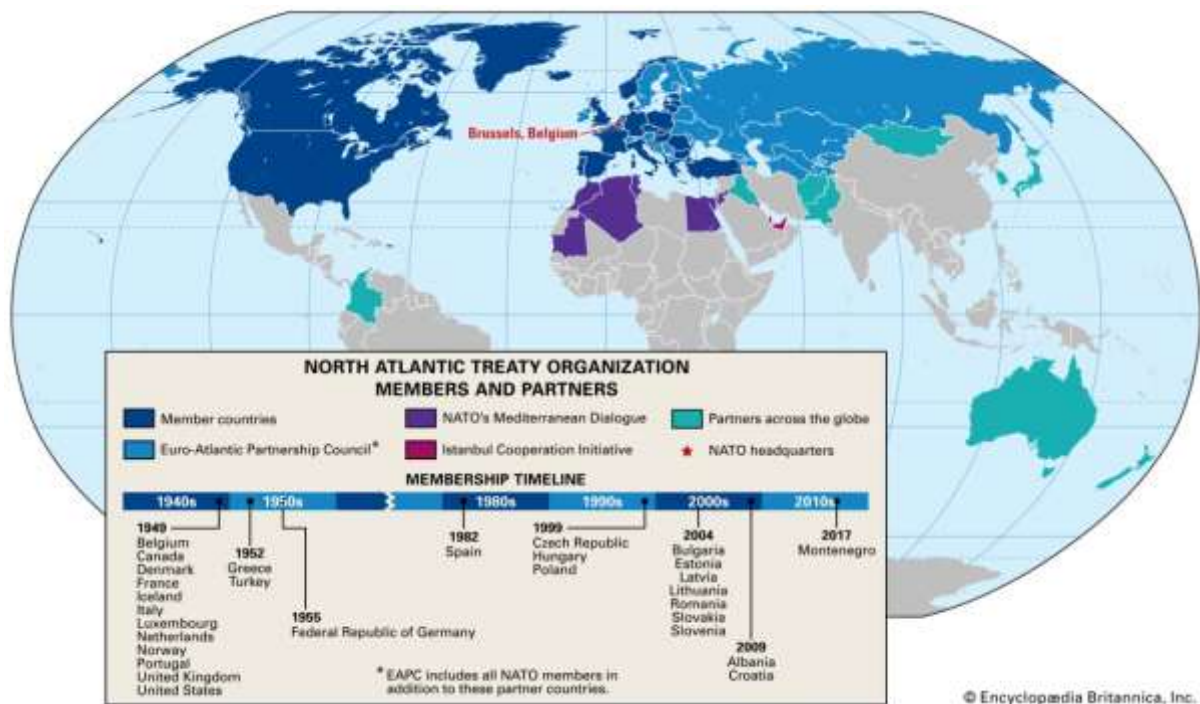
pottery, who had established themselves in Khurja, several hundred years ago. In this version **pottery from Egypt and Syria accompanied the Afghan King Taimur Lung when he passed by Khurja** on an easterly campaign 500 years ago.

- In another, the origins of the tradition go back to **people with knowledge of pottery who had moved there during the Mughal empire.**
- Khurja pottery, which the **GI tag**, boasts of a variety of tea-sets, crockery, and ceramic tile works. Among the most popular glazed pottery forms, the process involves a range of labour-intensive tasks such as clay churning, moulding, colouring, followed by glazing.



## Topic 17: NATO

### *Importance for Prelims: International Relations*



US President Donald Trump has decided to withdraw nearly 12,000 American soldiers as part of NATO stationed in Germany.

- NATO is a **multilateral organisation** founded by **12 member states** following the signing of the **Washington Treaty** on April 4, 1949.
- The objective of the Treaty was to **create an alliance to counter the Soviet Union** and its influence in western Europe.
- The Treaty derives its authority from **Article 51 of the United Nations Charter**, which confers the inherent right to a nation to “**individual or collective self-defence**”.
- NATO is a **security alliance of 30 countries** from **North America and Europe**.

- NATO's fundamental goal is to **safeguard the Allies' freedom and security by political and military means.**
- NATO remains the **principal security instrument of the transatlantic community** and **expression of its common democratic values.**
- It is the practical means through which the security of North America and Europe are permanently tied together.
- Article 5 of the Washington Treaty i.e that an attack against one Ally is an attack against all is at the core of the Alliance, a promise of collective defense.



## Topic 18: Category B2 of EIA

*Importance for Prelims: Environment*



Draft environment impact assessment 2020 included list of projects into Category B2.

- All projects and activities are broadly categorized in to **two categories – Category A and Category B**, based on the **spatial extent of potential impacts** and potential impacts on human health and natural and manmade resources.
- All projects or activities included as Category ‘A’ in the Schedule shall require prior **environmental clearance from the Central Government** on the recommendations of an Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) to be constituted by the Central Government for the purposes of this notification All projects or activities included as Category ‘B’ in the Schedule will **require prior environmental clearance from the State/Union**

**territory** Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA).

- The SEIAA shall base its decision on the recommendations of a State or Union territory level Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) as to be constituted for in this notification.
- The projects requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment report shall be termed Category 'B1' and remaining projects shall be termed **Category 'B2' and will not require an Environment Impact Assessment report.**
- The projects under this category include **offshore and onshore oil, gas and shale exploration, hydroelectric projects up to 25 MW**, irrigation projects between 2,000 and 10,000 hectares of command area, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in dye and dye intermediates, bulk drugs, synthetic rubbers, medium-sized paint units, all inland waterway projects, expansion or widening of highways between 25 km and 100 km with defined parameters, aerial ropeways in ecologically sensitive areas, and specified building construction and area development projects.

## Topic 19: Aarhus Convention

*Importance for Prelims: International Relations*

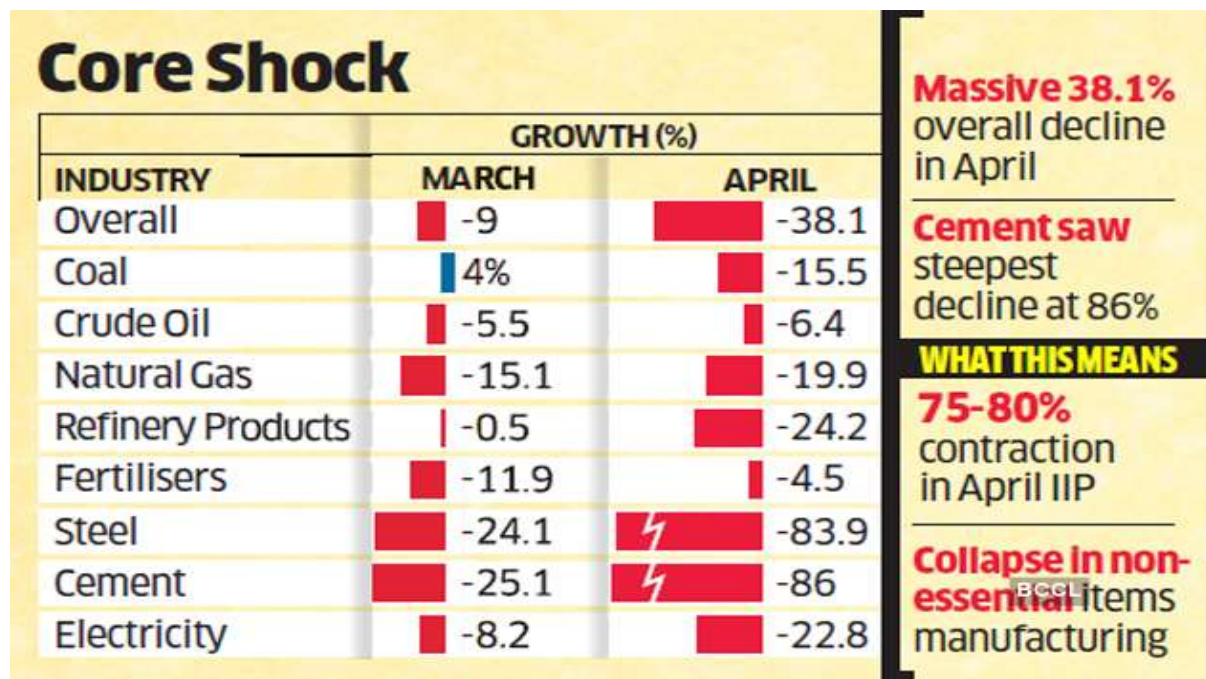


EIA rules must meet the requirements of the precautionary principle of avoiding harm, and intergenerational equity in accordance with the Aarhus Convention, 1998.

- The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters was adopted on 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus at the Fourth Ministerial Conference as part of the “Environment for Europe” process.
- The Aarhus Convention establishes **a number of rights of the public with regard to the environment.**

## Topic 20: Core sector

### Importance for Prelims: Economy



The output of **eight core sector industries shrank for the fourth straight month** in June 2020 but contraction eased to 15% from 22% fall in May

- Core industry can be defined as **the main industry which has a multiplier effect on the economy.**
- In most countries, there is particular industry that seems to be **backbone of all other industries** and it qualifies to be the core industry.
- The eight Core Industries in **decreasing order of their weightage**: Refinery Products > Electricity > Steel > Coal > Crude Oil > Natural Gas > Cement > Fertilizers.
- The Eight Core Industries **comprise 40.27% of the weight of items** included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

## Topic 21: Black rain

### Importance for Prelims: History



Important ruling was given for black rain survivors in Japan

- The United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and another one on Nagasaki three days later on August 9 as part of second world war.
- Thousands of people died in both cities in due to their **exposure to radiation from the blast and also from the black rain** that fell in the aftermath of the explosions.
- An estimated 69 per cent of the buildings in Hiroshima were destroyed by the atomic bomb.
- The **debris and soot** from this, **mixed with the radioactive fallout from the bomb, rose high into the atmosphere in the form of a mushroom cloud.** This material combined with the vapor in the atmosphere and **came down as dark drops of liquid that has been called black rain.**
- Black rain is **full of highly radioactive material.**

Effects:

- A study conducted in the year 1945 itself showed that black rain



had come down as far as 29 km away from ground zero.

- The **rain contaminated everything it came in contact with**, and dead fish were reported floating in water bodies and severely ill cattle were seen lying in the fields.
- Black rain has caused **acute radiation symptoms (ARS)**, nausea and diarrhoea for weeks. Other ARS include fever, sore throat and loss of hair. Over time, many people who were exposed to black rain have **developed cancer**.

## Topic 22: Gujjar and Bakarwal communities

### *Importance for Prelims: Geography*



Bangas Awaam Mela' held in Jammu and Kashmir to mark Article 370 abrogation anniversary. It saw the participation of hundreds of Gujjars, Bakarwals.

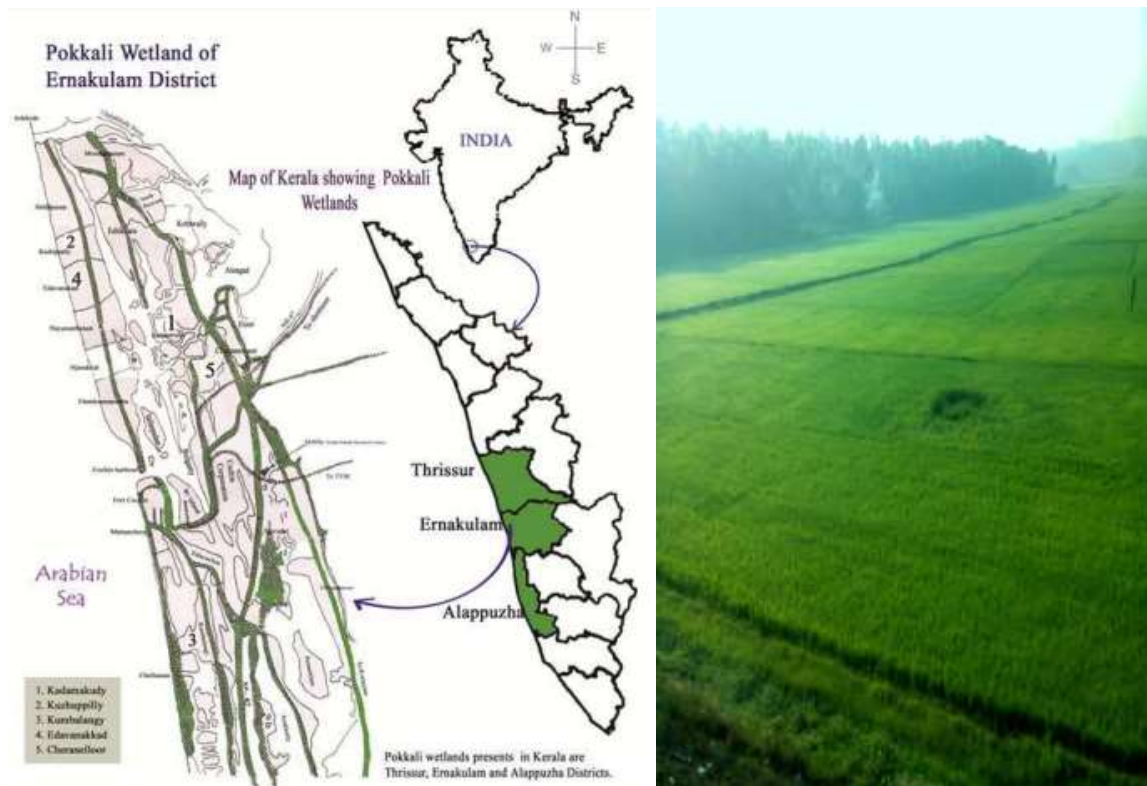
- The Gujjars and Bakarwals are the two unique **ethnic nomadic groups** that rear flocks of sheep and goat **between high and low altitudes of Western Himalayas**.
- In summer, these groups migrate to upper reaches of the valley and in winter, they take their flocks to the lower areas of the valley to protect themselves from the harsh cold.
- The habitat of these people is in the **hilly terrain of the North-Western Himalayas**.

### **Transhumance**

- Transhumance, form of pastoralism or nomadism organized around the migration of livestock between mountain pastures in warm seasons and lower altitudes the rest of the year.

## Topic 23: Pokkali rice

### *Importance for Prelims: Geography*



West Bengal farmers are going to cultivate pokkali variety of rice to tide over a crisis like situation created by severe seawater incursion into paddy fields in vast areas of the Sundarbans after the cyclone Amphan

- The pokkali variety of rice is known for its **saltwater resistance** and flourishes in the rice paddies of **coastal Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts**.
- The uniqueness of the rice has brought it the **Geographical Indication (GI)** tag.

## Topic 24: 103rd Amendment

*Importance for Prelims: Polity*

# Constitution

## 103rd Amendment Act, January 2019

### **10% reservation to the poor among the General Category**

Supreme Court has referred a batch of petitions challenging the 103rd Constitution Amendment of 2019 to a five-judge Constitution Bench

- It provides for **10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions** for Economically Weaker Section by **amending Articles 15 and 16** that deal with the fundamental right to equality.
- An additional clause was added to both provisions, **giving Parliament the power to make special laws for EWS** like it does for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes. The states are to notify who constitute EWS to be eligible for reservation.

**Issue:**

- The law was challenged primarily that it **violates the Basic Structure of the Constitution.**
- This argument stems from the view that the **special protections guaranteed to socially disadvantaged groups is part of the Basic Structure and that the 103rd Amendment departs from this** by promising special protections on the sole basis of economic status Another challenge has been made on behalf of private, unaided educational institutions.
- They have argued that their **fundamental right to practice a trade/profession is violated when the state compels them to implement its reservation** policy and admit students on any criteria other than merit.



## Topic 25: Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome

### Importance for Prelims: Science and tech



A disease called Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (SFTS) has killed seven and infected at least 60 in China

- Severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome virus (SFTSV) belongs to the **Bunyavirus family** and is transmitted to humans **through tick bites**. The virus was **first identified by a team of researchers in China** over a decade ago.
- The first few cases were reported in rural areas of Hubei and Henan provinces in 2009.
- Due to the rate at which it spreads and its high fatality rate, SFTS has been **listed among the top 10 priority diseases blue print** by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

## Topic 26: Starship

### *Importance for Prelims: Science and tech*



SpaceX's prototype uncrewed "Mars ship" which is a part of the Starship spacecraft, successfully flew to an altitude of over 500 feet for a little less than 60 seconds

- Designed by SpaceX, **Starship is a spacecraft and super-heavy booster rocket meant to act as a reusable transportation system** for crew and cargo to the **Earth's orbit, Moon and Mars**. SpaceX has described Starship as "the world's most powerful launch vehicle" with an ability to carry over 100 metric tonnes to the Earth's orbit.
- Starship has been under development since 2012 and is a part of Space X's central mission to **make interplanetary travel accessible and affordable and to become the first private company to do so.**
- Therefore, the company is working on building a fleet of reusable launch vehicles, capable of carrying humans to Mars and other destinations in the solar system.

## Topic 27: Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana

### *Importance for Prelims: Schemes*



In addition to 112 startups already funded, 234 startups in the agriculture and allied sectors will be funded under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana

- Concerned by the slow growth in the Agriculture and allied sectors, the **National Development Council (NDC)**, in its **meeting held on 29th May, 2007** resolved that a special **Additional Central Assistance Scheme (RKVY)** be launched.
- The NDC resolved that agricultural development strategies must be reoriented to meet the needs of farmers and called upon the Central and State governments to evolve a strategy to rejuvenate agriculture.
- The NDC reaffirmed its commitment **to achieve 4 per cent annual growth in the agricultural sector during the 11th plan.**
- The **Department of Agriculture**, in compliance of the above resolution and in consultation with the **Planning Commission**, has prepared the guidelines for the **RKVY**

scheme, to be known as **National Agriculture Development Programme (RKVY)**.

- In order to contribute directly and indirectly to enhancing the income of farmers by providing opportunities to them and to provide employment to youth, start-ups are being encouraged.
- A component, **Innovation and Agri-entrepreneurship Development programme has been launched** under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana in order to promote innovation and agripreneurship by providing financial support and nurturing the incubation ecosystem.
- These start-ups are in various categories such as **agro-processing, artificial intelligence, digital agriculture, farm mechanisation, waste to wealth, dairy, fisheries**

## Topic 28: Sangam Period

### *Importance for Prelims: History*



Artefacts and pottery dating to the Sangam period were unearthed at Kodukkur village, located on the banks of Sankarabaraniriver in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu

- The artefacts, including black and red ware, conical shaped bowls, part of amphoras, various types of jars and lids with intricate carvings, were found spread in an expanse of 50 acres of agricultural lands on the southern bank of the river.
- The site is **located close to the National Fossil Wood Park in Thiruvakkarai.**
- The period roughly between **the 3rd century B.C. and 3rd century A.D. in South India** (the area lying to the south of river Krishna and Tungabhadra) is known as Sangam Period.
- It has been named after the Sangam academies held during that period that flourished under the royal patronage of the Pandya



kings of Madurai.

- At the sangams eminent scholars assembled and functioned as the board of censors and the choicest literature was rendered in the nature of anthologies.
- **The literary works of this period were the earliest specimens of Dravidian literature.**
- According to the Tamil legends, there were three Sangams (Academy of Tamil poets) held in the ancient South India popularly called Muchchangam.
- The First Sangam, is believed to be held at Madurai, attended by gods and legendary sages. No literary work of this Sangam is available.
- The Second Sangam was held at Kapadapuram, only Tolkappiyam survives from this.
- The Third Sangam was also held at Madurai. A few of these Tamil literary works have survived and are a useful sources to reconstruct the history of the Sangam period.

## Topic 29: Priority Sector Lending

*Importance for Prelims: Economy*

# PRIORITY SECTOR LENDING BY BANKS (in%)

Segment	Target	Public sector	Private	Foreign
Agriculture	18.0	18.0	16.2	16.7
Micro enterprises	7.5	6.4	7.9	4.2
Weaker sections	10.0	11.5	9.5	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>39.9</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>38.3</b>

Source: RBI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to **broaden the scope of priority sector lending (PSL)** by including start-ups and enhancing borrowing limits for renewable energy sectors.

- Priority Sector refers to **those sectors of the economy which may not get timely and adequate credit.**
- Priority Sector Lending is an important role given by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the banks for providing a specified portion of the bank lending to few specific sectors.
- As per the RBI circular released in 2016, there **are eight broad categories of the Priority Sector Lending.**

They are:

- (1) Agriculture
- (2) Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
- (3) Export Credit
- (4) Education
- (5) Housing
- (6) Social Infrastructure
- (7) Renewable Energy
- (8) Others.

**Targets:**

- 40 per cent of Adjusted Net Bank Credit or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off- Balance Sheet Exposure, whichever is higher for domestic scheduled commercial banks (excluding Regional Rural Banks and Small Finance Banks) and
- Foreign banks with 20 branches and above 40 per cent of Adjusted Net Bank Credit or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure, whichever is higher, to be achieved in a phased manner by 2020 for Foreign banks with less than 20 branches

## Topic 30: Kisan rail

### *Importance for Prelims: Schemes*



India's first 'Kisan Rail' will run between Maharashtra and Bihar

The announcement regarding the "Kisan Rail" was made in the current year's Budget

- Setting up of a 'Kisan Rail' through the **public-private-partnership (PPP) mode for a cold supply chain to transport perishable goods.**
- This train will **help in bringing perishable agricultural products** like vegetables, fruits to the market in a short period of time. The train with frozen containers is expected to build a seamless national cold supply chain for perishables, inclusive of fish, meat and milk.
- This train is a step towards **realizing the goal of doubling farmers' incomes by 2022**