

19th December, 2021 Current Affairs

1. 8th Indian Ocean Dialogue:

The eighth Indian Ocean Dialogue was recently held on December 15, 2021.

Key Points:

- The dialogue was hosted by External Affairs Ministry and Indian Council of World Affairs jointly.
- Dialogue was hosted under the theme- “Leveraging Digital Technologies for Health, Education, Development, and Trade in Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Member States”.

Salient points of the dialogue:

- Minister of State for External Affairs Rajkumar Ranjan Singh during his address noted the need of greater collaboration among IORA Member States in order to recover from pandemic.
- He also surfaced the critical role of new and emerging technologies and re-affirmed India’s readiness to collaborate on it.

About Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):

IORA was previously known as Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) and Indian Ocean Rim Initiative. It is an international organisation comprising of 23 states which share borders with the Indian Ocean. It is a regional forum, tripartite in nature. It brings the representatives of Government, Academia and Business on the same forum to promote co-operation and closer interaction between them.

What are the principles of IORA?



IORA is based on the principles of Open Regionalism to strengthen Economic Cooperation, especially on Trade Facilitation & Investment, Promotion and Social Development of the region.

Secretariat of IORA:

Coordinating Secretariat of IORA is situated at Ebene in Mauritius.

History of IORA:

IORA was first established in March 1995, as Indian Ocean Rim Initiative. It was formally launched in March 1997 with the conclusion of a multilateral treaty called “Charter of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation”.

2. **NASA’s Parker Solar Probe has entered the Sun’s corona:**

Recently, a scientific paper revealed that, NASA’s Parker Solar Probe successfully entered the Sun’s Corona on April 28, 2021.

Key Highlights:

- Corona is the outermost layer of Sun’s atmosphere. Here, strong magnetic fields bind plasma as well prevent turbulent solar winds from escaping.
- Prior to April 28, spacecraft had been flying just beyond the Alfvén point.
- The Alfvén point is when solar winds become greater than critical speed and can break free of Sun’s corona and magnetic fields.



About the Parker Solar Probe:

The Parker Solar Probe is a NASA space probe. It was launched on August 12, 2018. It was launched with objective of making observations of outer corona of the Sun. It reached to within 9.86 solar radii from Sun’s centre. By 2025, it will travel at closest approach. It is the first spacecraft to fly into low solar corona.

Background:

This project was announced in 2009, at the cost of US\$1.5 billion. The spacecraft was designed and built by Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. It is the first spacecraft by NASA, named after a living person. It has been named so to honour nonagenarian physicist Eugene Newman Parker.

Sun's Corona:

Sun's corona is an aura of plasma surrounding it. It extends for millions of kilometres into outer space. Corona is easily visible during a total solar eclipse. It can also be observed with a coronagraph. As per spectroscopy measurements, there is a strong ionization in corona and the plasma temperature of 1000000 kelvin. It is much hotter as compared to surface of the Sun.

3. Cabinet approved the implementation of PMKSY for 2021-26

Recently, Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved implementation of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) for 2021-26.

Key Highlights:

- The Scheme was launched with an outlay of Rs.93,068 Crore.
- CCEA approved central support of Rs.37,454 crore to States.
- 20,434.56 Crore of debt servicing has been approved for loan availed by Government of India to develop irrigation during PMKSY 2016-21.
- As a part of the scheme, Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), Watershed Development and Har Khet ko Paani (HKKP) components have been extended for 2021-26.



Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP):

- AIBP is a flagship programme, launched by government of India with the goal of providing financial support to irrigation projects.
- With the continuation of scheme during 2021-26, total target of additional irrigation potential creation is 13.88 lakh hectare.

- Beside the focused completion of 60 ongoing projects, additional projects can also be taken up.
- Cabinet has relaxed the inclusion criteria for projects under tribal and drought prone areas.

About Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP):

- Har Khet Ko Pani component of the scheme is intended to enhance the physical access on farm & expansion of cultivable area under assured irrigation.
- Under it, repair-renovation-restoration of water bodies and surface minor irrigation components are aimed to provide more of 4.5 lakh hectare irrigation.

Watershed Development:

- This component of the scheme emphasizes on the development of rainfed areas for soil & water conservation, arresting runoff, regeneration of ground water and promoting extension activities related to water harvesting & management.
- The approved Watershed Development component will cover 49.5 lakh hectare dryland or degraded lands for bringing additional 2.5 lakh hectare under protective irrigation during 2021-26.

About PMKSY:

PMKSY scheme was launched in 2015. It is an umbrella scheme that provides central grants to the State Governments for specific activities. It comprises of two major components namely, Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP), and Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP).

4. Union Cabinet approves to raise Women's Marriage age to 21

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the proposal of increasing marriage age for women from 18 years to 21 years.



Background:

This proposal was approved a year after the announcement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in August 2020, during the Independence Day address.

What is the present age for marriage?

Currently, the minimum age of marriage for men is 21 while for women it is 18.

About Task Force:

The Task force, headed by Jaya Jaitley, was constituted in June 2020. It was framed by Ministry of women & child development, to re-examine the right age of marriage for girls. It gave its report in December 2020. It had recommended that, minimum age of women at the time of giving birth to first child should be 21. Task force recommended to increase marriage age for girls from 18 years to 21 years. Proposal also correlated the marriage age to health & social indices like maternal mortality, infant mortality, and nutrition levels in mothers and children.

What acts will be amended now?

After the approval of this proposal, the government will bring amendments to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, Hindu Marriage Act and Special Marriage Act for giving new proposal a shape.

What are the significances of this move?

Delay in marriage will positively impact the economic, social and health of women, children, families, and society. It will also save women from malnutrition.

What does experts say?

Experts are of the view that, increasing age of marriage will not work. This is because:

Law to prevent child marriages does not work. The marriage age of 18 was set in 1978. However, child marriage started to decline during 1990s, when government started stressing on primary education of the girl child and took initiatives to reduce poverty.

With the new law, criminalisation of marriages will increase.

5. Telangana's New rules on child labour

Telangana Government has recently issued a revised guidelines for curbing child labour menace, in line with the rules formulated by Centre.



Key points:

- State government wants to take strict action against those who employ or force children below 14 years to work.
- As per the revised norms, if anyone attempts to employ children aged below 14 years, he or she will be punished with a jail term of six months to one year.
- They would also be charged with a fine of Rs. 20,000 to Rs 50,000.

About the Task Force Committee:

Labour Department will also constitute a task force committee headed by District Collector concerned, to effectively monitor and curb the child labour menace.

Can children work in movies or serials?

- As per the revised guidelines, a film director would require to obtain permission from the Collector concerned in order to rope in children in movies or serials.
- The children will be allowed to work only for five hours, with one break after three hours.
- Crew members will have to ensure child's safety during the shooting.
- Furthermore, child will be permitted to attend shooting up to 27 days only.

- In case, more than five children are taking part in shooting, a person would be appointed for supervision.
- 25 % of the remuneration of the child has to be fixed deposited in the bank. This amount will be given to the child after he or she becomes major.

Provisions for parents:

If parents force children to work, they will also have to face action. Parents can take assistance from their children, but it must not affect their education.

These guidelines further state that, children should not be used in dangerous works, retail chain and manufacturing sector.

About the Guidelines for School Principal:

If any child fails to attend school for 30 days, without permission, school principal will require to bring it to the notice of concerned nodal officer.

6. PM Modi has inaugurated All India Mayors' Conference:

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed and inaugurated an All-India Mayor's Conference in Varanasi via video conferencing.

Key Highlights:

The All-India Mayor's Conference was organised by the department of Urban Development of Uttar Pradesh.

Conference has witnessed the participation of mayor's from more than 100 cities.

Mayor's conference began after the inauguration of a three-day exhibition.

Location of the conference:

The conference was held in Deen Dayal Upadhyay-Business Facilitation Center (DDUTFC) in Bada Lalpur, Uttar Pradesh.

Importance of the conference:



The conference marked the beginning of a month-long celebrations in Varanasi because of inauguration of Kashi Vishwanath Dham.

Inauguration of exhibition:

- On the occasion, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath and Union Minister of Urban Development Hardeep Singh Puri has inaugurated a three-day exhibition.
- Exhibition was organised under the theme “Changing Urban Environment” in the TFC premises.
- It was organized from December 17 to 19, 2021.
- The showcased the key achievements of Government of India as well as Government of Uttar Pradesh in urban development.
- In the exhibition, works related to special & remarkable achievements made across urban areas in other districts of India as well as Uttar Pradesh was displayed.

What was the agenda of the conference?

During the conference, groups of five mayors has held a discussion on urban development issues.

7. What is 6G technology?

Recently, Minister of Communication, Ashwini Vaishnaw, highlighted that India has started work towards developing the next generation of communication technology, using indigenously developed 6G infrastructure. It is likely to be launch by 2023-end or early 2024.



Key Highlights:

- Though 5G is still in its developing stage, 6G will build on top of.
- 6G will bring the human, physical environment and virtual environment together.
- For example, Metaverse is one of the 5G use cases. It promises to disrupt traditional as well as digital spaces. With the launch of 6G, Metaverse would evolve into a final model, but it will also unify with physical world by using artificial intelligence and machine learning.
- Most significant aspect of 6G will be its potentiality to sense the environment, people and objects.

About 6G network:

- 6G is the sixth-generation standard in telecommunications.
- It is currently under development for wireless communications technologies that support cellular data networks.
- It is the planned successor to 5G network. This network will probably be broadband cellular networks.
- In it, the service area is divided into small geographical areas known as cells. Companies like Nokia, Ericsson, Samsung, Huawei, Xiaomi, LG and Apple, as well as countries like China, Japan and Singapore have shown interest in developing 6G networks.

Importance of the network:

6G networks are likely to exhibit even more heterogeneity as compared to their predecessors. It is expectedly to support applications beyond current mobile use scenarios like virtual & augmented reality (VR/AR), pervasive intelligence, ubiquitous instant communications, and the Internet of Things (IoT).

8. ISRO is developing a SSLV with Private Participation:

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is in process of developing a Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) with private participation. This satellite will be launched in first quarter of 2022.

Key Highlights:

- SSLV will provide a payload capability of 500 kg to a planar orbit of 500 km.
- The development of SSLV is in final stages.
- First developmental flight of SSLV is targeted to launch during the first quarter of 2022.
- Government has sanctioned Rs. 169 Crores to develop this project including the qualification and development of the vehicle systems as well as flight demonstration by three development flights namely, SSLV-D1, SSLV-D2 and SSLV-D3.

Contribution by Private sector:

Private Industry will help in realizing the Hardware and structures for SSLV development project including:

- Solid motor cases
- Nozzle sub-systems
- Mandrels for casting of solid motors
- Inter-stage structures
- Actuator motors and
- Fixtures will be realized through private industry.

About Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV):

SSLV is a small-lift launch vehicle which will have a payload capacity to deliver 600 kgs to low Earth Orbit (at 500 km) or 300 kgs to Sun-synchronous orbit (500 km). It is being developed by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The SSLV have the capability to support multiple orbital drop-offs. Design of the vehicle was



completed at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), Thumba on December 21, 2018.

What is aim of the vehicle?

SSLV is being developed with the goal of launching small satellites commercially at a reduced price and higher launch rate as against the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).