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Cairn Circles

- A megalith is a large prehistoric stone that has been used to construct a structure or monument, either alone or together with other stones.
- Cairn-circles are the prehistoric stone row which is a linear arrangement of parallel megalithic standing stones.
- Recently, the State Department of Archaeology, Chennai has identified 250 cairn-circles from the Kodumanal excavation site in Tamil Nadu.
- This is for the first time that 10 pots and bowls were discovered from the site, instead of the usual 3 or 4 pots, placed outside three-chambered burial cists and inside the cairn-circle.
- More numbers and bigger size of boulders suggests that the grave could be of a village head or the head of the community.
- Findings from the site also include an animal skull, beads, and copper smelting units, the mud walls of a workshop, potteries, and Tamil Brahmi script.
- Other types of megaliths are

1. **Dolmenoid cists -** Box-shaped stone burial chambers,
2. **Capstones -** Distinctive mushroom-shaped burial chambers (found mainly in Kerala)

Kodumanal

- Kodumanal is a village located in the Erode district in Tamil Nadu.
- The place is an important archaeological site.
- It is located on the northern banks of Noyyal River, a tributary of the Cauvery.
- The earlier excavations of Kodumanal revealed that multi-ethnic groups lived in the village.
- It also revealed that the site served as a trade-cum-industrial centre from 5th century BCE to 1st century BCE.

Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan

- Through this scheme, Union Government plans to provide employment to migrant workers and create rural infrastructure
- The scheme will be launched through video-conferencing from village Telihar in Khagaria district of Bihar.
- The scheme will empower and provide livelihood opportunities to the returnee migrant workers and rural citizens who have returned to their home states due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown.
- This campaign will work in mission mode for 125 days with an outlay of Rs. 50,000 crore.
- A total of 116 districts across six states, namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha (where maximum migrant workers have returned) have been chosen for the campaign.
- Those districts where 25,000 migrants have returned have been chosen for this programme.
- It will involve intensified and focused implementation of 25 different types of works which includes

1. Construction of wells,
2. Plantation and Horticulture,
3. Angwadi centres,
4. Rural housing,
5. Rural connectivity and border road works,
6. Railway works,
7. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee RURBAN mission,
8. PM KUSUM works,
9. Laying of fiber optic cable under Bharat Net,
10. Works under Jal Jeevan mission.

- Apart from these the workers will help build gram panchayat bhawans and anganwadi centres, national highway works, railway works and water conservation projects, among others across six states.
- 12 different Ministries/Departments, namely, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Road Transport and Highways, Mines, Drinking Water and Sanitation, Environment, Railways, etc. will be coordinating for the implementation of the scheme.
- The villages will join this programme through the Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) maintaining the norms of social distancing in the wake of the pandemic.

Common Service Centres

- Common Services Centres are a strategic cornerstone of the National e-

Governance Plan (NeGP).

- It was approved in May 2006 to introduce e-governance on a massive scale under the National Common Minimum Programme.
- It aims to provide high quality and cost-effective video, voice and data content and services, in the areas of e-governance, education, health, telemedicine, entertainment as well as other private services.
- A highlight of the CSCs is that it offers web-enabled e-governance services in rural areas, including application forms, certificates and utility payments such as electricity, telephone and water bills.

Krishi Vigyan Kendras

- It is an integral part of the National Agricultural Research System (NARS).
- It consists of scientists, technical staff, administration support staff and auxiliary staff.
- The first KVK was established in 1974 at Puducherry.
- KVKs also produce quality technological products (seed, planting material, bio-agents, and livestock) and make it available to farmers.
- The KVK scheme is *100% financed by the Government of India*.

Rajya Sabha Polls

- Rajya Sabha is a permanent House and is not subject to dissolution.
- However, one-third Members of Rajya Sabha retire after every second year (biennial).
- A member who is elected for a full term serves for a period of six years.
- The election held to fill a vacancy arising otherwise than by retirement of a member on the expiration of his term of office is called 'Bye-election'.
- A member elected in a bye-election remains a member for the remainder of the term of the member who has resigned or died or disqualified to be member of the House under the Tenth Schedule.

Methods of Voting in RS Polls

- **Single Transferable vote -** In this method, a voter instead of voting for a single candidate, ranks all candidates according to his preference.
- Voting only takes place when there are more candidates than the vacant seats.
- The method would lead to the election of candidates opposed to the majority party in a state.
- **Cross voting -** During late nineties, MLAs were regularly convinced to

vote against their party's candidate (cross-vote).

- The Supreme Court in 2006 held that the practice of cross-voting would not attract the penalty under the anti-defection law, which further promoted the practice of cross-voting.
- **Open Ballot -** To stem the Cross voting rot, a Rajya Sabha committee headed by S B Chavan(1999) mooted the idea of voting by open ballots in the elections to the upper house.
- Parliament passed a law in 2003 requiring MLAs to show their votes to their party before voting in a Rajya Sabha election.
- But neither did the law stop the MLAs from cross-voting, nor could it prevent the influence of big money.
- The open ballot provides legal and technical grounds for invalidating votes.
- **Postal Ballot -** In rare circumstances RS polling can be done by postal ballots subject to the condition that a notification under Rule 68 of 1961 rules (Conduct of Election Rules 1961) is made before the last date of withdrawal of nominations.

Asian Development Outlook (ADO)

- Asian Development Outlook (ADO) is report released by Asian Development Bank.
- The ADO analyses economic and development issues in developing countries in Asia.
- This includes forecasting the inflation and growth rates of countries throughout the region, including China and India.
- Highlights of recent report are as follows

1. According to report the Indian economy is expected to contract by 4% during the current financial year (2020-21).
2. Earlier, in April 2020, ADB had projected India's economy to grow at 4% in 2020-21.
3. The report also highlighted India's GDP slowed to 3.1% in the last quarter (Jan-March) of the financial year 2019-20, it is the slowest since early 2003.
4. Developing Asia refers to a group of over 40 countries, including India that are members of the ADB.
5. Growth of Developing Asia is expected around 0.1%, this is down from the 2.2% forecast in April 2020 and would be the slowest growth for the region since 1961.
6. However, China is expected to record a positive growth of 1.8% in

2020-21.

Asian Development Bank

- ADB is a regional development bank established in 1966.
- It has 68 members. India is a founding member.
- Japan holds the largest proportion of shares in ADB followed by the USA.
- It aims to promote social and economic development in Asia and the Pacific.
- It is headquartered in Manila, Philippines.

Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)

- Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) is the usage and licensing fee that telecom operators are charged by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- It is divided into spectrum usage charges and licensing fees, pegged between 3-5 % and 8 % respectively.
- As per DoT, the charges are calculated based on all revenues earned by a telco – including non-telecom related sources such as deposit interests and asset sales.
- Telcos, on their part, insist that AGR should comprise only the revenues generated from telecom services.

Verdict on AGR

- In October 2019, SC issued a verdict on the AGR, that it will be used for calculating government dues such as licence fee and spectrum charges.
- The Supreme Court has upheld the definition of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) calculation as stipulated by the Department of Telecommunications.
- This means that telecom companies will have to pay up as much as Rs 92,642 crore to the government.
- Following this Department of Telecommunication (DoT) had sought Rs 4 lakh crore in past dues from gas utility GAIL India Ltd, electricity transmission firm PowerGrid, Oil India Ltd, Delhi Metro and others.
- The state-owned firms challenged the demand, saying telecom was not their core business and revenue from licences such as ISP formed a meagre part of their revenue.
- Recently government has informed the SC that the DoT has decided to withdraw 96% of the Rs 4 lakh crore demand for AGR related dues raised against non-telecom PSUs like GAIL.

Election to Non-Permanent members of UNSC

- Recently India, Norway, Ireland, Mexico and Kenya were elected as the non-permanent members of the UNSC for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2021.
- The presidency of the Council is held by each of the members in turn for one month, following the English alphabetical order of the member states' names.
- India will assume the rotating presidency of the Council for the month of August in 2021.
- India will preside over the Council again for a month in 2022.
- Previously, India was elected for the years 1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and most recently in 2011-2012.

United Nation Security Council

- The United Nations Charter established six main organs of the United Nations, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- The UNSC has been given primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the Security Council, which may meet whenever peace is threatened.
- The UNSC is composed of 15 Members:

1. **Five permanent members:** China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
2. **Ten non-permanent members** elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly.

- 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:

1. Five for African and Asian countries.
2. One for Eastern European countries.
3. Two for Latin American and Caribbean countries.
4. Two for Western European and other countries.

Source: The Hindu, Outlook, Economic Times, Live Mint



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