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1. History

1.1.Ancient church, set to be razed, gets new life

About

- The centuries-old St. George's Orthodox Church at Cheppad in Kerala faced demolition for widening of National Highway 66, but is now set to become a Centrally-protected monument of national importance with Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) recognition
- There are 47 murals and the paintings are of St. Paul with a sword, the birth of Jesus Christ, resurrection of Lazarus, the kiss of Judas, the Last Supper, Christ bearing the cross, Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, and Noah's Ark. These paintings, blending Persian and Kerala mural art styles, draw enthusiasts from far and wide.

Quick facts for prelim

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ASI, under the Ministry of Culture, is the premier organization for the archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.
- It was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham- the first Director-General of ASI. Alexander Cunningham is also known as the "Father of Indian Archaeology".
- Its activities include carrying out surveys of antiquarian remains, exploration and excavation of archaeological sites, conservation and maintenance of protected monuments etc.
- It is the successor of 'The Asiatic Society of India',

Monument of National importance

- The Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 defines any structure, erection or monument, or any tumulus or place of interment, or any cave, rock-sculpture, inscription or monolith which is of historical, archaeological or artistic interest and which has been in existence for not less than 100 years.

Criteria

- The monument or archaeological site is not less than 100 years old.
- It has special historical, archaeological or artistic interest, making it worthy of declaration as of national importance.
- It qualifies under specified provisions of definition of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
- The interested public do not have major objections to such declaration.
- The authenticity and integrity of the ancient monument or archaeological site and remains have not been damaged.
- It is free from major encumbrances.
- The central government maintains national monuments, while the state government maintains state monuments.

2. Economy

2.1.GST mop-up rises 7.4% in Feb; tops Rs 1 lakh crore for 5th straight month

- Goods and services tax (GST) collections in February (for sales in January) rose 7.4 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,13,147 crore. Though lower than Rs 1,19,875 crore collected the previous month, the February mop-up is the fifth consecutive month of GST collections breaching the Rs 1-lakh-crore mark, in a sign of pickup in economic activity along with compliance measures and action against tax evaders making use of data analytics by the GST authorities

About GST

GST Council

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) is governed by the GST Council. Article 279 (1) of the amended Indian Constitution states that the GST Council has to be constituted by the President within 60 days of the commencement of the Article 279A.

Representative

- Union-
  - ✓ The Union Finance Minister will be the Chairperson
  - ✓ As a member, the Union Minister of State will be in charge of Revenue of Finance
- State
  - ✓ The Minister in charge of finance or taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State government, as members
- Voting power
  - ✓ Union- 1/3rd vote in council
  - ✓ State- 2/3rd vote in council
- Quorum-
  - ✓ 50% of total membership
- Decision-
  - ✓ 75% vote support

GST 101 Constitutional amendment act 2016

- Replaced indirect tax of union
  - ✓ Central sales tax
  - ✓ Service tax
  - ✓ Excise duty- except 5 hydrocarbon fuel-Apply as GST council decide
- Replaced State taxes

✓ Purchase tax on vehicle, boats

✓ Octroi for entry of goods

✓ Advertisement tax for hoarding

✓ Taxes on lottery, gambling

✓ Entertainment tax on cinema

✓ Luxury tax on hotel

✓ State excise on liquor for human consumption- out of GST

GST compensation

- GST Compensation Cess" on specified luxury & demerit goods like tobacco, caffeinated beverages
- The Centre promised compensation to the States for any shortfall in tax revenue due to GST implementation for a period of five years. This promise convinced a large number of reluctant States to sign on to the new indirect tax regime
- As per the GST Act, states are guaranteed compensation for any revenue shortfall below 14% growth (base year 2015-16) for the first five years ending 2022. GST compensation is paid out of Compensation Cess every two months by the Centre to states.

2.2.Why Bihar farmers are looking to sell their sugarcane in Nepal

- Sugarcane farmers have alleged that these procurement centres were never operational; instead, middlemen opened their own procurement centres and bought sugarcane at a lower price than the market rates. Since the farmers had no other option, they sold the sugarcane to the middlemen at a loss.
- The sugarcane commissioner told farmers can sell to any sugar mill, but when farmers try to sell to other mills, they are refusing, citing poor quality sugarcane.

Why Nepal

- Sugar mills in Nepal buy a quintal of sugarcane from local sugarcane farmers at 471 Nepali rupees (Rs 297) and in addition, Nepal gives a subsidy of Rs 65 per quintal to its farmers.
- People of Nepali origin who carry sugarcane from Bihar sell the sugarcane in the mill and give the receipt to the government and get the subsidy.
- Sugarcane production is decreasing in Nepal, so the mill management is always ready to buy sugarcane from Bihar.
- Sugarcane is mainly cultivated in 14 districts of the country. However, sugarcane acreage and production have both declined over the years

Issue of Bihar

- Bihar has been a pioneer in the sugar industry. The first sugar mill in the country was opened in the year 1907 at Marhaura in Saran district of Bihar. Altogether, 29 sugar mills were opened, mostly in North Bihar.

- But currently, 20 mills are closed and only nine are running, out of which two are public-sector owned, according to the Bihar Sugar Mills Association.
- As per Bihar Sugar Mills Association, there are various reasons for the poor performance of the sugar industry in Bihar.
- There is no linkage between sugar price and sugarcane price. Price of sugarcane increases every year but sugar prices remain stagnant. If the sugar industry will not earn a profit, how will it run
- In Bihar, recovery is very low compared to Uttar Pradesh. In Bihar if 100 kg sugarcane is crushed we get 10kg sugar, but UP mills get 11-12 kg sugar."
- State currently not adopting the latest technology and no capital investment has led to the decline of the sugar industry in the state.
- In 2015, sugarcane was cultivated on 2.5 lakh hectares in Bihar, which decreased to 2.2 lakh hectares in the year 2020

Fair And Remunerative Price (FRP)

- India is the world's second largest sugar producer after Brazil and also the largest consumer.
- Fair and remunerative price (FRP) is the minimum price at which rate sugarcane is to be purchased by sugar mills from farmers.
- The Federal/Central Government announces Fair and Remunerative Prices which are determined on the recommendation of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) and are announced by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, which is chaired by Prime Minister
- The State Advised Prices (SAP) are announced by key sugarcane producing states which are generally higher than FRP.
- In order to ensure that higher sugar recoveries are adequately rewarded and considering variations amongst sugar mills, the FRP is linked to a basic recovery rate of sugar, with a premium payable to farmers for higher recoveries of sugar from sugarcane

CACP

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India. It came into existence in January 1965
- It is an advisory body whose recommendations are not binding on Government

3. Environment

3.1.Paris Agreement goals: UN urges countries to update emission targets

About

- The United Kingdom and the European Union are the only regions among 18 of the world's biggest emitters that have significantly increased their greenhouse gas reduction targets
- Of the 197 Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), only 75 have submitted new or updated nationally determined contributions (NDC) till December 31, 2020. These Parties account for 30 per cent of the global greenhouse emissions
- UNFCCC called for more ambitious climate action plans by the countries in order to achieve the Paris Agreement target of containing global temperature rise to two degrees Celsius (ideally 1.5°C) by the end of the century.
- While a majority of countries increased their individual levels of ambition to reduce emissions, their combined impact will help achieve only a 1 per cent reduction by 2030 compared to 2010 levels. Global emissions, however, need to reduce by 45 per cent in order to meet the 1.5°C goal, according to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Paris agreement

- Adopted in 2015
- Legally binding international treaty on climate change
- Objective
  - ✓Keep the global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level.
  - ✓Pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius
  - ✓Strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change.

About NDC

- Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are at the heart of the Paris Agreement and the achievement of these long-term goals. NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- The Paris Agreement (Article 4) requires each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that it intends to achieve. Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions

3.2.IIT-Delhi researchers develop technology to recycle e-waste

About

- To deal with one of the fastest growing waste streams, researchers at Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi have developed a zero-emission technology to manage and recycle e-waste to wealth.

- It adopted a methodology that uses e-waste as an "Urban Mine" for metal recovery and energy production. Researchers said using their method, e-waste is shredded and pyrolyzed to yield liquid and gaseous fuels, leaving behind a metal-rich solid fraction.
- On further separation using a novel technique, the leftover solid residue yields a 90-95% pure metal mixture and some carbonaceous materials. The carbonaceous material is further converted to aerogel for oil spillage cleaning, dye removal, carbon dioxide capture, and use in supercapacitors
- The technology is an outcome of a Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, funded project and developed technology will cater to the need of "Smart Cities," "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan," and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiatives of the government,

E waste

- Electronic waste or e-waste refers to electronic products which have become unwanted, obsolete and have reached the end of their useful life. It refers to all electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) and its parts that have been discarded by its owner as waste without the intent of reuse
- The government has reported that the recycling rate of 10% in 2017-18 has risen to 20% in 2018-19

India's initiative

- Until 2011, E-waste was dealt with under the Hazardous Waste Management (HWM) Rules.
- In 2011, the E-waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011 was enacted under the Environmental Protection Act 1986.
- In 2016, the E-waste (Management) Rules, 2016 was enacted which replaced the 2011 rules and was eventually amended in 2018.

	e-waste (Management &Handling) Rules, 2011	E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016
Applicability	Producer, consumer or bulk consumer, collection centre, dismantler and recycle	expanded to manufacturer, dealer ,re furbisher and Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) and other mercury containing lamp brought under the purview of rules
Exemption	Micro and Small industry sector as defined in Micro Small and Medium Developmental Act, 2006	Micro enterprises as defined in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006
Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)	The Producers are required to obtain authorization from SPCB/PCCs	Single EPR Authorization for Producers is now being made CPCB's responsibility to ensure pan India implementation
Target based approach for collection under EPR	No such provision	Collection and channelisation of e-waste in Extended Producer Responsibility-Authorisation shall be in line with the targets prescribed in Schedule III of the Rules.
Economic Instrument for implementation of the rules	No specific citation	Deposit Refund Scheme has been introduced as an additional economic instrument wherein the producer charges an additional amount as a deposit at the time of sale of the electrical and electronic equipment and returns it to the consumer along with interest when the end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment is returned

E-waste exchange	No specific citation	The e-waste exchange as an option has been provided in the rules.
Responsibility of State Government	No provision	The roles of the State Government has been also introduced in the Rules in order to ensure safety, health and skill development of the workers involved in the dismantling and recycling operations.
Responsibility of Urban Local Bodies	No specific citation	Urban Local Bodies (Municipal Committee/ Council/Corporation) has been assign the duty to collect and channelized the orphan products to authorized dismantler or recycler

E-waste (Management) Amendment Rules, 2018

- The e-waste collection targets under EPR have been revised and is being applied from October 1, 2017.
- The phase-wise collection targets for e-waste in weight is 10% of the quantity of waste generation as indicated in the EPR Plan during 2017-18, with a 10% increase every year until 2023. The target from 2023 onwards, shall be 70% of the quantity of waste generation as indicated in the EPR Plan.
- The quantity of e-waste collected by producers from the October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017 shall be accounted for in the revised EPR targets until March 2018.
- Separate e-waste collection targets have been drafted for new producers, i.e. those producers whose number of years of sales operation is less than the average lives of their products.
- Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs) shall apply to the Central Pollution Control board (CPCB) for registration to undertake activities prescribed in the Rules.
- Under the Reduction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) provisions, cost for sampling and testing shall be borne by the government for conducting the RoHS test. If the product does not comply with RoHS provisions, then the cost of the test will be borne by the producers.

International effort

Basel convention

- Adopted on March 22, 1989 at Basel, Switzerland
- It is an international treaty that aims to reduce the movement of hazardous waste between countries
- It particularly focuses on preventing transfer of hazardous waste from developed to less developed countries.
- It included clinical waste, minig waste, agriculture waste etc

2019 amendment

- includes plastic waste in a legally-binding framework, which would make global trade in plastic waste more transparent and better regulated, whilst also ensuring that its management is safer for human health and the environment. However, it does not bar countries from exporting various categories of plastic waste.
- India's laws currently don't allow electronic and plastic waste to be imported into the country.

Rotterdam Convention

- The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for certain hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in international trade provides Parties with a first line of defence against hazardous chemicals

4. Security

4.1.Chinese cyber attack

About

- Chinese state-sponsored threat Actor group known as Red Echo is targeting Indian Power sector's Regional Load Dispatch Centres (RLDCs) along with State Load Dispatch Centres (SLDCs).

Malware

- Malware is the collective name for a number of malicious software variants, including viruses, ransomware and spyware. Shorthand for malicious software, malware typically consists of code developed by cyber attackers, designed to cause extensive damage to data and systems or to gain unauthorized access to a network.

CERT-In

- was established in 2004 as a functional organization of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- In recent IT amendment act 2008, CERT-In designated as national agency to perform functions like collection, analysis and dissemination of information on cyber incidents , forecast and alert of cyber security incidents etc

Quick facts for prelim

Budapest Convention on Cybercrime:

- It is the first international treaty that seeks to address Internet and cybercrime by harmonizing national laws, improving investigative techniques and increasing cooperation among nations. It came into force in 2004.India is not a signatory to this convention

Cyber Swachhta Kendra (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre):

- It provides for the detection of malicious programs and free tools to remove such programs

Cyber Surakshit Bharat Yojana:

- It was launched in 2018 by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in association with National e-Governance Division(NeGD) and industry players.It includes awareness programs on cyber security; workshops on best practices and enablement of the officials with cyber security health tool kits

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre(I4C):

- It was established in 2018 to combat cybercrime in India in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.It functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Other Recent attacks

- WannaCry

  ✓ Ransomware attack had hit banks in India including few enterprises in Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

- Mirai Botnet Malware Attack

  ✓ affected 2.5 million IoT devices including a large number of computer systems in India.

- Petya

  ✓ Ransomware attack halted work at one of the terminals of India's largest seaport causing computer lockdown and serious consequences for the country's exports.

- Dtrack

  ✓ New spyware tool attack Kudankulam nuclear power plant.

- Pegasus

  ✓ Pegasus is the flagship spyware of Israel-based NSO Group. It is believed to be known by other names as well, like Q Suite and Trident