Prelims EDGE – 04/10/2024

PRIME MINISTER'S INTERNSHIP SCHEME

Context: The government has launched the pilot phase of the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme, which aims to provide 1.25 lakh internship opportunities during the fiscal year 2024-25.

About PM's Internship Scheme:

• First announced in the **Budget 2024-25**, the scheme envisions creating **one crore internship opportunities** for young people in top companies over the **next five years**.

• **Managed through:** an online portal developed by the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)**.

• The pilot project has already generated significant interest, with over 1,000 internship offers from leading companies like **Mahindra & Mahindra, Max Life, and Alembic Pharma.**

• The companies participating in the scheme were selected based on their **average Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure over the last three years**.

• Involvement in the scheme is **voluntary**.

• Additionally, other companies, banks, and financial institutions can apply to participate with MCA approval.

• In cases where partner companies cannot offer internships in-house, they are allowed to collaborate with suppliers, customers, or other entities in their value chain.

• Duration of internship: **12 months**, with at least half of the internship period dedicated to hands-on work experience.

• **Stipend structure:**
  o **Monthly stipend:** ₹5,000, with ₹4,500 provided by the government and ₹500 (10%) contributed by the company from its CSR funds.
  o A **one-time grant** of ₹6,000 for incidental expenses will also be provided by MCA when interns join their workplace.

• Interns will be insured under government schemes like **PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana** and **PM Suraksha Bima Yojana**, with the government covering the premium costs.

• A grievance redressal mechanism and a multilingual helpline (1800-116-090) have been established to support applicants and ensure a smooth internship process.

Source: Internships to bridge job market-skills gap; pilot project takes off (The Hindu)

CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

Context: The Union Cabinet has approved classical language status for Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali and Prakrit.

About Classical Languages:
- The **Ministry of Culture** provides the guidelines regarding Classical languages.
- **Criteria** evolved by Government of India to determine declaration of a language as a Classical language is as under:
    - High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of **1500-2000 years**;
    - A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers;
    - The literary tradition be **original and not borrowed** from another speech community;
    - The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.
- Currently, **six languages** enjoy the **'Classical' status**: Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).
    - On October 3rd, **5 more languages** were added to the list: **Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali and Prakrit**, taking the total to 11.
- All the Classical Languages except **Pali and Prakrit** are listed in the **Eighth Schedule** of the Constitution.
- Benefits available to languages notified as a Classical language:
    - Two major annual **international awards** for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages.
    - **Centre of Excellence** for studies in Classical Languages is set up.
    - The University Grants Commission is requested to create, to start with at least in the Central Universities, a certain number of **Professional Chairs** for the Classical Languages so declared.

Source: Marathi, four more languages get classical tag (The Hindu)

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL RANKING FRAMEWORK (NIRF)

Context: The Hindu editorial points to the use of quantitative metrics such as NIRF in education as harming the teaching aspect of the system.

About National Institutional Ranking Framework:
- It is a ranking system for higher education institutions in India.
- Introduced by: **Ministry of Education**
- It aims to provide a fair and transparent assessment of higher education institutions across India based on various parameters.
- **Parameters for ranking:** the NIRF evaluates institutions based on **five** broad parameters.
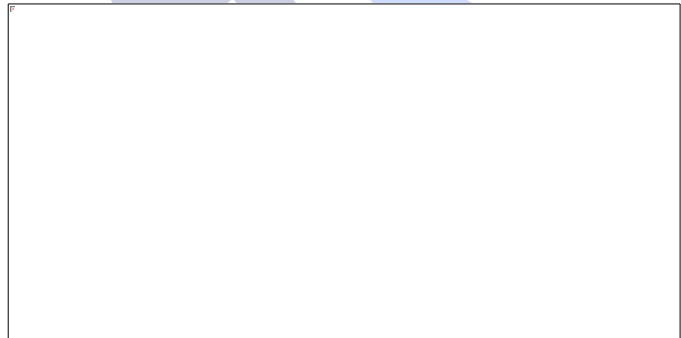
The **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)** also evaluates educational institutions. NAAC evaluates and accredits higher education institutions based on a comprehensive assessment of their **overall quality**, encompassing various dimensions.

NAAC's accreditation process is **qualitative**, focusing on an institution's ability to provide a well-rounded educational experience.

The accreditation system categorizes institutions into **grades** ranging from **A++ to D**, indicating their overall quality status.

In contrast, NIRF's primary role is to rank institutions annually based on specific quantitative parameters, helping prospective students gauge the relative performance of institutions across the country.

Fig. 1: NIRF Parameters for Ranking of Institutions

Source: An obsession with ranking is harming India's universities (The Hindu)

EU DEFORESTATION REGULATION

Context: The European Commission has proposed to extend the implementation of its deforestation regulation by a year.

About EU Deforestation Regulation:

- It is a European Union regulation that aims to **counter deforestation**.
- It requires companies registered in the EU that import or export specific items to ensure that they have **not been produced on land that was deforested** after December 31, 2020.
- The EU-DR covers **seven primary commodities** and a variety of products derived from these.
- While the main commodities are **cattle, cocoa, coffee, oil palm, rubber, soya, and wood**, the derived commodities are several such as meat products, leather, chocolate,

coffee, palm nuts, palm oil derivatives, glycerol, natural rubber products, soybeans, soybean flour and oil, fuel wood, wood products, pulp and paper and printed books.

India's opposition to the EUDR

- There is criticism that this is just a form of **non-tariff barrier** to trade, as **EU itself has reduced its primary forest cover** to increase agricultural output before the said date, and now is not allowing other countries to do the same as they struggle with population pressure on resources.
- India's stand is that it **violates Most Favored Nation (MFN)** and **National Treatment** principles.
- This is the second such measure by the EU after its **Cross Border Adjustment Mechanism**.
- It is estimated that both together are likely to adversely affect exports from India to EU worth $9.5 billion.

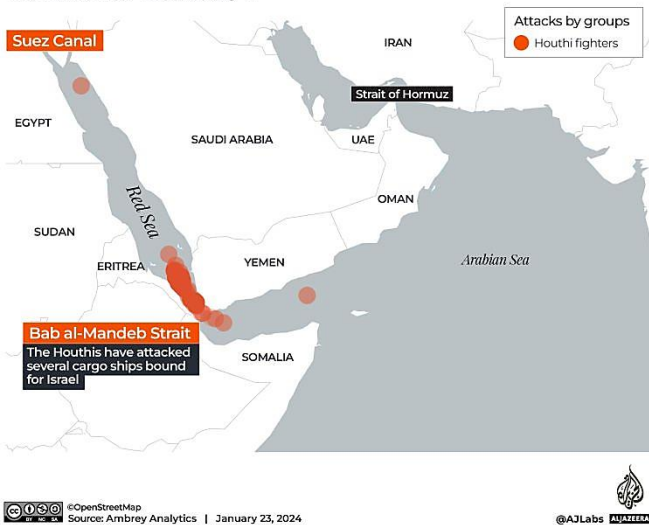*Source: EU offers to extend deadline to enforce deforestation rule (The Hindu)*

TERMS IN NEWS

Mission Aspides

ISRAEL'S WAR ON GAZA
Attacks in the Red Sea
Houthi fighters have attacked Israel-linked ships in the Red Sea, disrupting maritime trade, in retaliation to Israel's war on Gaza. The map shows attacks from November 19 to January 11.

- It is a European Union (EU) naval mission to protect cargo ships in the Red Sea from attacks from Yemen's Houthi rebels.
- It will send European warships and airborne early warning systems to the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and surrounding waters.
- France, Germany, Italy and Belgium have contributed troops towards this mission.
- Aspides vessels, whose operational command centre will be in the Greek city of Larissa, will have orders to fire on the Houthis only if they attack first and will not be authorised to shoot pre-emptively.
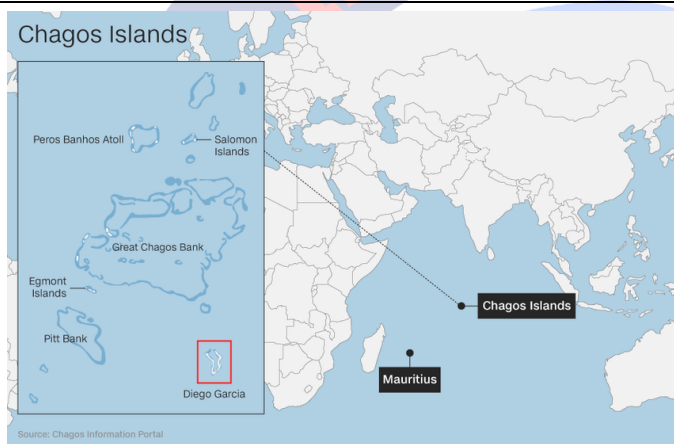

⚡👥 **Red Sea**
- It is a **semi-enclosed inlet** (or extension) of the **Indian Ocean** between the continents of Africa and Asia. It is one of the world's **warmest** seas.
- It is connected to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean to the south through the **Gulf of Aden** and the narrow **strait of Bab El-Mandeb**.

4

- The northern portion of the Red Sea is bifurcated by the **Sinai Peninsula** into the **Gulf of Aqaba** and the **Gulf of Suez**, where it is connected to the **Mediterranean Sea** via the famous **Suez Canal**.
- **Bordering Countries:**
  o **Yemen** and **Saudi Arabia** border the Red Sea to the east.
  o It is bordered by **Egypt** to the north and west and by **Sudan, Eritrea, and Djibouti** to the west.
- **Islands:** Some well-known islands include **Tiran Island**, which is located near the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba, and **Shadwan Island**, which is located at the entrance of the Gulf of Suez.

PLACES IN NEWS

Chagos Archipelago

- It is an island group located in the **central Indian Ocean** and is about 1,000 miles (1,600 km) south of the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent.
- It is an **overseas territory of the United Kingdom** that was established on November 8, 1965.
- Its key islands include the **Diego Garcia** atoll, **Danger Island**, **Egmont Islands**, **Eagle Islands**, Nelsons Island, Peros Banhos atoll. (Diego Garcia island houses a strategic **US military base**).
- **Climate:** It experiences a tropical marine climate with high temperatures and elevated humidity levels. The climate is heavily moderated by the trade winds which blow over the islands.

Chagos island dispute

- The Chagos dispute centres around the archipelago in the Indian Ocean, which **Britain claimed along with Mauritius** in 1814.
- In **1966**, Britain **leased Diego Garcia**, the largest of the Chagos Islands, to the **United States**, which was seeking a military base in the region.
- The Chagossians, who are mostly descendants of African slaves brought to the islands in the 18th century, have since been engaged in a prolonged legal battle for the right to return to their homeland.
- Mauritius, which gained independence from Britain in 1968, has consistently maintained its claim over the Chagos Islands.
- In 2019, the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** dismissed the UK's right to govern the Chagos Islands and called on its government to withdraw from the archipelago.

5

Recent developments:

- The UK and Mauritius have reached a historic agreement to return sovereignty of the Chagos islands to Mauritius while securing the base at Diego Garcia.
- Mauritius will assume sovereignty over the archipelago with UK authorized to exercise the sovereign rights of Mauritius on Diego Garcia.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme:

1. It aims to create 1 crore internship opportunities in top 500 companies over the next 5 years.

2. It is mandatory for all companies having a CSR obligation to participate in the scheme.

3. It functions under the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

How many of the given statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q2. Which of the following are the latest languages to gain the classical status in India?

1. Pali

2. Persian

3. Odia

4. Assamese

5. Bengali

Choose the correct answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3

(b) 4 and 5

(c) 1, 4 and 5

(d) 3 and 5

Q3. With respect to the EU Deforestation Regulation, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to reduce deforestation within the EU in line with REDD+ principles.

2. It affects trade in primary commodities such as cocoa, coffee, oil palm, soya etc.

Which of the given statements is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Mission Aspides recently seen in news is:

(a) Indian army's humanitarian mission in Darfur region of Sudan

(b) Israel's mission to oust the Hezbollah from Lebanon

(c) USA's rescue mission for citizen's stuck in conflict ridden areas of West Asia

(d) EU's naval mission to protect cargo ships in the Red Sea from attacks by Houthi rebels

Q5. The UK recently reached a historic agreement to restore sovereignty over the Chagos islands to which of the following countries?

(a) Madagascar

(b) Seychelles

(c) Mauritius

(d) Kenya

Answers:
1. A
2. C
3. B
4. D
5. C