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CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Shaurya Chakra: Gallantry Award

- On the eve of the 73rd Republic Day, six personnel of the Indian Army were awarded the Shaurya Chakra, the country's third highest peacetime gallantry award, in recognition of their distinguished service.
- Of these, five have been awarded posthumously.
- 'Gallantry Awards' are announced twice a year – on the occasion of Republic Day and Independence Day.

Gallantry Awards in India:

- After independence, the initial three gallantry awards – Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra and Vir Chakra were instituted by the Government of India on 26 January 1950, which were deemed to be effective from 15 August 1947.
- After this, in the year 1952, other three gallantry awards – 'Ashok Chakra Varg-I', 'Ashok Chakra Varg-II' and 'Ashok Chakra Varg-III' were instituted, which were considered effective from August 15, 1947.
- In January 1967, the names of these awards were changed to Ashok Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra respectively.
- The order of priority of these awards is – Param Vir Chakra, Ashok Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra, Kirti Chakra, Vir Chakra and Shaurya Chakra.

People Eligible for the Award:

- All officers of all ranks of the Army, Navy and Air Force or any Reserve Force, Territorial Army and any other legally constituted Armed Forces are eligible for these awards.

- In addition to the above mentioned personnel, Matrons, Nurses, Staff of Nursing Services and Employees of Hospitals and Nursing Services, regular or temporary are also eligible for this.

Highest Wartime Gallantry Award:



Param Vir Chakra:

- It is India's highest military decoration, given to display conspicuous acts of gallantry during war (whether on land, at sea or in the air).

Mahavir Chakra:

- It is the second highest gallantry award for acts of conspicuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy on land, at sea or in the air.

Vir Chakra:

- It is the third highest wartime gallantry award in the country after Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra.

Highest Peacetime Gallantry Award:

Ashoka Chakra:

- It is the highest military award for gallantry, courageous action or sacrifice during peacetime.

- It is awarded in peace time for conspicuous bravery or any other act of courage or gallantry or self-sacrifice.

Kirti Chakra:

- It is the second highest peacetime gallantry award and is given for courageous action or self-sacrifice in peace time.

Shaurya Chakra:

- It is awarded to the personnel of the Armed Forces for exceptional gallantry.

Other Awards:

Sena Medal:

- It is given for exceptional devotion to duty or acts of courage in the Army.

Navy Medal:

- It is awarded for individual acts of exceptional devotion to duty or courage in the Navy.

Air Force Medal:

- It is awarded for exceptional devotion to duty or for individual acts of courage in the Air Force.

Lala Lajpat Rai

- On January 28, 2022, the birth anniversary of the famous freedom fighter Lala Lajpat Rai was celebrated across the country.
- Lala Lajpat Rai was born on January 28, 1865 in a small village called ‘Dhudike’ in Firozpur district of Punjab.

- Lala Lajpat Rai was one of the greatest freedom fighters of India. He studied law from the Government College, Lahore.
- He was influenced by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and joined Arya Samaj in Lahore.
- Together with Bipin Chandra Pal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, he formed a trio (Lal-Bal-Pal) of extremist leaders.
- He founded the ‘Home Rule League of America’ in America in the year 1917 and through this sought moral support from the international community in America for the Indian independence movement.
- He founded the ‘Hindu Relief Movement’ in the year 1897 to help the famine victims and to save them from the clutches of missionaries. Apart from this, he founded the ‘Servants of People’s Society’ in the year 1921.
- He was the editor and founder of Arya Gazette. He also laid the foundation stone of Punjab National Bank in the year 1894. He was also known as ‘Punjab Kesari’ and ‘Lion of Punjab’.

Indian Pomegranate: Bangladesh

- Bangladesh has emerged as the top destination for export of Indian pomegranates over the years.
- In the last financial year (2020-21), India exported 68,502.9 tonnes of fruits, of which 36,906.77 tonnes (more than 50%) went to Bangladesh.

Introduction:

- Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) is grown in tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world.
- It grows well in semi-arid conditions and can be grown up to an altitude of 500 m above mean sea level. It grows well in hot and dry winters, provided suitable irrigation facilities are available.
- Pomegranate is grown mostly in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat, Pomegranate has emerged as a major export crop to the drought affected areas of the state.
- Indian exports have stagnated at around 50,000-60,000 tonnes in the last few years, as the increased focus on fruit quality has hit growth potential.

- While the European Union is a major market where fruits fetch premium prices and have higher quality control standards.
- Non-availability of fruits ready for export has reduced the attractiveness of Indian exporters in the European markets over the years.

Reasons for export growth in Bangladesh:

- Ease of transportation and relatively relaxed import norms have helped Indian growers to move their fruits to Bangladesh, even though the share of exports to European countries has declined.
- This fruit can be exported to Bangladesh throughout the year and thus Europeans can send their produce even when the season ends.

Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)

- Recently Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) officials estimated that RRTS will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by taking about 1.5 lakh private vehicles off the road.
- This corridor will start from Sarai Kale Khan in Delhi and reach Modipuram in Meerut (Uttar Pradesh) via Ghaziabad.
- First of its kind RRTS in the national capital whose average speed of train on track will be 100 kmph and passengers will be able to reach Meerut in 50-60 minutes.

Role:

- A task force was constituted by the Planning Commission in the year 2005 under the chairmanship of the Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development to develop a multi-modal transit system for the National Capital Region (NCR).
- It was included in the Integrated Transport Plan for NCR 2032 with special emphasis on 'Regional Rapid Transit System' (RRTS) connecting regional centres.
- The Task Force identified 8 corridors and prioritized three corridors for implementation, namely Delhi-Meerut, Delhi-Panipat and Delhi-Alwar.

About RRTS:

- The 'Regional Rapid Transit System' is a new, high speed, high capacity, comfortable commuter service connecting regional nodes in NCR.
- RRTS is also different from conventional railways as it is more reliable and completes more cycles with higher speed.
- RRTS differs from Metro in that it has fewer stops and higher speed than Metro and caters to the needs of passengers traveling relatively longer distances.

Desired benefits:

- **Environment friendly:** The corridor is estimated to emit 2.5 lakh tonnes of CO₂ less than the total annual greenhouse gas emissions, making the city cleaner and a better place to live.
- **Economic growth:** The share of use of public transport along the corridor is projected to increase from 37% to 63%.
- High-speed connectivity will result in balanced economic development of the entire region, bringing economic benefits to all sections of the society and multiple points of development, rather than all economic activity taking place in one place.
- **Sustainable Urbanization:** This project will serve as a model for developing high capacity rapid urban transit corridors in other urban areas of India.
- It will help in reducing traffic congestion in NCR and overall emissions from the transport sector.

Swachhta Start-up Challenge

- Recently the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in partnership with 'Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade' (DPIIT) and 'French Development Agency' (AFD) under 'Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0' under 'Swachhta Start-up Challenge.'

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0

Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0



- SBM-U 2.0 was launched on 01 October, 2021 to achieve the goal of 'Garbage Free Cities' in the next five years.
- It focuses on waste source and its segregation, reduction of single-use plastics and air pollution, effectively managing waste from construction and demolition activities and bioremediation of all old dump sites.
- Under this mission the waste water will be treated properly before releasing it into the water bodies and the government is trying to prioritize maximum reuse of this water.

Introduction:

- This challenge has been launched to encourage innovative start-ups to drive catalytic change in the sanitation and waste management sector.
- The challenge invites solutions in four thematic areas, which include (i) social inclusion, (ii) zero dump (solid waste management), (iii) plastic waste management and (iv) transparency through digital enablement.
- It aims to promote an enabling environment for enterprise development under SBM-U 2.0.
- The French Development Agency (AFD) will provide seed funding of Rs 25 lakh and one year customized support to each of the 10 selected start-ups.
- With the spirit of innovation at its core, the start-up space has immense potential to revolutionize India's waste management sector.
- It is in line with self-reliant India and Make in India.

Objective:

- It aims to capitalize on the start-up movement by providing entrepreneurial opportunities to young innovators for socially impactful and marketable business solutions.

Importance:

- This initiative comes at a time when France and the European Union (EU) want to work together with India at the international level to negotiate a global treaty on plastic pollution.
- This is also important because today the start-up space is growing rapidly, with India leading the world with over 70 unicorns (crossing the US\$1 billion valuation).

Initiatives to tackle plastic pollution:

- On the occasion of World Environment Day (June 5) in 2018, global leaders pledged to “defeat plastic pollution” and eliminate the use of plastic completely.
- The Group of Environment Ministers of the G-20 countries agreed to adopt a new implementation framework to tackle the issue of marine plastic waste at the global level.
- As per the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, every local body should be responsible for setting up infrastructure for segregation, collection, processing and disposal of plastic waste.
- The Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018 introduced the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).
- A new national framework on plastic waste management is being implemented, which will introduce third party audits as part of the monitoring mechanism.
- The India Plastics Pact was launched in September 2021 in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to set time-bound commitments to reduce plastics from its value chain.

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