



Yojna IAS

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NOV-DEC 2023

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

YOJNA IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS
27/11/2023 TO 03/12/2023

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CURRENT AFFAIRS

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

NATIONAL PENSION SYSTEM (NPS)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "National Pension System (NPS)". This topic has relevance in the Economy section of the UPSC CSE exam.

GS 3: Economy

Why in the news?

The Union Home Minister's recent announcement to deliberate on the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) has reignited discussions on the National Pension System (NPS).

As a retirement benefit scheme introduced by the Government of India, the NPS aims to provide a regular income post-retirement for all its subscribers.

Key Features of the National Pension System (NPS):

- **Inception and Expansion:**
 - Launched on January 1, 2004.
 - Initially for new government recruits, it was extended to all citizens, including those in the unorganized sector, on a voluntary basis from May 1, 2009.
- **Voluntary Nature:**
 - Open to all citizens, allowing flexibility in investment amounts at any time.
- **Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN):**
 - Each subscriber is assigned a unique PRAN for account identification.
- **Portability:**
 - NPS accounts and PRANs remain constant despite changes in employment, location, or state, accessible from anywhere in India.
- **Regulatory Authority:**

- Governed by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).
- **Defined Benefit Absence:**
- Unlike traditional pension schemes, NPS lacks a defined benefit at exit; accumulated wealth depends on individual contributions and investment returns.
- **Investment Structure:**
- Individual savings are pooled into pension funds managed by PFRDA-regulated professionals.
- Diversified portfolios include Government Bonds, Bills, Corporate Debentures, and Shares.
- **Corpus Growth and Withdrawal:**
- Contributions accumulate until retirement, with market-linked returns.
- Subscribers can exit before retirement or opt for superannuation.
- **Two Personal Accounts under PRAN:**
- Tier I Account: Non-withdrawable, designed for retirement savings.
- Tier II Account: Voluntary savings with withdrawal flexibility, not eligible for tax benefits.

Prospects of Restoring the Old Pension Scheme (OPS):

- The government's consideration of restoring OPS prompts a reevaluation of retirement benefit schemes, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach between voluntary contributions and defined benefits.
- The committee's report will likely play a crucial role in shaping the future of pension schemes in India.

Aspect	Old Pension Scheme	National Pension Scheme (NPS)
Guarantee of Income	Guarantees a lifelong income post-retirement.	Participants contribute, and the scheme does not guarantee a fixed income.
Financial Responsibility	Government bears the expenditure on the pension.	Employees contribute, and the government may match the contributions.
Monthly Payment	Assures a fixed monthly payment, typically 50% of the last drawn salary.	Contributions are invested in earmarked schemes with potential market-linked returns.
Contribution Structure	The entire financial responsibility lies with the government.	Employees contribute a portion, and the government may contribute as well.
Investment of Funds	Not applicable, as the government bears the financial burden.	Funds are invested in earmarked investment schemes through Pension Fund Managers.
Withdrawal at Retirement	Monthly pension payment continues, as per the predetermined amount.	At retirement, a portion (60%) can be withdrawn tax-free, while the remaining (40%) is invested in annuities.

Will deliberate on Old Pension Scheme after panel report: Amit Shah – The Hindu

Q.1 With reference to the provided information on the National Pension System (NPS), consider the following statements:

1. The NPS was initially launched for new government recruits and later extended to all citizens
2. The NPS Tier II Account is designed for non-withdrawable retirement savings.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: A

Q.2 In light of the ongoing discussions regarding the potential revival of Old Pension Scheme (OPS), critically assess the implications of such a move on India's pension landscape

RAT-HOLE MINING

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Rat-Hole Mining". This topic has relevance in the Economy section of the UPSC CSE exam.

GS 3: Economy

Why in the news?

Recently, the efforts to rescue workers trapped in the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel have brought attention to the use of horizontal auger machines and the adoption of rat-hole mining practices.

Horizontal Auger Machines:

Definition and Functionality:

- Also known as horizontal boring machines or directional drills. It is a specialized tool for creating horizontal bores or underground tunnels without surface disturbance.
- Comprise a rotating helical screw blade (auger) attached to a central shaft or drill.

- Commonly used in construction, utility installations, and infrastructure projects.

Working Mechanism:

- It is positioned at the bore's starting point on the surface.
- It consists of a drill head with a rotating auger or drill string. The auger cuts through soil, rock, or other materials underground.
- Rotation is powered by hydraulic or mechanical systems and the material removal is facilitated by drilling fluid or mud pumped through the drill string.

Rat-Hole Mining:

- It is a method of extracting coal from narrow, horizontal seams, prevalent in Meghalaya. It involves narrow pits ("rat holes") dug into the ground for coal extraction.
- Miners descend using ropes or bamboo ladders to reach coal seams.
- Manual extraction using primitive tools like pickaxes, shovels, and baskets.

Types of Rat-Hole Mining:

- **Side-Cutting Procedure:** Narrow tunnels dug on hill slopes until the coal seam is found. Coal seams in Meghalaya are typically thin, less than 2 meters.
- **Box-Cutting:** A rectangular opening is made, followed by a vertical pit, and horizontal rat-hole-sized tunnels for coal extraction.

Environmental and Safety Concerns:

- Unregulated mines lacking safety measures.
- Potential for land degradation, deforestation, and water pollution.
- Hazardous working conditions, accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

Ban on Rat-Hole Mining:

- Banned by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2014 and retained in 2015. cited reasons include flooding during the rainy season, resulting in deaths and environmental damage.
- Despite bans, challenges persist due to economic factors and the lack of alternative livelihoods.

SOURCE:

Silkyara tunnel rescuers resort to traditional mining method: Rat-hole mining explained | Dehradun News – Times of India (indiatimes.com)

Q.1 With reference to the rat-hole mining, consider the following statements:

1. Rat-hole mining is a method of extracting coal from narrow, horizontal seams, prevalent in Maharash-

tra.

2. The Supreme Court banned rat-hole mining in 2014.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: D

Q.2 Evaluate the reasons behind the National Green Tribunal's (NGT) ban on rat-hole mining.

JUSTICE GITA MITTAL COMMITTEE ON MANIPUR VIOLENCE

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs", and the topic details "Justice Gita Mittal Committee on Manipur Violence". This topic has relevance in the Governance section of the UPSC CSE exam.

GS 2: Governance

Why in the news?

The interim report concerning the May 2023 violence in Manipur has been submitted to the Supreme Court by the Justice Gita Mittal committee.

Background:

On May 3, 2023, violent ethnic clashes erupted in Manipur between the Meitei people in the Imphal Valley and the Kuki-Zo tribal community from the surrounding hills. The catalyst for the violence was a 'Tribal Solidarity March' protesting the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. The Manipur High Court's order, directing the state government to recommend ST status by May 29, further intensified tensions.

Immediate Causes and Impact:

The violence resulted in more than 175 casualties, with 94 unclaimed bodies in state mortuaries. Over 70,000 people were displaced from their homes. The genesis of the conflict lies in the historical ST status of the Meitei community, seeking restoration after the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union.

Justice Gita Mittal Committee:

In response to the escalating situation, the Supreme Court appointed a three-member committee, led

by former Jammu and Kashmir High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal, in August 2023. Empowered to submit reports directly to the Supreme Court, the committee recently presented its thirteenth interim report.

Major Findings and Recommendations:

- The committee's key findings center on the sensitive issue of handling the deceased. It recommends directing victims' relatives to perform the last rites, with state intervention if necessary.
- The report highlights external pressures from civil society organizations, alleging interference with last rites due to "vested interests" and to extract "unwarranted" concessions from state authorities.
- The committee urges the Supreme Court to intervene by compelling the next of kin to claim bodies and conduct last rites. Additionally, it recommends prohibiting civil society organizations from obstructing or interfering with the solemn process.

Ethnic Diversity in Manipur:

Manipur is characterized by its diverse population, primarily divided into three main ethnic communities: Meiteis residing in the valley, and 29 major tribes in the hills, categorized into two primary ethno-denominations – Nagas and Kuki-Chins.

Meiteis:

- **Population:** With a majority presence of over 50%, Meiteis are the predominant ethnic group in Manipur, primarily residing in the Imphal Valley.
- **Religion:** Meiteis predominantly follow the Hindu religion, contributing to the religious pluralism within the state.

Naga Group:

- It comprises various tribes such as Zeliangrong, Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Maring, and Tarao.
- Represents a significant portion of the hill communities in Manipur, each tribe contributing to the rich cultural tapestry of the region.

Chin-Kuki Group:

- Encompassing tribes like Gangte, Hmar, Paite, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zou, Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom, Anal, Chothe, Lamgang, Koirao, Thangal, Moyon, and Monsang.
- The term 'Chin' refers to people in the neighboring Chin state of Myanmar, while in the Indian side, they are known as 'Kukis.'
- Certain groups like Paite, Zou, Gangte, and Vaiphei identify themselves as Zomi, distancing from the term 'Kuki.'
- **Population:** Constituting 25% of Manipur's demographic landscape, Kukis predominantly inhabit the hilly regions of the state.

- **Religion:** The majority of Kukis adhere to the Christian faith, contributing to the religious diversity in Manipur.

Cultural Commonalities:

- Despite diverse ethnicities, all groups in Manipur share Mongoloid origins, fostering close similarities in culture and traditional practices.
- The legend among various tribes, including Meiteis, narrates their origin from a cave in the north, underlining a shared historical narrative.

Cultural Distinctions:

- Meiteis, residing in the valley, exhibit cultural differences from the surrounding hill tribes by predominantly following Hindu customs.
- This cultural distinction adds a layer of diversity to Manipur's social fabric, where religious practices contribute to the unique identity of each community.

Shared Heritage:

- The coexistence of Meiteis in the valley and diverse tribes in the hills reflects the harmonious integration of various ethnicities in Manipur.
- The shared heritage, despite cultural nuances, emphasizes unity in diversity, creating a mosaic of traditions that contributes to the cultural richness of the region.

SOURCE:

Manipur violence: SC directs disposal of unclaimed bodies, tells state to give kin one week's notice | India News – The Indian Express

Q.1 Consider the following statements regarding Manipur's Ethnic Communities:

1. Meiteis constitute the majority ethnic group in Manipur.
2. Meiteis primarily reside on the hills of Manipur
3. Meiteis are primarily Christian by faith

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

ANSWER: A

Q.2 Discuss the recent ethnic violence in Manipur, highlighting the underlying causes, and the socio-political implications for the region. Evaluate the role of historical factors, administrative decisions, and societal dynamics in contributing to the unrest.

NOLAMBA DYNASTY

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs", and the topic details "Nolamba Dynasty". This topic has relevance in the History and Culture section of the UPSC CSE exam.

GS 1: History and Culture

Why in the news?

In recent historical investigations into the Nolamba Pallavas, researchers have discovered ancient inscriptions, hero stones, and depictions of Shiva Linga and Nandi idols.

The Nolamba Dynasty, often referred to as Nolamba Pallavas, played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of South India from the 8th to the 12th centuries C.E. Unearthed artifacts, including inscriptions, hero stones, and Shiva Linga idols, provide insights into their historical significance.

Political Influence:

The Nolambas initially served as feudatories to prominent dynasties such as Pallavas, Chalukyas of Badami, Gangas, and Rashtrakutas. Later, they aligned with the Chalukyas of Kalyani. Their dominion, known as Nolambavadi, encompassed regions in southeast Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh.

Capital Shift:

The dynasty's early capital was Chitradurga, but it was later relocated to Hemavati in modern Andhra Pradesh during the 8th to 10th centuries AD. This shift marked a significant era in Nolamba rule.

Founder and Origins:

Mangala Nomabathi Raja (735–785 A.D.) is recognized as the founder of the Nolamba dynasty. Inscriptions suggest that they emerged as governors during the supremacy of the Pallavas and Chalukyas. Their existence intertwined with political changes, especially after the Chalukyas lost territories to the Pallavas.

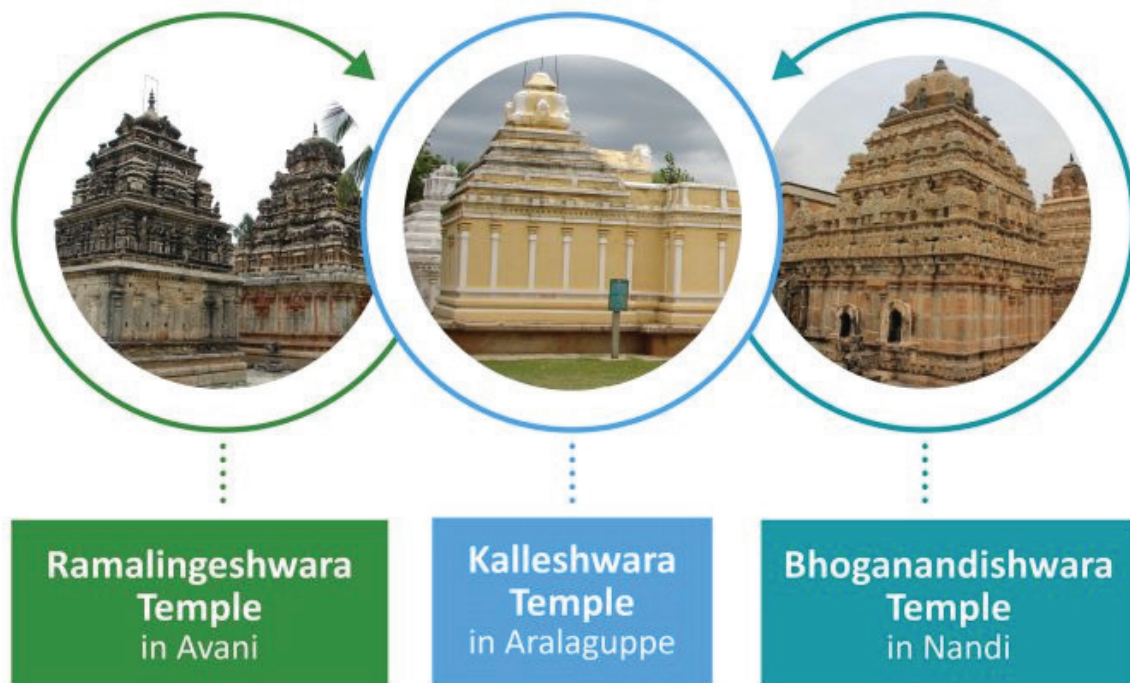
Rise and Fall:

Initially linked to the Banas and Vaidumbas, the Nolambas faced political shifts with the Chalukyas regaining control. The defeat of Pallava chiefs by the Chalukyas led to the emergence of the Nolambas. However, their decline came at the hands of Ganga king Marasimha, who claimed the title Nolambakulantaka.

Religious Legacy:

The Nolambas, devout Shaivites, left a cultural imprint through grand temple complexes dedicated to Lord Shiva. Notable examples include the Kalleshwara Temple in Aralaguppe, the Bhoganandishwara Temple in Nandi, and the Ramalingeshwara Temple in Avani.

Temples Built by Nolamba Dynasty



The Nolamba Dynasty, despite its historical significance, often remains overshadowed. Through their political maneuverings, capital shifts, and religious patronage, the Nolambas left an indelible mark on South Indian history, as evidenced by the unearthed relics and temple structures that stand testament to their once-flourishing rule.

Source:

Hero stones, inscriptions found in Sathya Sai district (msn.com)

Q.1 Consider the following statements regarding the Nolamba Dynasty?

1. The Nolambas initially served as feudatories to Chalukyas of Badami
2. The Nolambas built Chennakesava temple at Belur.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: A

Q.2 Evaluate the role of Dravidian architecture in shaping the religious landscape and regional identity in South India.

GOLAN HEIGHTS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Golan Heights". This topic has relevance in the Geography section of the UPSC CSE exam.

GS 1: Geography

Why in the news?

India has cast its vote in support of a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution expressing profound concern about Israel's failure to withdraw from the Syrian Golan Heights.

Geography:

- Located in southwestern Syria, Golan Heights is a rocky plateau about 60km southwest of Damascus.
- Bounded by the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee, Mount Hermon, Wadi Al-Ruqqād River, and the Yarmūk River.
- Boat-shaped, covering approximately 1,150 square kilometers with dimensions of 44 miles north to south and 27 miles east to west.



History:

- Seized by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War from Syria.
- Majority of Syrian Arab inhabitants displaced during the conflict.
- Establishment of an armistice line and Israeli military control.
- Settlement activities initiated by Israel, leading to a contested demographic landscape.
- Unsuccessful Syrian attempt to reclaim the region in the 1973 Middle East conflict.
- 1974 armistice signed with the deployment of a UN observer force along the ceasefire line.
- Unilateral Israeli annexation in 1981 solidified geopolitical tensions.

Current Situation:

- Over 30 Israeli settlements in the Golan, considered illegal under international law.
- Population includes approximately 20,000 Syrians and 20,000 Israelis, fostering a complex social fabric.
- Ongoing tension between Israel and the international community regarding settlements.

Strategic Significance:

- Elevated vantage points provide a clear view of the Syrian capital, Damascus, enhancing military and surveillance capabilities.
- Golan serves as a watershed, contributing to the Jordan River's water supply.
- One-third of Israel's water supply is believed to come from the Golan.
- Fertile land in the region supports agriculture, adding to its strategic importance.

Source:

India votes in favour of UNGA resolution that expresses deep concern over Israel not withdrawing from Syrian Golan (msn.com)

Q.1 Regarding the Golan Heights recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It lies on the Syria-Jordan border.
2. It lies west of the Sea of Galilee.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: A

Q.2 In the context of evolving global dynamics, discuss the changing perspectives of India on the Israel-Palestine conflict

LOSS AND DAMAGE FUND

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details " Loss and Damage Fund". This topic has relevance in the Environment section of the UPSC CSE exam.

GS 3: Environment

Why in the news?

- The COP28 climate conference in Dubai marked the official launch of a loss and damage fund aimed at assisting vulnerable nations in managing the effects of climate change.

Background:

- The announcement of the loss and damage fund initially took place at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, the preceding year.
- The fund's initial financial support is anticipated to total \$475 million.
- The UAE, serving as the host, committed \$100 million to the fund.
- The European Union demonstrated significant support with a pledge of \$275 million.
- The United States contributed \$17.5 million to the fund.
- Japan, in a show of commitment, allocated \$10 million to support the initiative.

Loss and Damage Fund Overview:

- **Global Financial Package:** The Loss and Damage Fund is a global financial package designed to support the rescue and rehabilitation of countries experiencing the cascading impacts of climate change.
- **Responsibility and Compensation:** Rich nations, deemed responsible for the climate crisis due to their industrial growth, are obligated to pay compensation to poorer nations facing the adverse effects.
- **Impact on Vulnerable Countries:** Despite having a low carbon footprint, some nations are disproportionately affected by rising sea levels, floods, droughts, cyclones, impacting lives, livelihoods, biodiversity, cultural traditions, and identities.

Complexity of Loss and Damage:

- **Lack of UNFCCC Agreement:** There is no universally agreed-upon definition of loss and damage within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- **Categorization:** Loss and damage are often classified as economic or non-economic. Economic losses involve quantifiable monetary impacts, while non-economic losses are challenging to assign a monetary value to.

Industrialization's Role in Climate Change:

- **Historical Responsibility:** The Industrial Era since 1850 has disrupted Earth's natural mechanisms for greenhouse gas production and absorption.
- **Emission Responsibility:** The US, the UK, and the EU contribute to 50% of all emissions, while India's historical emissions account for only 3%. China, the largest emitter in recent years, is responsible for 30% of global emissions annually.

Extent of Climate Crisis-Induced Loss and Damage:

- **Financial Impact:** Over the past two decades, 55 vulnerable countries have collectively suffered \$525 billion in losses due to climate crisis-induced events.
- **Future Projections:** Estimated losses are expected to reach \$580 billion annually by 2030, with projections indicating a continued increase as global warming persists.



COP28 Summit's Climate Disaster Fund:

- **Positive Development:** The COP28 climate conference in Dubai saw a positive start with member countries agreeing to establish a climate disaster fund.

- **Fund Source:** Rich nations like the US, the UK, and the EU, along with some developing countries, contribute to the fund.
- **Interim Host:** The World Bank will serve as the interim host for four years, although some developing nations initially expressed concerns about potential financial control by richer nations.
- **Fund Scale and Operation:** The scale and replenishment cycle remain unclear, but the urgency necessitates a fund in the trillions. Key aspects, such as contributors and fund size, are yet to be determined.
- **Voluntary Payments:** Contributions to the fund are voluntary, and all developing countries are eligible to directly access the resources.

Source:

Loss and damage fund approved at COP28 summit: All you need to know | Explained News – The Indian Express

Q.1 With reference to the Loss and Damage Fund established during the COP28 climate conference, consider the following statements:

1. The World Bank will serve as the interim host for the Loss and Damage Fund.
2. Contributions to the fund are mandatory for all member countries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: A

Q.2 Discuss the critical role of financial mechanisms in addressing the challenges posed by climate change. Examine the necessity for a robust financial framework to support climate adaptation and mitigation efforts globally, considering the recent developments at the COP28 conference in Dubai.