

Prelim Bits 09-04-2022 | Daily UPSC Current Affairs

Arctic Council

- Established in 1996, the Arctic Council is a leading high-level **intergovernmental forum** that addresses issues faced by governments in the region and the indigenous people of the Arctic.
- It promotes cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues.
- **Members** - As per the Ottawa Declaration, **8 states** are defined as Members of the Arctic Council.
- The members are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Russia, Sweden and the USA.
- Besides these, 6 organizations representing the indigenous people of the Arctic region is granted the status of permanent participants.
- Other countries or national groups are considered observer states (38).
- All decision-making happens through consensus between the 6 members, and in consultation with the permanent participants.
- The 6 Working Groups carry out the Council's activities
 1. Arctic Contaminants Action Program
 2. Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme
 3. Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna
 4. Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response
 5. Protection of the Arctic Marine
 6. Environment Sustainable Development Working Group
- **India** is currently an Observer member on the Arctic Council.
- Recently, the government unveiled India's Arctic policy document.
- It says India aspires to have a permanent presence, more research stations and establish satellite ground stations in the Arctic region.
- **Related Links** - [India's Arctic Policy](#)

Reference

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/videos/watch-why-is-arctic-council-important-to-india/article65302805.ece>
2. <https://arctic-council.org/about/>
3. <https://arctic-council.org/>

Banarasi Pashmina

The premium Pashmina products prepared by the highly skilled Khadi weavers of Varanasi were launched by Chairman of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).

- This is for the first time that Pashmina products are being produced outside the Himalayan highlands of Leh-Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir.
- KVIC will be selling the "Made-in-Varanasi" Pashmina products through its showrooms, outlets and through its online portal.
- The journey of Pashmina production in Varanasi begins with collection of raw Pashmina wool

from Ladakh and which is brought to Delhi for de-hairing, cleaning and processing.

- The processed wool, in the form of roving, is brought back to Leh where it is handspun into yarn by women Khadi artisans on modern Charkhas provided by KVIC.
- The finished yarn is then sent to Varanasi where it is woven by trained Khadi weavers into final Pashmina products.

Reference

1. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1814859>
2. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/pashmina-to-get-distinct-varanasi-identity/articleshow/90716518.cms>

Guru Nabha Dass

Punjab government announced gazetted holiday on the birth anniversary of Guru Nabha Dass, a 16th century saint, taking it out from list of restricted holidays.

A restricted holiday is a list of holidays additional to the gazetted list from which a government employee can choose two to observe each year.

- Guru Nabha Dass was born in 1537 at village Bhadrachalam on the bank of Godavari River in Khammam district, which is in Telangana.
- He belonged to Mahasha or doom or dumna community, which is one of the Schedule Caste communities.
- People from this community are also known as Nabhadassias, who are known for making baskets and grain storage containers with bamboo.
- Nabha Dass was 5 years old when his parents passed away.
- Two religious gurus - Agar Dass and Keel Dass - who were passing through his village took the orphan child to a temple at Ghalta Dham, which is now main pilgrimage of Nabhadassias, at Jaipur (Rajasthan).
- Since childhood Guru Nabha Dass, whose original name was Narayan Dass, had an inclination towards spirituality.
- Guru Nabha Dass wrote '**Bhagatmal**' in 1585. It has the life history of around 200 saints ranging from the Satyug to the Kalyug era.
- He died in 1643.
- **Connection with Punjab** - Guru Nabha Dass used to visit village Pandori in Punjab where people of Doom community live.
- Some gurus of the community also used to live there.
- Neighbouring Himachal Pradesh and Jammu states also have a sizeable presence of the community.
- Kullu Dussehra is celebrated for a week on the directions of Guru Nabha Dass.

Reference

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/punjab-govt-gazetted-holiday-nabha-dass-anniversary-explained-7860718/>
2. <https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/india/punjab/birthday-of-sri-guru-nabha-dass-ji>

Bucha Massacre

Ukrainian President accused Russian troops of committing “the most terrible war crimes” since World War II in Bucha, Ukraine.

- More than 300 bodies have been found in Bucha, a Kyiv suburb, some with their hands bound, flesh burned, and shot in the back of the head.
- Bucha is a town located about 25 km to the northwest of Kyiv.
- The discoveries have drawn comparisons with the killings of civilians in this area during World War II.
- Between the 1st Battle of Kyiv (1941) and the 2nd Battle of Kyiv (1943) when the Red Army started to push back the Germans from Ukraine, the area around the Ukrainian capital saw the “Holocaust by bullets”.
- Both the expressions ‘genocide or war crimes’ have been used freely in outraged Ukrainian and Western descriptions of the atrocities in Bucha.
- Whether these incidents fit those definitions is important because of the international community’s obligation to respond to them.

Reference

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-happened-in-bucha-ukraine-and-was-it-genocide-7854561/>
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/60981238>

‘Tour of Duty’ Scheme

The Department of Military Affairs has finalised the “Tour of Duty (ToD)” scheme - a radical proposal for future recruitment to the armed forces.

- Under this scheme, the youngsters will be recruited as soldiers only for **3 to 5 years** in the backdrop of the urgent need to curb the ballooning salary & pension bills that are badly impacting military modernization.
- The 12-lakh strong **Army** was finalizing the radical ToD proposal for both officers and jawans, which would **not entail any pensionary benefits** being given to them.
- The scheme, which was being pushed by the late Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, is likely to be applicable to the **Indian Air Force (IAF) and Indian Navy** as well.
- But entry at the officer-level under the ToD scheme is not on the cards as of now.
- ToD scheme, which is likely to be called the “**Agnipath**” recruitment, is likely to be launched on an experimental basis first. But eventually, all soldiers could be recruited under this model.
- While 25% of them would serve for three years and 25% for five years, the remaining 50% would serve for the full term till they reach the retirement age.

Reference

1. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/tour-of-duty-scheme-to-recruit-soldiers-only-for-3-5-years-being-finalised/articleshow/90692866.cms>
2. <https://theprint.in/defence/3-yr-tour-of-duty-for-jawans-govt-to-roll-out-new-recruitment-process-not-for-officers/904971/>



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