



Daily Current Affairs

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Voter Awareness Forums

Why in news?

Recently Election commission of India has announced that Voter Awareness Forums will be set up in Ministries, Government Departments, Non-Government Departments and other Institutions to promote electoral awareness.

Highlights:

- Voter Awareness Forums are informal Forums for generating awareness around electoral process through activities like discussions, quizzes, competitions and other engaging activities.
- All employees of the Organisation are expected to become members of the VAF with the Head of the Organisation acting as Chair of VAF.
- VAF is part of the Electoral Literacy Club programme of ECI. Launched on the 8th National Voters Day, 25th January 2018, the ELC programme envisages setting up of Electoral Literacy Club in every educational institution and Chunav Pathshala at every booth to cover those outside the formal education system.
- Around 2.11 Lakh ELCs have already been established across the country in the first year of the launch of the programme.

About National Voters' Day:

In order to encourage more young voters to take part in the political process, Government of India has decided to celebrate January 25 every year as "National Voters' Day". It started from January 25, 2011 to mark Commission's foundation day.

Why it is important?

- Observing that new voters, who have attained the age of 18 years, were showing less interest in getting enrolled in the electoral rolls, she said the level of their enrollment was as low as 20 to 25 per cent in certain cases.
 - "In order to effectively deal with this problem, the Election Commission has decided to take up a vigorous exercise to identify all eligible voters attaining the age of 18 years as of January 1 every year in each of the 8.5 lakh polling stations across the country,"
 - Such eligible voters would be enrolled on time and handed over their Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) on January 25 every year, and this initiative is expected to give the youth a sense of empowerment, pride and inspire them to exercise their franchise.
 - The slogan 'No Voter to be left behind' has been coined to further emphasis the focus on inclusiveness. The National Awards are being conferred for excellence, proficiency and innovation in election processes and procedures.
 - These awards recognize contribution by election machinery, government department/ agency/ PSU, CSO and media said. The greatest joy is seen in young voters of India.
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Womaniya on Government e Marketplace

Why in news?

Recently Union Government has launched Government e Marketplace [GeM] has launched "Womaniya on GeM", an initiative to enable women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups.

Key Facts:

- Government e Marketplace [GeM] has launched "Womaniya on GeM", an initiative to enable women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups [WSHGs] to sell handicrafts and handloom, accessories, jute and coir products, home décor and office furnishings, directly to various Government ministries, departments and institutions. The initiative seeks to develop women entrepreneurship on the margins of

society to achieve gender-inclusive economic growth.

- Nearly 80 percent women-owned establishments are self-financed and more than 60 percent of 8 million units are owned and or led by women entrepreneurs from socially-challenged sections of the society.
- Since women tend to invest up to 90 percent of their earnings back in their families to provide better nutrition, health care and education to their children, economic empowerment of women is a step in the direction of poverty alleviation.
- Government e-Marketplace (GeM), created in a record time of five months, facilitates online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Government Departments / Organisations / PSUs.
- GeM aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement. It provides the tools of e-bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation to facilitate the government users, achieve the best value for their money.
- Womaniya on GeM will spur hyper-local economic opportunities for women entrepreneurs and address goals and objectives under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Government e Marketplace is a 100 percent government owned company setup under the aegis of Ministry of Commerce and Industry for procurement of common use goods and services by Government ministries, departments and CPSEs.
- GeM was setup in 2016 and has 731,431 product categories, with 180,862 registered sellers and 32,114 government buyers. Since inception, GeM has processed 1,171,761 orders worth Rs. 16,976 crores in gross merchandise value.

Vision

To affect an evolution in public procurement promoting a transparent, efficient and inclusive marketplace.

Mission

- Institute a unified procurement policy to encourage behavioral change and drive reform.
- Establish a lean, dynamic organization capable of continuous innovation and market driven decision making.

- Build an easy to use, fully automated platform to ensure transparency and efficiency in procurement
- Demonstrate commitment to delivering value by ensuring right quality at right price
- Create a sustainable ecosystem covering all stakeholders and driving inclusive development in India

Values

1. Commitment
 2. Responsiveness
 3. Ownership and Accountability
 4. Transparency and Integrity
 5. Social Inclusion
 6. Innovate to simplify
 7. Be Told and Think Big
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Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas

Why in news?

The Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas is scheduled to commence at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh on 21st January.

Highlights:

- The spiritual capital of India Varanasi has geared up to welcome the people from all over the world who will be flocking in to participate in “Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas” scheduled to commence on January 21.
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated once in every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots.
- It is 15th edition of the “Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas” which is organized on an interval of two years.
- During the Convention, selected overseas Indians are also honored with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to recognize their contributions to various fields both in India and abroad.

- The **theme** of PBD Convention 2019 is "Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India".
 - These Conferences are chaired by the **Minister of External Affairs**.
 - Domain experts from the Diaspora, stakeholders and policy makers based in India and foreign countries are invited for day-long deliberations on various topics.
 - Their recommendations are submitted to the concerned Ministries & Departments in the Government of India for consideration in policy formulation.
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An end-to-end prediction system for predicting thunderstorms/lightning

Why in news?

Indian Meteorological Department to launch an end-to-end prediction system for predicting thunderstorms/lightning by April 2019.

Why this initiative?

- Last year during the pre monsoon season a series of thunderstorm/dust storm affected the northern states and claimed about 200 lives especially in UP, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana and Punjab.
- In view of this the India Meteorological Department will be implementing an end-to-end prediction system for predicting thunderstorms/lightning by April 2019.

Key Facts:

- Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) and IMD are developing prediction tools for thunderstorm/lightning.
- IITM Pune has already installed 48 lightning sensors around the country which can locate the thunderstorm/lightning activities on real time.
- IITM Pune also developed a Mobile App called "DAMINI" to give alerts on impending lightning activity over the area.

- Focusing on IMD's Observational Network, IMD is strengthening the observational network and by end of this year, 10 new X-band weather radars will be installed over NW Himalayas (J &K, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand).
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Global Housing Technology Challenge-India

Why in news?

Recently Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Launched "Global Housing Technology Challenge-India".

About Launching Global Housing Technology Challenge-India:

- GHTC- India intends to get best globally available innovative construction technologies through a challenge process. It seeks to demonstrate and deliver ready to live-in houses in a shorter time, with lower cost and quality construction in a sustainable manner.
- It also seeks to promote future technologies, to foster an environment of research and development in the country.
- GHTC-India has been conceptualized to enable the paradigm shift required in the construction sector in the country.
- GHTC-India will bring change, both in the perception as well as the manner in which construction of houses is done.

The challenge has three components viz.

- i) Conduct of Grand Expo-cum-Conference.
- ii) Identifying Proven Demonstrable Technologies from across the world.
- iii) Promoting Potential Technologies through setting up incubation centers at selected IITs and organizing accelerator workshops under the Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators- India (ASHA-India) Program.

Why GHTC-India is important for India?

- MoHUA has been implementing Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) Mission to provide all weather “pucca” houses to eligible beneficiaries by the year 2022.
- Against the validated demand of about one crore housing units to be constructed by the year 2022, MoHUA has so far sanctioned around 70 lakh houses, out of which around 37 lakh have been grounded and around 15 lakh completed and allotted to beneficiaries.
- To ensure a robust process, MoHUA conducted a series of consultations with State/UT governments, IITs, technology providers and other relevant stakeholders to identify broad reasons for slow and limited adoption of innovative and alternative construction technologies for affordable housing.
- Typically conventional construction systems (such as the use of brick and mortar) are slow paced, energy intensive, dependent on natural resources and have large carbon footprint.
- They use low levels of mechanization and have high dependence on manual labour. A concerted effort is required to create mass awareness to accept a technology transition from conventional to new technologies through lighthouse projects, expositions and other outreach methods that will mainstream its use.
- This transition will contribute towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as laid out by the United Nations (UN), the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Climate Accord to which India is a signatory and other such international commitments.

The use of alternative, innovative and fast-track technologies aims at:-

- a) conservation of natural resources;
- b) bringing speed in construction;
- c) utilization of industrial and construction demolition waste;
- d) reduction in air and noise pollution;
- e) optimum use of water;
- f) increased labour productivity;
- g) cost reduction;
- h) safe and disaster resilient houses; and

i) all weather site execution etc. Such a technology transition aligns well with the vision of New India 2022.

This will bring the country at par with the advanced economies of the world and their rigorous standards in the construction sector.

