

1. Central University Entrance Test

Topic: Governance

In News: The University Grants Commission (UGC) announced the introduction of the Central University Entrance Test (CUET), which is now mandatory for undergraduate admission at any of the 45 central universities in the country.

More on the Topic:

- The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct **CUET for all central universities in the first week of July.**
- It is a computer-based test that will be held in two shifts and can be taken in 13 languages.
- But unlike JEE (Main), there will be no common counselling for admission to central universities based on the CUET score.
- Each university is free to define its admission process based on the merit list prepared by the NTA.
- At this moment, CUET is compulsory for central universities but the government is open to other institutions, including private universities.
- Conducting admissions to postgraduate programmes through CUET is not compulsory for central universities and are free to adopt CUET for PG admissions or stick to their own admission process for now.

Significance of Common Entrance Test:

- The main aim behind a common entrance test is **to reduce the burden on higher education aspirants.**
- It will provide equal opportunities to students from across boards, especially to those from the northeast and rural areas.
- The CUET is also expected **to reduce financial burden on parents and students,** as candidates will only have to write one exam.

Concerns:

- Economically disadvantaged students won't be able to go to coaching centers to clear the exams in contrast to the upper or middle class students.
- In a country like India, due to patriarchy parents may not invest much in a girl child's education; there-fore it could result in gender imbalance.
- Professors of some of the top universities believe that the proposal to have a common entrance test is against the autonomy of universities.

Source: The Hindu

APTITUDE TEST MUST FOR ALL

Common entrance exam for central universities from 2021-22

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 7-member committee for central universities for common entrance exams set up by UGC ➤ Admission for 2021-22 for UG programmes in central universities based on the test ➤ The exam will be computer-based 	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Format: Aptitude and subject specific ➤ Aptitude: Verbal, Quantitative, Logic & Reasoning ➤ Aptitude test is mandatory for all aspirants ➤ Aspirants will be able to choose the subject(s) of their choice
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2. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

Topic: Governance

In News: Parliamentary committee opinioned that The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has been dysfunctional for the last four years and has not delivered a single report to Parliament.

More on the Topic:

- The committee found out the following problems in the functioning of the commission:
- There is Manpower and budgetary shortage.
- The recruitment in the Commission was constrained because of lack of applicants as the eligibility bar was set too high and the rules being tweaked to enable many more candidates to apply.
- Its rate of pendency of resolution of complaints and cases that it receives is also close to 50 per cent.
- As per the Commission's website, in the financial year 2021-22, it has met only four times. **Its rate of pendency of resolution of complaints and cases** that it receives is also close to 50 per cent.



About National Commission for Scheduled Tribes:

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003.
- By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely- (i) the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and (ii) the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) w.e.f. 19 February, 2004.
- **Composition:** The term of office of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and each member is three years from the date of assumption of charge.
- The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Minister and the Vice-Chairperson that of a Minister of State and other Members have the ranks of a Secretary to the Government of India.
- They are appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
- At least one member should be a woman.
- The Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the other Members hold office for a term of 3 years.
- The members are not eligible for appointment for more than two terms.

Source: Business Today

3.National AIDS and STD Control Programme

Topic: Government Programmes

In News: The Union Cabinet has approved continuation of National AIDS and STD Control Programme.

More on the Topic:

- The national AIDS response under NACP is globally considered to be an extremely successful programme.
- The annual new HIV infections in India have **declined by 48% against the global average of 31%** [the baseline year of 2010].
- The annual AIDS related deaths have declined by 82% against the global average of 42% (the baseline year of 2010).
- As a result, the HIV prevalence in India continues to be low with an adult HIV prevalence of 0.22%.



About The National AIDS Control Programme (NACP):

- The National AIDS Control Programme (NACP), launched in 1992, is being implemented as a **comprehensive programme for prevention and control of HIV/ AIDS in India.**
- Over time, the focus has shifted from raising awareness to behaviour change, from a national response to a more decentralized response and to increasing involvement of NGOs and networks of People living with HIV (PLHIV).
- NACP phase V programme will enable India to achieve **sustainable development goal 3.3**, ending HIV/AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030.

Source: Indian Express

4. The United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR)

Topic: Environment and Ecology

In News: The United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR) was released ahead of World Water Day (March 22).

More on the Topic:

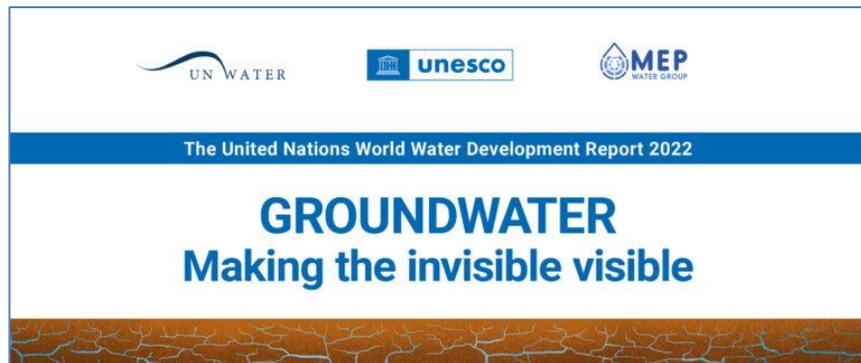
- The latest edition of the United Nations World Water Development Report was titled as “Groundwater: Making the invisible visible”.
- The report has put emphasis on the vast potential of groundwater, and the need to manage it sustainably.
- Groundwater presently provides **half of the volume of water withdrawn for domestic use by the global population**, including the drinking water for the vast majority of the rural population who do not get their water delivered to them via public or private supply systems, and around 25% of all water used for irrigation.
- **Globally, water use is projected to grow by roughly 1% per year over the next 30 years.**
- **Our overall dependence on groundwater is expected to rise** as surface water availability becomes increasingly limited due to climate change.

What needs to be done to unlock full potential of Ground Water?

- The report raises the issue of **the lack of groundwater data** and emphasizes that groundwater monitoring is often a ‘neglected area’. Public Private Partnership is needed for avoiding this blind spot.
- As **groundwater pollution** is practically irreversible, it must be avoided. Preventing groundwater contamination requires suitable land use and appropriate environmental regulations, especially across aquifer recharge areas
- Reinforce human, material and financial resources to build, support and maintain **institutional capacity related to groundwater.**

Steps taken by the Central Government to Control Groundwater Depletion:

- Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Government of India launched Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) in 2019, intended to improve water availability including groundwater conditions in the water stressed blocks of 256 districts in India.
- **National Water Policy (2012):** The policy advocates rainwater harvesting and conservation of water and highlights the need for augmenting the availability of water through direct use of rainfall.



- **Atal Bhujal Yojana:** Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) scheme (co-funded by World Bank funding, for sustainable management of ground water with community participation is being taken up in the identified over-exploited and water stressed areas.
- **Aquifer Mapping and Management Programme:** The CGWB has taken up Aquifer Mapping and Management Programme.

Source: PIB

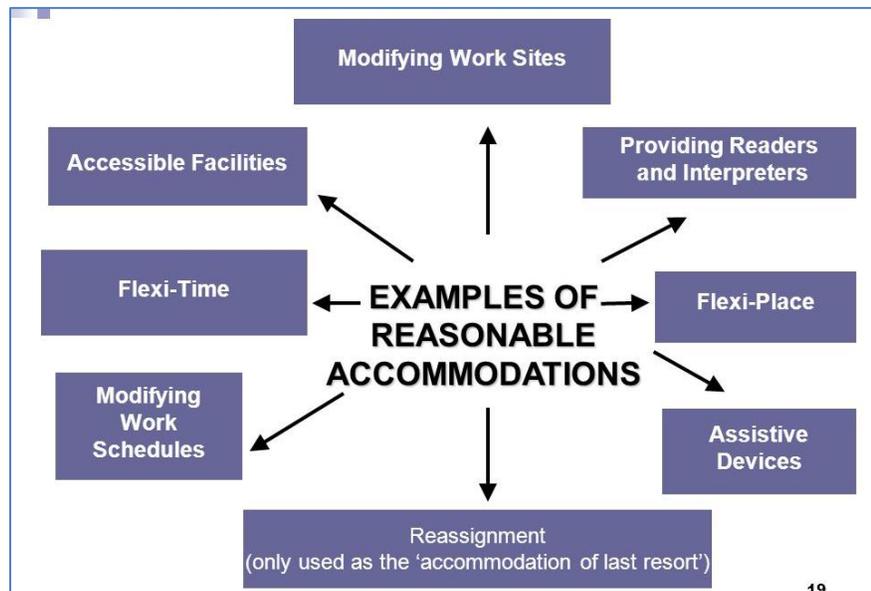
5. Reasonable Accommodation

Topic: Social Justice

In News: The Karnataka High Court decision effectively upheld the denial of entry to students wearing the hijab. The court rejected an argument in support of permitting Muslim girls to wear head-scarves that was based on the principle of 'reasonable accommodation'.

More on the Topic:

- 'Reasonable accommodation' is a **principle that promotes equality, enables the grant of positive rights and prevents discrimination based on disability, health condition or personal belief.**
- Its use is primarily in the disability rights sector.
- The provision plays a major role in addressing these barriers and thus contributes to greater workplace equality, diversity and inclusion.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) defines A reasonable accommodation as "necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms".
- In India, the Rights of People with Disabilities Act, 2016 has a definition to 'reasonable accommodation' in the same line mentioned above.



- In **Jeeja Ghosh and Another v. Union of India and Others (2016)**, the Supreme Court upheld this view with respect to disabled citizens.

Source: Hindu

6. Kala Namak Rice

Topic: Agriculture

In News: UP Government is promoting cultivation of GI tagged Kala Namak Rice.

More on the Topic:

- Siddarthnagar (Uttar Pradesh) is famous for the exotic variety of rice called **Kalanamak (Black Salt)**.
- Its interesting name is derived from its **black husk (kala meaning black)** and namak meaning salt because of the salty taste it leaves when someone bites the whole grain (with husk).
- The paddy of this variety grows around 4 to 5 feet, which is much taller than normal varieties. Therefore, after maturing, it tends to fall making its handling challenging for the farmers.
- Also known as the Black Pearl Rice, this is an aromatic variety; even in raw form, it gives away a husky aroma.
- Besides, it is believed to have many health benefits.
- **Kalanamak rice was found to have been cultivated almost 3000 years back in the Buddhist period (600 BC)** or even before that.
- It was featured in the book *Speciality Rices of the world* by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.



Source: Hindu

7. Ol Chiki Santhali Scripture

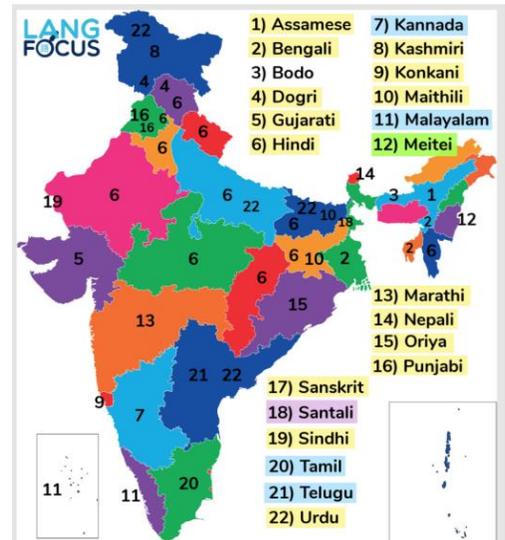
Topic: Art and Culture

In News: Indian Constitution has been translated into Ol Chiki script for the first time.

More on the Topic:

- Santhali is written in Ol Chiki script and spoken by 6.4 million people, according to the 2001 census.
- In India alone and its speakers live mostly in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Assam. It is also spoken in Bangladesh and Nepal.
- It is a recognised regional language of India per the **Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution**.
- Santali was a mainly oral language until the development of Ol Chiki by **Pandit Raghunath Murmu in 1925**.

Source: Hindu



8. Narasinghapettai nagaswaram

Topic: Art and Culture

In News: Narasinghapettai nagaswaram has been granted the Geographical Indication tag.

More on the Topic:

- The nagaswaram is a wind instrument that is an integral part of Carnatic concerts, weddings, festivals and temple ceremonies.
- Its sonorous nature draws attention to the performance of temple rituals and social celebrations.
- The Nagaswaram is made from the wood of acha maram, a tree known for its sturdy features. In the present day, however, the nagaswaram makers use the wood from Chettinadu's old pillars.

Source: Hindu





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