DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 10-06-2024

GS-1

1. PM Awaas Gramin

GS-2

2. Women in Lok Sabha

GS-3

3. Open Network for Digital Commerce

4. Fungus Parengyodontium album

5. State of the Ocean Report 2024

PM Awaas Gramin

Syllabus: GS-1: Rural and Urban Infrastructure.

Context:

- *Approval of 2 crore PM Awaas Gramin houses with more assistance.*
- **New NDA Government Plan:** *Approve 2 crore more houses under PMAY-G in the first 100 days.*

Current Assistance:

- *Up to Rs 1.2 lakh per house in plains.*
- *Up to Rs 1.30 lakh per house in hilly, difficult, tribal, and backward areas.*
- **Proposed Increase:** *Assistance may increase by 50%.*
- *New amounts could be Rs 1.8 lakh in plains and Rs 2 lakh in hilly areas.*

PMAY Overview:

- *The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), also known as Housing for All Mission, is a flagship initiative launched by the Government of India in 2015.*
- *It aims to ensure "Housing for All" by providing affordable housing to urban and rural poor by 2024 (revised target).*

Components of PMAY:

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G/ PMAY-R):** *Targets rural households.*

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U):** *Focuses on urban poor, including slum dwellers.*

Key Features of PMAY-U:

- **Beneficiary-led individual house construction/enhancement (BLC):** *Provides subsidy for constructing or enhancing a pucca house.*

- **Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS):** *Promotes affordable housing for weaker sections through interest rate subsidy on housing loans.*

- **Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP):** *Encourages Public Private Partnership (PPP) for developing affordable housing projects.*

Target Groups under PMAY-U:

- **Economically Weaker Section** *(EWS) - Annual income up to ₹ 3 lakhs.*

- **Lower Income Group** *(LIG) - Annual income between ₹ 3 lakhs and ₹ 6 lakhs.*

➢ **Middle Income Group** *(MIG I & II) - Annual income between ₹ 6 lakhs and ₹ 18 lakhs.*

Salient Aspects of PMAY-U:

➢ **Subsidy:** *Central Government provides financial assistance to beneficiaries depending on their income category and house type.*

➢ **Focus on Amenities:** *Houses constructed under PMAY-U have basic amenities like water supply, sanitation, electricity, and kitchen.*

➢ **Women Empowerment:** *Ownership of houses is preferably given to women or jointly held.*

➢ **Social Inclusion:** *Priority is given to differently-abled persons, senior citizens, SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities, single women, and transgender.*

Achievements of PMAY-U (as of 2022):

➢ *Central Assistance released: ₹ 1.28 lakh crore.*

➢ *Houses sanctioned: 122.69 lakh.*

➢ *Houses completed: 64.45 lakh.*

Challenges of PMAY-U:

➢ **Land Acquisition:** *Difficulties in acquiring land for housing projects in urban areas.*

➢ **Fund Flow:** *Ensuring timely flow of funds from central and state governments.*

➢ **Construction Delays:** *Streamlining construction processes to meet targets.*

PMAY - G

Focus:

➢ *Targets households living in rural areas of India.*

➢ *Aims to replace Kutcha houses (made of impermanent materials) with pucca houses (made of permanent materials) and provide basic amenities.*

Key Features of PMAY-G:

➢ **Individual house construction in rural areas:** *Provides financial assistance to eligible families for building a pucca house.*

➢ **Convergence with MGNREGS:** *Wages for unskilled labor under PMAY-G can be linked with Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).*

➢ **Focus on Tribal Areas and Hill States:** *Offers higher financial assistance for constructing houses in these regions.*

Beneficiary Eligibility under PMAY-G:

➢ *Households living in Kutcha or dilapidated houses.*

➢ *Households identified in the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011 as "houseless" or living in "Kutcha houses".*

Financial Assistance under PMAY-G:

➢ **Cost Sharing:** *Central and State Governments share the cost of construction:*

- o **Plain Areas:** *60:40 ratio (Center:State) with a maximum Central Assistance of ₹1.20 lakh per unit.*

- o **Hill States, North-Eastern States, and UT of J&K:** *90:10 ratio with a maximum Central Assistance of ₹1.30 lakh per unit.*

- o **UTs excluding Ladakh:** *100% funding from Central Government.*

➢ **Additional Benefits:** *Unskilled wages of ₹90.95 per day can be availed under MGNREGS for house construction.*

Achievements of PMAY-G (as of 2022):

➢ *Houses sanctioned: Over 2.2 crore.*

➢ *Houses completed: Over 1.8 crore.*

Challenges of PMAY-G:

➢ **Identification of Beneficiaries:** *Ensuring accurate targeting and inclusion of eligible households.*

➢ **Timely Completion of Houses:** *Streamlining construction processes and addressing delays.*

➢ **Awareness and Outreach:** *Reaching out to all eligible beneficiaries in rural areas.*

Women in Lok Sabha

Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity – women in politics.

Context:

➢ The **18th Lok Sabha will have 74 women** *along with 469 men. While this cohort of 74 certainly includes many powerful, gritty and diligent elected representatives, together, they* **comprise only 13.6 per cent of all MPs.**

Historical Context

➢ **Pre-Independence Era**: *The movement for women's representation in legislative bodies started during the colonial period. The Government of India Act, 1935, was a significant step that allowed women to vote and stand for elections.*

➢ **Post-Independence**: *The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, guaranteed equal rights for women. Women's representation in the Lok Sabha (House of the People) has been a subject of significant political discourse.*

Milestones in Women's Representation

➢ **First Lok Sabha (1952-1957)**: *Only 24 women were elected out of 489 members, which constituted about 4.9% of the House.*

➢ **Landmark Representation**:

  o *1962: Indira Gandhi became the first and only female Prime Minister of India.*

  o *1984: The number of women in the Lok Sabha increased to 44.*

  o *1999: Meira Kumar became the first female Speaker of the Lok Sabha in 2009.*

Women's Reservation Bill

➢ **The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023**, *reserves one-third of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, State legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, including those reserved for SCs and STs.*

Trends and Analysis

➢ **Statistics**:

  o **16th Lok Sabha (2014-2019)**: *62 women MPs were elected, constituting 11.23% of the House.*

  o **17th Lok Sabha (2019-present)**: *The number increased to 78 women MPs, which is 14.36% of the total strength.*

- o **The 18th Lok Sabha will have 74 women** *along with 469 men. While this cohort of 74 certainly includes many powerful, gritty and diligent elected representatives, together, they comprise only 13.6 per cent of all MPs.*

- ➤ **Political Participation**: *Women's participation in politics has increased over the years, but they are still underrepresented compared to their male counterparts.*

Important Facts and Figures

- ➤ **First Woman MP**: *Radhabai Subbarayan was among the first women MPs in independent India.*

- ➤ **First Woman Prime Minister**: *Indira Gandhi, 1966.*

- ➤ **First Woman Speaker of Lok Sabha**: *Meira Kumar, 2009.*

- ➤ **Percentage of Women in 18th Lok Sabha**: *13.6%.*

Factors Influencing Women's Representation in the Lok Sabha

1. Social and Cultural Barriers

- ➤ **Patriarchal Society**: *In many parts of India, traditional gender roles restrict women to domestic spheres, limiting their public and political engagement.*

  - o **Example**: *In rural areas, societal norms often discourage women from participating in politics, fearing a backlash from the community.*

- ➤ **Educational Disparities**: *Lower levels of education among women compared to men reduce their opportunities and confidence to participate in politics.*

  - o **Example**: *The literacy rate among women in India is lower than that of men, impacting their ability to engage effectively in political processes.*

2. Economic Constraints

- ➤ **Financial Dependence**: *Women often lack the financial resources necessary to run election campaigns.*

  - o **Example**: *Many women in India are financially dependent on their families, which limits their ability to finance their political careers independently.*

- ➤ **Employment Opportunities**: *Limited access to employment opportunities and economic resources hinders women's political ambitions.*

  - o **Example**: *Women's participation in the workforce is lower, leading to economic insecurity that prevents them from contesting elections.*

3. Political Party Dynamics

> ➢ **Candidate Selection**: *Political parties often prefer male candidates, assuming they have better chances of winning.*
>
> > o **Example**: *In the 2019 general elections, major political parties fielded a relatively lower percentage of women candidates, with some notable exceptions like the Trinamool Congress.*
>
> ➢ **Leadership Roles**: *Women are less likely to hold leadership positions within political parties, affecting their influence and ability to push for candidacy.*
>
> > o **Example**: *Historically, very few women have served as presidents or secretaries of major political parties in India.*

4. Electoral System

> ➢ **First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) System**: *This electoral system can be disadvantageous for women as it tends to favor candidates with established networks and resources, which men typically dominate.*
>
> > o **Example**: *In constituencies where the competition is intense, female candidates often struggle to secure the necessary support and resources.*
>
> ➢ **Reservation Policies**: *Lack of mandatory reservations for women in the Lok Sabha, unlike the reservation system in Panchayati Raj Institutions (local government bodies), reduces their representation.*
>
> > o **Example**: *While the Women's Reservation Bill proposes 33% reservation, it has not been enacted, unlike the reservation policies successfully implemented at the local governance level.*

5. Legal and Institutional Framework

> ➢ **Legislative Measures**: *Absence of effective legislation ensuring women's representation impacts their political presence.*
>
> > o **Example**: *The Women's Reservation Bill (108th Amendment) has been pending for years, showing the slow progress in legislative support for women's political participation.*
>
> ➢ **Electoral Reforms**: *Necessary reforms to support and encourage women candidates are often lacking or not effectively implemented.*
>
> > o **Example**: *Campaign finance reforms that could provide state funding or subsidies for women candidates are not in place.*

6. Support Networks and Mentoring

➢ **Mentoring and Training Programs**: *Lack of structured mentoring and training programs for aspiring women politicians limits their political engagement and success.*

  o **Example**: *Initiatives like the National Commission for Women's leadership programs are steps in the right direction, but more widespread and sustained efforts are needed.*

➢ **Civil Society and NGOs**: *Support from civil society organizations and NGOs can play a crucial role in encouraging and training women for political roles.*

  o **Example**: *Organizations like PRS Legislative Research and Women's Political Forum provide valuable support and training for women politicians.*

7. Media Representation

➢ **Media Coverage**: *Women often receive less media attention compared to their male counterparts, impacting their visibility and electoral prospects.*

  o **Example**: *Studies have shown that media coverage of elections often focuses more on male candidates, marginalizing women's issues and contributions.*

➢ **Portrayal of Women Leaders**: *Media portrayal of women leaders can reinforce stereotypes or undermine their credibility.*

  o **Example**: *Female politicians are sometimes subjected to sexist coverage that focuses on their personal lives or appearance rather than their policies and achievements.*

Conclusion

Women's representation in the Lok Sabha is influenced by a complex interplay of social, economic, political, and institutional factors. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including legislative measures, societal change, and support systems for women in politics. By understanding and addressing these factors, India can move towards a more inclusive and representative democracy.

Practice Question

Analyze the key social, economic, and political factors influencing women's representation in the Lok Sabha and suggest measures to enhance their participation in Indian politics. (15 marks, 250 words)

Open Network for Digital Commerce

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – e-commerce.

Context:

> ➤ *In May 2024, the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) recorded an all-time high of 8.9 million transactions across retail and ride-hailing segments, marking a 23% month-on-month increase in total transaction volume.*

AboutOpen Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC):

> ➤ *A network of **interconnected e-marketplaces** allowing sellers, including brands, to list and sell products directly to customers without intermediaries.*
> ➤ *Facilitates the transition from a **platform-centric model to an open-source network** for buying and selling goods and services.*
> ➤ *Launched in 2021 under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** by the Ministry of Commerce as part of the Digital India initiative.*
> ➤ *Offers delivery services for groceries, home decor, cleaning essentials, food delivery, and other products.*
> ➤ *Operates as a **not-for-profit organization**, enabling local digital commerce stores across various industries to be discovered and engaged by network-enabled applications.*
> ➤ *Aims to level the operational playing field among e-commerce platforms, similar to the **Unified Payments Interface (UPI).***
> ➤ *The **Quality Council of India** is responsible for integrating e-commerce platforms through this open-source technology network, allowing users to modify, enhance, or improve the original code.*

Objectives:

> ➤ **Democratization and Decentralization of e-Commerce**:*Promoting a more equitable and dispersed e-commerce ecosystem.*
> ➤ **Inclusivity and Access**:*Supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and local businesses.*
> ➤ **Increased Choices and Independence for Consumers**:*Providing more options and autonomy for buyers.*
> ➤ **Cost Reduction:***Making goods and services more affordable.*

Working Mechanism:

> ➤ **Open Network Functionality**:*Unlike single platforms like Amazon or Flipkart, ONDC operates as a gateway where buyers and sellers from different platforms can connect.*

Potential Advantages of ONDC:

Empowering Consumers:

> ➤ *Enhances transparency by increasing access to information.*
> ➤ *Enables consumers to make informed choices.*

> ➤ *Offers a wider array of sellers, potentially leading to lower prices.*

Boosting Competition:

> ➤ *Breaks down the dominance of existing platforms.*
> ➤ *Creates a level playing field, incentivizing competition among sellers.*
> ➤ *Results in a wider variety of products and potentially lower prices for consumers.*

Innovation:

> ➤ *The open-source architecture encourages innovation.*

Cost Efficiency:

> ➤ *The decentralized structure streamlines operations and reduces redundancies.*
> ➤ *Leads to significant cost savings.*

Boosting Small Businesses:

> ➤ *Removes entry barriers for small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and local vendors.*
> ➤ *Facilitates greater participation in the digital marketplace.*
> ➤ *Fosters a more inclusive e-commerce ecosystem.*

Challenges to ONDC:

Complexity Factor:

> ➤ *ONDC's mechanisms are more intricate compared to user-friendly systems like UPI.*
> ➤ *Adoption may not be as seamless as with UPI.*

Breaking Established Habits:

> ➤ *Consumers are familiar with the interfaces and functionalities of existing e-commerce platforms.*
> ➤ *ONDC needs to provide a seamless and user-friendly experience to compete effectively.*

Dispute Resolution Concerns:

> ➤ *Unlike traditional platforms managing the entire transaction lifecycle, ONDC focuses solely on online buying and selling.*
> ➤ *This separation may lead to an increase in disputes related to deliveries, product quality, or after-sales service, as ONDC doesn't act as a direct intermediary.*

Lack of a Robust Grievance Redressal Mechanism:

> ➤ *Unclear responsibility for customer service and complaint handling might deter people from joining the platform.*

Challenges from Existing E-commerce Platforms:

➢ *Established e-commerce giants have strong consumer relationships through loyalty programs, bundled services, and other incentives.*

➢ *ONDC needs compelling strategies to attract and retain customers in a competitive landscape.*

Price Advantage Uncertainty:

➢ *As a facilitator, ONDC might not directly influence product pricing or offer discounts on the scale of established players who leverage bulk deals and partnerships.*

Way Forward

Enhancing Digital Infrastructure:

➢ *Government investment in broadband connectivity.*

➢ *Initiatives to bridge the digital divide in rural and remote areas.*

Promoting Digital Literacy:

➢ *Implement a comprehensive digital education policy catering to diverse regional languages.*

➢ *Empower consumers and sellers, especially small businesses and local vendors, to navigate the ONDC platform effectively.*

➢ *Develop user-friendly interfaces to enhance adoption.*

Targeted Outreach Programs:

➢ *Fund extensive outreach programs to attract and onboard small sellers, particularly MSMEs and kirana stores.*

➢ *Provide incentives and handholding support to overcome initial adoption hurdles.*

Dispute Resolution Framework:

➢ *Establish a secure and efficient single-window mechanism for addressing issues like information asymmetry, opaque pricing, quality concerns, and buyer-seller disputes.*

➢ *Build trust and confidence among stakeholders in the ONDC ecosystem.*

Practice Question

Q. Analyze the potential impact of the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) on India's e-commerce landscape, considering its objectives, challenges, and proposed solutions for inclusive growth. (15 marks, 250 words)

Fungus Parengyodontium album

Syllabus: GS-3: Biodiversity.

Context:

➢ *The fungus,* **named Parengyodontium album***, was found living with other marine organisms on samples of plastic trash drawn from the North Pacific Garbage Patch in December 2019 during the Ocean Cleanup's North Pacific Mission 3.*

About Parengyodontium album

➢ **Marine Fungus***: Capable of breaking down polyethylene (PE), the most common plastic in the ocean.*
➢ **Discovery:** *Identified by marine microbiologists from the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research (NIOZ).*
➢ **Bioremediation Process***: Converts PE-derived carbon into fungal biomass, using it as an energy source.*
➢ **Photodegradation Role***: Initial UV sunlight exposure is essential to degrade PE, enabling the fungus to break down oceanic plastic litter.*
➢ **Plastic Pollution***: Over 400 billion kilograms of plastic are produced annually, with a significant amount ending up in the ocean.*
➢ **Potential of Fungi***: Known as 'masters of degradation,' fungi utilize a variety of digestive enzymes for plastic degradation. Researchers speculate that more plastic-degrading fungi may exist in the ocean's deeper parts.*

State of the Ocean Report 2024

Syllabus: GS-3: Environment conservation.

Context:

> ➢ *UNESCO's State of Ocean Report highlights key knowledge gaps in research & data on spiking oceanic warming.*

UNESCO State of the Ocean Report

Initiation and Purpose:

> ➢ *Launched by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO) during the 2022* **United Nations Ocean Conference***.*
> ➢ *Provides an accessible overview of the ocean's current status.*
> ➢ *Supports monitoring of the* **UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).**
> ➢ *Encourages actions towards a sustainable ocean future.*

2022 Edition Highlights:

> ➢ *Included insights from* **over 100 marine science experts***.*
> ➢ *Covered topics like ocean acidification, pollution, and tsunami warning.*
> ➢ *Aligns with the seven outcomes of the UN Ocean Decade.*
> ➢ *Annual editions released on* **World Oceans Day (June 8).**

Key Findings:

Ocean Warming:

> ➢ *The* **upper 2,000 meters** *of oceans have significantly warmed.*
> ➢ *Warming rate* **increased from 0.32 ± 0.03 W/m² *(1960-2023) to 0.66 ± 0.10 W/m²** *in the last two decades.*

Energy Absorption:

> ➢ *Oceans absorb* **about 90% of Earth's excess energy***.*
> ➢ *This causes* **increased deoxygenation**, *threatening marine ecosystems and human economies.*

Ocean Acidification:

> ➢ *Acidification is rising globally, particularly in the open ocean.*
> ➢ *Noted pH decline since the late 1980s.*
> ➢ *Need for more comprehensive data from coastal areas.*

Sea Level Rise:

> ➢ *Consistent rise since 1993.*
> ➢ *Improved monitoring systems at all scales are necessary.*

Marine Carbon Dioxide Removal (mCDR):

- *Growing interest in mCDR technologies.*
- *Uncertainty about their ecological impacts and effectiveness.*