DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 20-02-2025

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90 days Brahmaputra carnival

Syllabus: GS-1; Art & Culture

Context

➢ The **Brahmaputra Carnival** is a newly introduced 90-day festival held on the sandy banks of the Brahmaputra River in Guwahati, Assam. This event aims to establish itself as **the premier cultural and adventure festival** of Northeast India.

A Festival with a Pan-Regional Appeal

➢ While the Northeast is home to state-specific events like the Ziro Music Festival (Arunachal Pradesh), the Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival (Meghalaya), and the Hornbill Festival (Nagaland), the Brahmaputra Carnival aims to create a festival with a broader regional appeal.

A Tribute to Assam's Cultural and Natural Heritage

➢ Overlooking the festival venue is a statue of Lachit Barphukan, the legendary 17th-century Ahom general. The site is also adjacent to a new bridge under construction over the Brahmaputra.

Boosting Assam's Tourism Beyond Kaziranga

> Tourism officials see the Brahmaputra Carnival as an opportunity to diversify Assam's tourism landscape, which has been largely centered around Kaziranga National Park.
> The event introduces visitors to the cultural wealth of the entire Northeast, while also promoting river tourism.

Adventure Meets Luxury: The Glamping Experience

The festival offers an exciting mix of adventure and luxury, featuring activities such as:

> Jet skiing
> Speedboat rides
> Parasailing
> River rafting
> Kayaking
> All-terrain vehicle rides

The highlight, however, is **glamping**—a fusion of glamour and camping—on an expansive sandbar called **'Glamping Island Tent City'**, which emerges during the winter months when the river's water level recedes.

Accommodation and Unique Experiences

Guests can choose from **royal, premium, and deluxe tents**, with packages including meals and cultural performances ranging from traditional to contemporary. Additionally, visitors can enjoy:

> Spotting the rare **Gangetic dolphin**
> Luxury river cruises
> A blend of thrilling activities and peaceful relaxation

Panchayat Devolution Index

Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity – Governance.

Context:

> Karnataka ranks **first** in the overall Devolution Index (DI) ranking of the Panchayat Raj system among Indian states.

- Kerala and Tamil Nadu hold the second and third positions, respectively.

- The ranking is based on the report 'Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States – An Indicative Evidence-Based Ranking' (2024) released by the Centre on February 13.

- The report was prepared by the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi.

Ranking Criteria

The states/UTs were ranked based on:

- Overall Panchayat DI

- Six Key Dimensions:
  - Framework
  - Functions
  - Finances
  - Functionaries
  - Capacity Enhancement
  - Accountability

Overall Index Scores

Rank	State	Score
1st	Karnataka	72.23
2nd	Kerala	70.59
3rd	Tamil Nadu	68.38
4th	Maharashtra	61.44
5th	Uttar Pradesh	60.07
6th	Gujarat	58.26

- The national average score is 43.89.

➢ Bihar, Assam, Sikkim, and Uttarakhand scored above the national average but are considered **moderate performers**.

Performance Across Six Key Dimensions

1. Framework Dimension

- **Kerala ranks first (83.56),** followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Haryana.

- **Indicators:**

    o Holding **regular panchayat elections**.

    o Reservation of seats for **women, SCs, and STs**.

    o Establishing **State Election Commission** and **State Finance Commission**.

2. Functions Dimension

- **Top-performing states:**

    1. Tamil Nadu (**60.24**)

    2. Karnataka (**57.62**)

    3. Odisha (**57.46**)

    4. Rajasthan (**56.13**)

- This dimension evaluates the extent to which states **assign local functions** to panchayats, enabling **self-governance**.

3. Finances Dimension

- **Top-ranking states:**

    1. Karnataka (**70.65**)

    2. Kerala (**62.89**)

    3. Tamil Nadu (**55.78**)

    4. Rajasthan (**54.56**)

- **Key indicator:**

    o **Timely release of funds** under the **15th Finance Commission**.

    o Most states **lack seriousness** in constituting the **State Finance Commissions (SFCs)** and implementing their recommendations.

4. Accountability Dimension

- **Top-ranking states:**
    1. Karnataka (**81.33**)
    2. Kerala (**81.18**)
    3. Maharashtra (**80.36**)
    4. Uttar Pradesh (**76.07**)

- **Key indicators:**
    o **Social audit** and **Gram Sabha functioning**.
    o **Transparency** and **anti-corruption measures**.
    o **Panchayat assessment and incentivization**.

5. Functionaries Dimension

- **Top-ranking states:**
    1. Gujarat (**90.94**)
    2. Tamil Nadu (**84.25**)
    3. Kerala (**82.99**)

- Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh scored **above 70**.

- **Key indicators:**
    o **Panchayat infrastructure** and **e-connectivity**.
    o Availability of **panchayat officials** and **staff positions filled as per sanction**.

6. Capacity Building Dimension

- **Top-ranking states:**
    1. Telangana (**86.19**)
    2. Tamil Nadu (**84.29**)
    3. Gujarat (**83.96**)

- Karnataka is among the **top 10 states** in this category.

- **Key indicators:**

- o Availability of **training institutions**.

- o **Training programs** for **elected representatives** and **panchayat officials**.

Conclusion

- ➤ Karnataka's **top ranking** highlights its **strong devolution policies**, particularly in **finances** and **accountability**.

- ➤ Kerala and Tamil Nadu also perform well across multiple dimensions.

- ➤ The **Devolution Index** provides an **evidence-based framework** to assess how effectively **states empower panchayats** for decentralized governance.

- ➤ The report emphasizes the need for **timely fund disbursement**, **enhancing capacity-building measures**, and **strengthening local governance structures** across all states.

Munich Security Conference (MSC)

Syllabus: GS-2: International Events.

Context:

The 60th MSC was held amid growing concerns about the prolonged Ukraine war and threats to NATO cohesion.

About MSC:

- ➤ **What is it?**: The world's leading forum for debating international security policy.

Objective:

- ➤ To build trust among nations.
- ➤ To contribute to peaceful conflict resolution through continuous and informal dialogue.
- ➤ **Established**: 1963
- ➤ **Location**: Munich, Bavaria, Germany
- ➤ **Annual Timing**: February
- ➤ **Venue**: Hotel Bayerischer Hof, Munich

Significance:

- ➤ Acts as a **platform for diplomatic initiatives** to address pressing global security concerns.
- ➤ Brings together **security experts, politicians, military leaders, and the defense industry**.

➢ Publishes the **Munich Security Report**, an annual digest of key security challenges with data, maps, and analysis.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

➢ **Overview**:

- o A transatlantic **security alliance** of **31 North American and European countries**.

➢ **Key Facts**:

- o **Established**: April 4, 1949
- o **Treaty**: North Atlantic Treaty (Washington Treaty)
- o **Headquarters**: Brussels, Belgium

➢ **Objective**:

- o Protect peace and ensure **territorial integrity, political independence, and security** of member states.

➢ **Article Five (Collective Defense)**:

- o An **attack on one** member is considered **an attack on all**.
- o Other members must assist the attacked member, including military intervention if necessary.
- o This principle forms the **core of NATO's collective defense** strategy.

Forest Rights Act

Syllabus: GS-3; Rights issues, Environment, GS-2; Governance and tribal welfare

Context

➢ Karnataka officials face heat over illegal forest evictions.

Key Provisions of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006

1. Objective:

➢ Recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs).
➢ Grants legal recognition to their rights over land and resources.
➢ Empowers local communities in forest conservation and management.

2. Types of Rights under FRA:

1. **Individual Forest Rights (IFR):**
   o Ownership rights over forest land for habitation or self-cultivation.
   o Maximum limit: **4 hectares** per family.
2. **Community Forest Rights (CFR):**
   o Right to collect, use, and sell **minor forest produce (MFP)** like honey, bamboo, and tendu leaves.
   o Right to fish, graze cattle, and access traditional seasonal resources.
   o Right to protect and conserve forests under traditional governance systems.
3. **Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR):**
   o Right to manage and conserve community forest resources.
   o Empowers Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) to take forest conservation decisions.

3. Who is Eligible?

➢ **Scheduled Tribes (STs):** Must prove they resided in forests before **13th December 2005**.
➢ **Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs):** Must prove 75 years of residence (three generations) and dependence on forest resources.

4. Institutional Mechanism for Implementation:

➢ **Gram Sabha:** First authority to receive claims and recommend rights.

➢ **Sub-Divisional Level Committee (SDLC):** Verifies claims.
➢ **District Level Committee (DLC):** Final approval of claims.

5. Role of Gram Sabha:

➢ **Key decision-making body** under FRA.
➢ Determines rights, manages resources, and ensures sustainable use.

Importance of FRA

➢ **Empowers Tribals & Forest Dwellers:** Restores rights over forests, ending historical injustices.
➢ **Enhances Livelihoods:** Legal access to land and minor forest produce boosts income.
➢ **Decentralized Governance:** Strengthens **Gram Sabhas** in forest management.

➢ **Sustainable Forest Conservation:** Encourages community-led conservation.

Challenges in Implementation

➢ **Poor Awareness:** Many tribals are unaware of their rights.
➢ **Bureaucratic Delays:** Approval process is slow, and land titles are often denied.
➢ **Conflict with Forest Bureaucracy:** Resistance from forest departments that favor conservation without community participation.
➢ **Dilution of FRA:** New laws (e.g., amendments to the Indian Forest Act) sometimes override FRA provisions.
➢ **Encroachments & Evictions:** Supreme Court orders have led to forced evictions in some cases.

Government Initiatives & Supreme Court Interventions

➢ **2019 Supreme Court Order:** Directed eviction of rejected claimants but later stayed the order after public backlash.
➢ **Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (2018):** Supports tribal communities in value addition and marketing of **Minor Forest Produce (MFP)**.
➢ **CAMPA Fund:** Meant for afforestation but often conflicts with FRA provisions.

Indirect Prompt Injection Attacks

Syllabus: GS-3: Internal Security – Cybersecurity.

Context:

➢ Recently, researchers warned that AI chatbots are vulnerable to indirect prompt injection attacks.
➢ Indirect Prompt Injection is a technique used to manipulate chatbots into executing **malicious commands**. It exploits the inherent nature of **Large Language Models (LLMs)** to follow embedded instructions within the content they process.

How It Works:

➢ Attackers embed malicious instructions within seemingly **benign documents, emails, or text-based prompts**.

➢ When processed by an LLM-powered chatbot, these hidden commands can **trigger unauthorized actions**, such as:

  o Searching for sensitive information

- o Altering long-term memory settings
- o Executing unintended functions

Key Facts about Large Language Models (LLMs)

- ➢ **Definition:** LLMs are a type of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** program that can recognize, interpret, and generate text.

- ➢ **Training:** They are trained on vast datasets, hence the name **"large"** language models.

- ➢ **Technology Used:**
  - o Built on **machine learning** principles
  - o Operate using **neural networks**, specifically **transformer models**

- ➢ **Functionality:** LLMs have been trained with enough examples to recognize and process human language and other complex data.

Applications of Large Language Models

LLMs can perform a variety of tasks, with one of the most well-known applications being **Generative AI**.

Common Uses:

- ➢ **Text Generation:** Can generate essays, poems, articles, and other forms of text.

- ➢ **Conversational AI:** Used in chatbots like **ChatGPT** to respond to user inputs.

- ➢ **Data Analysis & Summarization:** Helps in processing and summarizing large volumes of text.

- ➢ **Code Generation & Debugging:** Used by developers for programming-related tasks.