

ONE NATION, ONE STUDENT ID INITIATIVE

Why in news?

- Recently, several state governments requested schools to seek parental consent for the creation of a new student identity card.
- The new ID card, known as the **Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry- APAAR**, is part of the 'One nation, One Student ID' initiative of the Union government.

What is APPAR ID?

- It is envisioned as a special ID system for all students in India, starting from childhood.
- Under the initiative, each student would get a lifelong APAAR ID, making it easy for the learners, schools, and governments to track academic progress from pre-primary education to higher education.
- APAAR would also serve as a gateway to Digilocker.
 - Digilocker, a digital system where students can store their important documents and achievements, such as exam results and report cards, digitally, making it easier to access and use them in the future.

Need

- The goal behind introducing APAAR is to make education hassle-free and reduce the need for students to carry physical documents.
- This initiative was launched as part of the **National Education Policy 2020** by the Education Ministry.
- The vision is to create a positive change, allowing state governments to track literacy rates, dropout rates, and helping them make improvements.
- APAAR also aims to reduce fraud and duplicate educational certificates by providing a single, trusted reference for educational institutions.
 - Only first party sources that issue certificates will be allowed to deposit credits into the system, ensuring authenticity.

What do students have to do to get their single ID created?

- To sign up for APAAR, students will have to provide basic information such as name, age, date of birth, gender, and a photograph.
- This information will be verified using their Aadhar number.
- Students will need to sign a **consent form**, and they can choose to either accept or decline sharing their Aadhar number and demographic information with the Ministry of Education for creating the APAAR ID.
- For minors, parents will have to sign the consent form, allowing the Ministry to use the student's Aadhar number for authentication with UIDAI.
- Registration for creating APAAR ID is voluntary, not mandatory.

GLOBAL DECLARATION FOR RIVER DOLPHINS

In a ground-breaking development, 11 Asian and South American countries recently signed a global declaration, the "Global Declaration for River Dolphins," aimed at preserving the world's six remaining river dolphin species.



About the Global Declaration for River Dolphins:

- This declaration is designed to guide 14 nations where river dolphins inhabit, with a focus on responsible freshwater dolphin conservation.
- It aims to **halt the decline of all river dolphin species** and **increase the most vulnerable populations**.
- The declaration will escalate collaborative endeavours to safeguard the surviving river dolphin species.
- Countries that adopted the declaration include Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, and Venezuela.
- The countries involved agreed to improve water quality in the dolphins' habitat, create protected areas, tackle overfishing, and involve Indigenous communities in the affected regions in protecting the animals.

Key facts about river dolphins:

- **River dolphins are any of six species of small, usually freshwater aquatic mammals that are related to whales (Order Cetacea).**
- **A seventh river dolphin species, the Chinese river dolphin, or baiji, was declared extinct in 2007.**
- **Distribution:** These dolphins are found in rivers of south-central Asia, China, and South America and in the coastal waters of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.
- **Common Features:** They have slender beaks lined with lots of teeth, small eyes, flexible necks and bodies, pronounced forehead melons, large flippers, and small dorsal fins.
- **The six surviving species of river dolphins are the Amazon, Indus, Ganges, Irrawaddy, Tucuxi, and Yangtze finless porpoises.**
- All six species of river dolphins are classified as Endangered or Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- The largest is the Amazon River dolphin (*Inia geoffrensis*).
- They are important indicators of the health of rivers. Where freshwater dolphin populations are thriving, it is likely that the overall river systems are flourishing.

WHAT IS THE NEOLITHIC AGE

A rock art dating back to the Neolithic period was recently found in the Palnadu district of Andhra Pradesh.



About the Neolithic Age:

- The Neolithic Age, also called the New Stone Age, is the final stage of cultural evolution or technological development among prehistoric humans.
- The term Neolithic is most frequently used in connection with agriculture, which is the time when cereal cultivation and animal domestication were introduced.

- Because agriculture developed at different times in different regions of the world, there is no single date for the beginning of the Neolithic age. In India, the starting point of the Neolithic is generally thought to have occurred sometime around 7000 BCE.
- The Neolithic followed the Mesolithic Period and preceded the Chalcolithic Age, or the early period of metal tools.

Features of the Neolithic Age:

- It was characterised by **stone tools shaped by polishing or grinding, dependence on domesticated plants or animals, settlement in permanent villages, and the appearance of such crafts as pottery and weaving.**
- The **houses were built of mud and reed in rectangular or circular shapes.**
- **End of the Neolithic Age:**
 - Towards the end of the Neolithic era, copper metallurgy is introduced, which marks a transition period to the Bronze Age, sometimes referred to as the Chalcolithic or Eneolithic Era.
 - In time, bronze became the primary material for tools and weapons, and a good part of the stone technology became obsolete, signalling the end of the Neolithic and thus of the Stone Age.
- Some of the important Neolithic sites in India include Burzahom in Kashmir, Chirand in Bihar and Edakkal caves in Kerala.

MANAGEMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COUNCIL (MEPSC)

Management & Entrepreneurship and Professional Skills Council (MEPSC) recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Magic Bus India Foundation, a leading non-profit organisation in the education and skilling space.



About the Management & Entrepreneurship and Professional Skills Council (MEPSC):

- MEPSC is a horizontal Sector Skill Council (SSC) incorporated as a Section-8 (Not for Profit Company) under the Companies Act, 2013, in a one of its kind, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.



CROSS & CLIMB ROHTAK



- The Council has been working under the tutelage of the Ministry of Skill Development.
- It is being promoted by All India Management Association (AIMA), the apex body of management profession in India, as its sole promoter.
- MEPSC is recognised as an awarding body by the skills regulator, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), and is supported by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- MEPSC is targeting to train and certify approximately 4.75 lakh trainees, develop and frame 50 Qualifications Packs (QPs)/National Occupational Standards (NOS), and train more than 550 trainers over the next 10 years.
- MEPSC shall lead skill development initiatives in five key segments, namely
 - Training and Assessment
 - Office Management
 - Professional skills (including Security)
 - Non-Teaching job roles in the education Sector
 - Entrepreneurship
- The MEPSC Board is comprised of several equally renowned and experienced business leaders, academicians, NSDC, AIMA, and Ministry officials.

Key Facts about the All India Management Association (AIMA):

- AIMA was created as an apex body of the management profession with the active support of the Government of India and Industry in 1957.
- AIMA is a not-for-profit, non-lobbying organisation, working closely with industry, government, academia, and students to further the cause of the management profession in India.
- AIMA has a membership base of over 38,000 members and close to 6,000 corporate /institutional members through 67 local management Associations affiliated with AIMA.
- It is represented in a number of policy-making bodies of the Government of India and national associations.

- AIMA offers various services in the areas of testing, distance education, skill development & training, research, publications, executive education, and management development programmes.
- Apart from its flagship Post Graduate Diploma in Management, AIMA offers topical and industry-oriented programmes and initiatives to help management professionals and students keep in step with the times while offering state of the art business solutions for organisations and institutions.
- AIMA is frequently co-opted by the government on specialised committees.
- AIMA is an active member of the Asian Association of Management Organisations (AAMO), which is the Asia-Pacific regional body of the World Management Council (CIOS).

UNION GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES BHARATIYA BEEJ SAHKARI SAMITI LIMITED (BBSSL)

Why in News?

- Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah has established a new cooperative society, Bharatiya Beej Sahkari Samiti Limited (BBSSL), to boost domestic production as well as exports of certified seeds.

What Is a Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS)?

- PACS are village level **cooperative credit societies** that serve as the last link in a three-tier cooperative credit structure headed by the **State Cooperative Banks (SCB)** at the state level.
 - Credit from the SCBs is transferred to the **District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs)**, that operate at the district level.
 - The DCCBs work with PACS, which deal directly with farmers.
- Since these are cooperative bodies, individual farmers are members of the PACS, and office-bearers are elected from within them. A village can have multiple PACS.
- PACSs **provide short-term, and medium-term agricultural loans to the farmers for the various agricultural and farming activities.**
 - The first PACS was formed in **1904**.

- Currently, there are more than 1,00,000 PACS in the country with a huge member base of more than 13 crore farmers. However, **only 63,000 of them are functional.**

Benefits/Advantages of PACS:

- The attraction of the PACS lies in the **last mile connectivity they offer.**
- For farmers, timely access to capital is necessary at the start of their agricultural activities.
- PACS have the capacity to **extend credit with minimal paperwork within a short time.**
 - With other scheduled commercial banks, farmers have often complained of tedious paperwork and red tape.
- For farmers, PACS provide strength in numbers, as most of the paperwork is taken care of by the office-bearer of the PACS.
- In the case of scheduled commercial banks, farmers have to individually meet the requirement and often have to take the help of agents to get their loans sanctioned.
- **Major Drawback of PACS –**
 - Since PACS are cooperative bodies, however, **political compulsions often trump financial discipline**, and the recovery of loans is hit.
 - Chairpersons of PACS participate in electing the office-bearers of DCCBs.
 - Political affiliations are important here as well.

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION NETWORK (ICN)

Recently, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has become a part of the prestigious 18-member steering committee of the International Competition Network (ICN).



International
Competition
Network

About the International Competition Network (ICN):

- The concept for the ICN originated from recommendations **made by the International Competition Policy Advisory Committee (ICPAC)**, a group formed in 1997.
- It was **established in October 2001** by officials of 15 competition agencies from around the world.

- The **steering committee** is the ICN's apex body.
- The ICN, comprising 140 competition agencies, typically provides antitrust authorities with a specialised, yet informal, venue for maintaining regular contacts and addressing practical competition concerns.
- The Steering Group members shall elect a Chair from among Steering Group representatives at the ICN Annual **Conference in odd-numbered years**.
- It is the **only global body devoted** exclusively to **competition law enforcement** and its members represent national and multinational competition authorities.
- It has **no formal Secretariat** or premises.

Key facts about CCI

- It is a statutory body of the Government of India and was established in March 2009 **under the Competition Act, 2002**.
- The goal of CCI is to create and sustain **fair competition in the economy** that will provide a 'level playing field' to the producers and make the markets work for the welfare of consumers.
- **Composition:**
 - It has the composition of **a quasi-judicial body**, with one chairperson and six additional members.
 - All members of the CCI are **appointed by the Central Government**.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.

SURROGACY IN INDIA

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court has protected the right of parenthood of a woman, suffering from a rare medical condition, by staying the operation of a law which threatened to wreck her hopes to become a mother through surrogacy.
- In this context, this article analyses the legal provisions with respect to surrogacy in India.

Salient Provisions of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act 2021:

- **What is surrogacy?**

- The Act defines surrogacy as a **practice where a woman gives birth to a child for an intending couple** with the intention to hand it over to them after the birth.
- It is **permitted only for altruistic purposes** or for couples who suffer proven infertility or disease.
- **Surrogacy is prohibited for commercial purposes** including for sale, prostitution or any other forms of exploitation.
- **Status of child born:**
 - Once the child is born, it will be deemed to be the **biological child of the couple** for all intents and purposes.
 - **Abortion of such a foetus** is allowed only with the consent of the surrogate mother and the authorities and must adhere to the provisions of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act.
- **Who can avail of surrogacy?**
 - Under the Act, a **couple should procure certificates of eligibility and essentiality** in order to have a child via surrogacy.
 - The couple is deemed '**eligible**' if they have been married for five years, the wife is aged between 25-50 years and the husband is between 26-55 years.
 - **The couple must not have any living child** (biological, adopted or surrogate.) A **child with mental or physical disabilities** or one suffering from a life-threatening disorder or illness has been **exempted from the above criterion**.
- **Who can be a surrogate?**
 - A surrogate mother **has to be a close relative of the couple**, a married woman with a child of her own, aged between 25-35 years, who has been a surrogate only once in her life.
 - **She must also possess a certificate of medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy**.
- **Who regulates surrogacy?**
 - The Centre and State governments are expected to constitute a **National Surrogacy Board (NSB) and State Surrogacy Boards (SSB)** respectively, within 90 days of the passing of the Act.
 - **This body is tasked with enforcing standards** for surrogacy clinics, investigating breaches and recommending modifications.