

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

A polar region we must keep on the radar in a multipolar world

GS-III | 02 September, 2019

GS-III: A polar region we must keep on the radar in a multipolar world

Context

Recent offer by the US president to buy Greenland is indicative of the emerging geopolitics of the Arctic region. Climate change and China are fast destabilizing the status quo and throwing up political, security, legal, and environmental challenges. Autonomous vehicles and robots can populate uninhabitable regions and the next few decades could see the Arctic emerge as a hotspot of great power competition.

Background

- Rising global temperatures are causing the frozen Arctic ocean to melt, opening up new sea routes and opportunities to extract hydrocarbons and minerals from the seabed and the newly exposed land surfaces.
- Countries of the Arctic are trying to take advantage of these opportunities.
- China declared itself a "near Arctic" country and is making determined efforts to extend its footprint in the polar region. Chinese firms have tried to purchase large tracts of land in Iceland, Norway and Denmark.
- There are concerns that Chinese investments in Greenland's natural resource economy might persuade the local population to secede from Denmark, creating a Laos-like Chinese satellite state between North America and Europe.

Arctic politics

- How should the region be shared among the eight Arctic countries Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the US as there are overlapping territorial claims among them.
- They have formed the Arctic Council to institutionalize their self-assigned rights, but many in China, the European Union, India are against conceding sovereignty to the Arctic countries.
- Russia, Canada and Denmark are all claimants to the ownership of the Arctic pole.
- Russia is both building up its military capabilities in the region and promoting the Northern Sea Route (NSR) as a new artery of global shipping. It recently announced that it will impose rules on commercial and naval vessels using the route.
- Both China and the US will contest Russia's jurisdiction on this water.

Source: Live Mint

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Mergers of Bank

GS-III | 02 September, 2019

GS-III: Mergers of Bank



Context

The Centre announced a mega amalgamation plan, the third in a row, that merged ten public sector banks into four larger entities, these series of mergers the number of state-owned banks is down to 12 from 27.

About Merger:

- There are four new sets of mergers Punjab National Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India to merge to form the country's second-largest lender.
- Canara Bank and Syndicate Bank to amalgamate; Union Bank of India to acquire Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank; and Indian Bank to merge with Allahabad Bank.
- The biggest merger out of the four was Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank merging into Punjab National Bank to create a second largest state-owned bank with Rs 17.95 lakh crore business and 11,437 branches.
- These three banks are technologically compatible as they use Finacle Core Banking Solution (CBS) platform.

How does it help the government?

- For over decades starting from 1992, the government as the biggest shareholder of over 25 banks had to provide capital for them.
- To grow and lend more, the banks often need a higher amount of capital to set aside also for loans that could go bad.
- With the government not willing to lower its equity holdings and with a large slice of the capital being set aside to cover for bad loans, the burden of infusing capital rests on the majority shareholder.
- This means marking a large amount of money almost every year during the last few years in the Budget for capital infusion at many banks at a time when there is a huge demand for social sector.
- By reducing the number of banks to a manageable count, the government hopes that the demands for such capital infusion will be lower progressively with increased efficiencies and with more well capitalised banks.

How have previous bank mergers fared?

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- Last year, the government had merged Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with Bank of Baroda, creating the third-largest bank by loans in the country.
- The government said this merger has been "a good learning experience" as profitability and business of the merged entity has improved.
- Earlier, the State Bank of India had acquired its associate banks.
- Indian Overseas Bank, Uco Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Punjab and Sind Bank, which have strong regional focus, will continue as separate entities.

Will this help improve the performance metrics now?

- While the announced consolidation of PSU banks is a credit positive as it enables the consolidated entities to meaningfully improve scale of operations and help their competitive position.
- At the same time, there will not be any immediate improvement in their credit metrics as all of them have relatively weak solvency profiles.
- While asserting that bank consolidation is a good move towards improving efficiency of the PSBs, he said "it is possible that the current mergers may face more friction than the last one with BoB, Dena and Vijaya".
- In that case, a large, well-capitalised strong bank absorbed two much smaller entities.
- In the present case, the mergers are mostly among larger banks, with absorbing bank not necessarily in strong health.

Source: Indian Express

Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) Regime

GS-II | 02 September, 2019

GS-II: Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) Regime



News

Banking details of Indians with accounts in Switzerland will be available to tax authorities as the automatic exchange of information regime kicks off between the two countries. In 2016, India and Switzerland had signed an information-sharing deal on bank accounts, which was to come in effect from September 2019.

About Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI)

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- This automatic exchange of information (AEOI) is to be carried out under the Common Reporting Standard (CRS), the global reporting standard for such exchange of information.
- It takes care of aspects such as confidentiality rules and data safeguards.
- The CRS has been developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- Under the agreement, India will not receive information on bank accounts prior to 2018.
- Under the agreement both jurisdictions will inform each other of any relevant developments in respect to the implementation of the OECD Common Reporting Standard in their respective domestic laws.
- Each jurisdiction confirms that it has informed the other jurisdiction about the modalities made available to persons making a voluntary disclosure of their financial assets.

Benefits of the regime

In 2018, data from Zurich-based Swiss National Bank (SNB) had shown that after declining for three years, money parked by Indians in Swiss Banks rose 50 per cent to CHF (Swiss Franc) 1.02 billion in 2017 over the previous year. The step is likely to shed more light on the wealth Indians have stashed away in Swiss bank accounts, for so long governed by strict local rules of secrecy.

Source: The Hindu

Interpol Red Notice

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GS-II: Interpol Red Notice



News

As many as 18 requests for RNs from India are pending with Interpol, including against famous fugitives hiding abroad.

INTERPOL:

- Interpol is global police co-operation agency and a non-governmental organization (NGO).
- It was established as the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC) in 1923.
- Its headquarter is located at Lyon, France.

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- It is the world's largest international police organization, with 194 member countries (including India).
- It is second-largest international organization after United Nations in terms of international representation.
- Its work focuses on public safety and battling terrorism, crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes, environmental crime etc.

Red Notices

- Criminals or suspects often flee to other countries to evade facing justice. An Red Notice alerts police forces across the world about fugitives who are wanted internationally.
- Interpol describes an RN as "a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action".
- RNs contain information that helps identify wanted persons, such as their names, dates of birth, nationality, and physical attributes such as the colour of their hair and eyes.

Why Red Notice?

- RNs mention the crime(s) they are wanted for.
- An RN is published by Interpol at the request of a member country.
- The fugitives may be wanted for prosecution or to serve a sentence.
- The country issuing the request need not be the home country of the fugitive; Interpol acts on the request of a country where the alleged crime has been committed.

Importance of Red Notice

- An RN can help bring a fugitive to justice, sometimes many years after the crime was committed.
- However, because an RN is not an arrest warrant, action against a fugitive frequently rests on the diplomatic clout that the country making the request has with the country where the fugitive is located.
- Nations with a big international profile, and economic or political heft, are often more successful than the rest.

Source: The Hindu

A new ethics for a sustainable planet.

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GS-III: A new ethics for a sustainable planet



Context

Brazil's Amazon forests are ablaze with dozens of fires mostly set intentionally by loggers and others seeking greater access to forest land. They are paving the way for a global climate catastrophe.

Climate Change

1. Energy and transport are mainly responsible for the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere.
2. Changes in land use patterns also have made significant contributions.
3. Deforestation, industrial agricultural systems and desertification are major drivers of climate change.
4. Agriculture, forestry and other land use activities accounted for a little less than a quarter (23%) of the total net anthropogenic emissions of GHGs between 2007-2016.
5. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently brought out a special report on Climate Change and Land that covers desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems. It makes it clear that unless land is managed in a sustainable manner, the chances for humanity to survive climate change will become smaller.

Examples of Climate Change

- Many cities in Europe and elsewhere have seen high temperatures never before experienced.
- Heat waves have also accelerated melting of glaciers in Greenland at a rate that was not anticipated by scientific models until much later this century.
- The burning of the world's largest forest reserves as witnessed in Amazon .

Importance of Land Management:

- Land is part and parcel of people's lives. It provides food, water, livelihoods, biodiversity and a range of other benefits from its ecosystems.
- Decades of poor land management in the agricultural system destroyed farm systems.
- Soils have become depleted with heavy use of chemicals
- Farms have few or no friendly insects.

CONCLUSION

Land use policy should incorporate better access to markets for small and marginal farmers, empower women farmers, expand agricultural services and strengthen land tenure systems.

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Source: The Hindu

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An intensifying whimper that has begun to take a global toll

GS-III | 03 September, 2019

GS-III: An intensifying whimper that has begun to take a global toll

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News

News show signs of another economic crisis and stock market decline.

Background

- The economic situation around the world is rather grim. From synchronized global growth in the first half of 2017, we are now in the midst of a synchronized slowdown exacerbated by the US-China trade war.
- Merval Stock Market dropped 48% in a single day and the peso has fallen by 85% over the last three years.
- Many countries in Europe have been or have now fallen into negative interest rates, with Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, and the Eurozone all with minus signs on interest rates.
- Countries that account for almost a quarter of total global output now have central banks with policy rates set below zero.
- The amount of "sub-zero" debt, that is debt with negative interest rates, is at an all-time high of \$15 trillion.
- Europe's slowdown is fully demonstrated by the entire German yield curve going below zero last month.

What is the issue

- Large parts of the world are starting from negative interest rates.
- This means that monetary policy stimulus as a method to combat the slowdown is rendered largely ineffective, and central banks in Europe, Japan, and the US may have to once again increase the size of their balance sheets.
- The only other choice is to use fiscal expansion to counter the slowdown.
- A third choice is to take the impact of the slowdown without too much of a cushion, but democracies are ill-equipped to deal with the negative political reaction to prolonged recessions.

Way Forward

- India must use any window of opportunity to undertake any structural reforms that present themselves.
- Low oil prices, good global growth, and moderate inflation are such windows.
- India's medium-term economic growth be supported by favorable demographics.
- In the short-term government may not undertake deep structural reforms that may impact

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growth and employment.

Source: Live Mint

When India's interim government was formed in 1946

GS-II | 03 September, 2019

GS-II: When India's interim government was formed in 1946

News

Background

- On this day in 1946, the interim government of India led by Jawaharlal Nehru was formed.
- It was the only such cabinet in India's history in which arch-rivals Congress and the Muslim League shared power at the Centre.
- The interim government functioned with a great degree of autonomy, and remained in power until the end of British rule, after which it was succeeded by the Dominions of India and Pakistan.

Formation of India's interim government

- Starting with the Cripps mission in 1942, a number of attempts were made by colonial authorities to form an interim government in India.
- In 1946, elections to the Constituent Assembly were held following the proposals of the British Cabinet Mission dispatched by the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee.
- In this election, the Congress obtained a majority in the Assembly, and the Muslim League consolidated its support among the Muslim electorate.
- Viceroy Wavell subsequently called upon Indian representatives to join the interim government.
- A federal scheme had been visualized under the Government of India Act of 1935, but this component was never implemented due to the opposition from India's princely states.

The interim cabinet

- On September 2, 1946, the Congress party formed the government. On September 23, the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) ratified the Congress Working Committee's

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decision.

- The Muslim League initially decided to sit out of the government, and three of the five ministries reserved for Muslims were occupied by Asaf Ali, Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, and Syed Ali Zaheer, all non-League Muslim representatives.
- Two posts remained vacant.
- However, after Lord Wavell agreed to allot all five reserved portfolios to the Muslim League if it agreed to cooperate, the latter finally joined.
- In October, the cabinet was reshuffled to accommodate the new Muslim League members, and Sarat Chandra Bose, Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan and Syed Ali Zaheer from the earlier team were dropped. Baldev Singh, C.H. Bhabha, and John Matthai continued to represent minority communities.

Source: Indian Express

Cryptocurrencies could constrain a country's choices

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GS-III: Cryptocurrencies could constrain a country's choices

CONTEXT

Facebook announced launching a cryptocurrency called Libra, designed to appeal to its global user base of over 2 billion.

Libra

- It will be backed by a basket of fiat currencies.
- It is supported by a consortium of large-scale corporate houses, financial services firms, and venture capitalists.
- Millennials have little patience for expensive traditional banking methods for cash transactions. They would likely flock to alternatives like Libra.

Impossible trinity

- It is the "trilemma" of monetary policy. It states that it is impossible to have all three of the following conditions fulfilled at the same time:
 - A fixed foreign exchange rate
 - Free capital movement
 - An independent monetary policy
- Even before cryptocurrencies, governments looking to control the monetary aspects of

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their economies have been subject to this trilemma, and have been forced to implement only two of the three conditions.

- If you want control over both your exchange rate and monetary policy, you would have to impose controls on free capital movement.
- Hence the existence of capital controls such as India's Foreign Exchange Management Act.
- The trilemma is a theory based on the "uncovered interest rate parity condition".
- It is supported by evidence-based studies where governments that have tried to simultaneously pursue all three goals have failed.
- Strong capital controls have meant that other means of payment have been in use before, such as the infamous "hawala" system.
- The ease of use and the scope of new Big-Tech cryptocurrencies are about to create global currencies of a completely different class.
- Economists argue that such currencies will affect the exchange rates and monetary policies of traditional currencies. This is because the introduction of a global digital currency removes the capital control levers that sovereign nations have today.

Conclusion

Thus the advent of Big Tech cryptocurrencies means that countries would have one less lever to pull.

Source: Live Mint

Genome sequencing of bacteria to help with biocontrol in farming.

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GS-III: Genome sequencing of bacteria to help with biocontrol in farming.



Bacteria with antimicrobial properties

- Scientists in Kerala have completed the whole genome sequencing of a rare bacterium capable of producing antifungal and insecticidal compounds.
- This has opened up the potential to develop a new line of products for biocontrol applications in agriculture.

Obtained from soil

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Researchers isolated some strains of actinomycetes (a kind of hairy bacteria) from the forest soils of the Neyyar wildlife sanctuary, one of the 12 mega diversity centres in the world.

One of the isolates was identified as *Streptosporangium nondiastaticum* reported to have antimicrobial properties.

- **Helping Biocontrol**

- Bioinformatics analysis showed that the genome contained a plant chitinase, an enzyme capable of degrading fungi and insect exoskeleton.
- The scientists have cloned the gene and engineered the recombinant protein.
- The strain can produce metabolites that are toxic to plant pathogens, making it a candidate for biocontrol applications.
- Across the world, fungal phytopathogens cause significant agricultural crop loss, both in farmlands and post-harvest storage conditions.
- The use of micro organisms to control phytopathogens and pests offers an important alternative to chemical fungicides and pesticides which result in environmental pollution and development of resistance in fungal pathogens.

Source: The Hindu

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ANDREX Project

GS-I | 04 September, 2019

GS-I: ANDREX Project

News

- Scientists have made a new discovery challenging the previous understanding of the link between the Southern Ocean next to Antarctica and the atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.
- The study published in a journal shows that biological processes far out at sea are the most important factors determining how the ocean absorbs carbon dioxide.

ANDREX Project???????

- Researchers studied the ocean circulation and carbon concentration of the Weddell Gyre a region lying east of the Antarctic Peninsula.
- The team studied data collected as part of the ANDREX project (Antarctic Deep water Rates of Export) which measured the physical, biological, and chemical properties of the waters in the gyre between 2008 and 2010.
- The data considered in this study showed unambiguously that, in the Weddell Gyre, the dominant process enabling the uptake of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and its removal to the deep ocean included the role of phytoplanktons.

Role of Southern Ocean in CO₂ absorption

- Carbon dioxide is absorbed in the surface oceans and stored in the deep seas, gradually, over a timescale of 100s to 1,000s years.
- The Southern Ocean plays a critical role in how the carbon dioxide is taken out of the atmosphere.
- It helps scientists understand its role during dramatic climate transitions in the past, such as the ice ages, and better predict the current and future climate change.
- Whether carbon is released into the atmosphere or trapped in the deep ocean, is crucially determined by the transformation of the water from light to dense which is in turn caused by cooling at the ocean's surface.

Outcomes

- The dominant factor driving the uptake of carbon from the atmosphere to the ocean was not related to dense water formation in the shallow seas close to Antarctica, but rather to biological processes further out in the sea.
- The results carry implications for our understanding of how the high-latitude Southern Ocean, close to the Antarctic continent, influences atmospheric carbon and global climate on 100 to 1000-year timescales.

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Source: The Hindu

Economics behind e-vehicle batteries

GS-III | 04 September, 2019

GS-III: Economics behind e-vehicle batteries



Context

- Shifting gears in the transition to electric vehicles (EVs), the NITI Aayog, in May this year, proposed to ban the sale of all internal combustion engine (ICE) powered three-wheelers post March 2023.
- It also suggested that all new two-wheelers below 150cc sold after March 2025 should be electric.
- In consonance with these proposals, the Union Budget announced tax incentives for early adopters.
- The automobile industry had objected to the proposal and called for a practical approach in framing EV-related policies.

How are cost structures of conventional vehicles and electric vehicles different?

- The portion of the costs of the drive train of EVs the system in a motor vehicle which connects the transmission to the drive axles in comparison to the cost of the entire vehicle is 4% lower compared to ICE vehicles.
- This is primarily due to less part in the electric drive train.
- However, the battery pack takes up nearly half the cost of an electric vehicle.

How has the cost of the Li-ion battery pack cost evolved in the last decade?

- The price of these battery packs has consistently fallen over the past few years.
- This decrease is in part due to technological improvements, economies of scale and increased demand for lithium-ion batteries.
- Fierce competition between major manufacturers has also been instrumental in bringing down prices.
- The chart shows the change in the price of Li-ion batteries from 2010 to 2016. It is not clear if the battery cost can be reduced even further.
- Given that raw materials account for 60% of the cost of the battery pack, the room for further cost reduction is rather limited.

Where does India stand on EV adoption?

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- In India, EV adoption will be driven by two-wheelers rather than cars in high numbers on because India's mobility market is driven more by two wheelers.
- According to the NITI Aayog, 79% of vehicles on Indian roads are two-wheelers.
- Three-wheelers and cars that cost less than ₹10 lakh account for 4% and 12% of the vehicle population, respectively.
- Two-wheelers will also need smaller batteries when compared to cars and hence the overall affordable cost.
- India needs to manufacture Li-ion cells in-house. Now, cells are imported and "assembled" into batteries.

Are EV vehicles completely environment friendly?

- In conventional ICEs, petrol or diesel fuels the engine.
- However, in EVs, batteries are not the fuel; electrons supplied by the battery fuel the vehicle.
- Presently, most of India's electricity is generated using conventional sources.
- In 2018-19, over 90% of India's electricity was generated from conventional sources, including coal, and around 10% was produced from renewable sources such as solar, wind and biomass.
- While the rate of electricity generated from renewable sources has increased over the years, more needs to be done for their adoption.

Source: The Hindu

Asteroid Impact Deflection Assessment (AIDA)

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GS-III: Asteroid Impact Deflection Assessment (AIDA)



Background

- Among all the causes that will eventually cause the extinction of life on Earth, an asteroid hit is widely acknowledged as one of the likeliest.
- Over the years, scientists have suggested different ways to ward off such a hit, such as blowing up the asteroid before it reaches Earth, or deflecting it off with a spacecraft.

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- Now, scientists have embarked on a plan to test their expertise with the second of these two methods.

Asteroid Impact Deflection Assessment (AIDA)

- It is an ambitious double-spacecraft mission to deflect an asteroid in space, to prove the technique as a viable method of planetary defence.
- The mission, which includes NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA), is known as the Asteroid Impact Deflection Assessment (AIDA).
- The target is the smaller of two bodies in the "double Didymos asteroids" that are in orbit between Earth and Mars.
- Didymos is a near-Earth asteroid system. Its main body measures about 780 m across; the smaller body is a "moonlet" about 160 m in diameter.
- The project aims to deflect the orbit of the smaller body through an impact by one spacecraft.
- Then a second spacecraft will survey the crash site and gather the maximum possible data on the effect of this collision.

Tools of the mission

- NASA is building the Double Asteroid Impact Test (DART) spacecraft for launch in summer 2021.
- It is planned to collide with the target at 6.6 km/s in September 2022.
- Flying along with DART will be an Italian-made miniature CubeSat, called LICIACube, to record the moment of impact.
- ESA's contribution is a mission called Hera, which will perform a close-up survey of the post-impact asteroid, acquiring measurements such as the asteroid's mass and detailed crater shape.
- Hera will also deploy a pair of CubeSats for close-up asteroid surveys and the very first radar probe of an asteroid.
- All this would allow researchers to model the efficiency of the collision.

Source: Indian Express

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme

GS-III | 04 September, 2019

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

GS-III: Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme



Context

The Union Cabinet has approved a higher procurement price for ethanol purchased by oil marketing companies for the ethanol blended petrol (EBP) programme.

Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme

- Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme was launched in January, 2003 for supply of 5% ethanol blended Petrol.
- The programme sought to promote the use of alternative and environment friendly fuels and to reduce import dependency for energy requirements.
- OMCs are advised to continue according priority of ethanol from 1) sugarcane juice/sugar/sugar syrup, 2) B-heavy molasses 3) C-heavy molasses and 4) damaged food grains/other sources.
- At present, this programme has been extended to whole of India except UTs of Andaman Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands with effect from 01st April, 2019 wherein OMCs sell petrol blended with ethanol up to 10%.

About the decision

- According to the new decision, the price of ethanol from C-heavy molasses will be increased from ₹43.46 per litre to ₹43.75 per litre.
- The price of ethanol from B-heavy molasses will be increased from ₹52.43 per litre to ₹54.27 per litre. The price of ethanol from sugarcane juice, sugar, and sugar syrup has been set at ₹59.48 per litre.
- The oil marketing companies will also pay the GST and transportation tax associated with the ethanol supply a provision that existed in the previous plan as well.

Source: The Hindu

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Where does India stand on plastic waste?

GS-III | 05 September, 2019

GS-III: Where does India stand on plastic waste?



Context

Government to pull out all the stops to cut use of plastics.

Background

On this Independence Day address, PM called for a movement to eliminate single-use plastic in India, beginning on Gandhi Jayanti (October 2).

The move is part of an ambitious drive against **Single-Use Plastic (SUP)**, under the theme "**Shramdaan**", for which a detailed plan has been worked out for ministries and departments.

The government is reported to be working on a ban on certain plastic items of common use such as carry bags, cutlery and plates **under the Environment (Protection) Act**, and this may be announced on October 2, well ahead of the **earlier deadline of 2022**.

Single-use plastic

- As the name suggests, single-use plastics (SUPs) are those that are discarded after one-time use.
- Besides the ubiquitous plastic bags, SUPs include water and flavoured/aerated drinks bottles, takeaway food containers, disposable cutlery, straws, and stirrers, processed food packets and wrappers, cotton bud sticks, etc.
- Of these, foamed products such as cutlery, plates, and cups are considered the most lethal to the environment.

Plastic waste management

- The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 notified by the Centre called for a ban on "non-recyclable and multi-layered" packaging by March 2018, and a ban on carry bags of thickness less than 50 microns.
- The Rules were amended in 2018, with changes that activists say favoured the plastic industry and allowed manufacturers an escape route. The 2016 Rules did not mention SUPs.
- On World Environment Day in 2018, India pledged to phase out SUPs by 2022.
- The PM has called for "a new revolution against plastic", and some government-controlled bodies such as Air India and the Indian Railways have announced they would

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stop SUPs.

Alternatives to Plastic

Although compostable, biodegradable or even edible plastics made from various materials such as sugarcane bagasse, corn starch, and grain flour are promoted as alternatives, these currently have limitations of scale and cost.

Some biodegradable packaging materials require specific microorganisms to be broken down, while compostable cups and plates made of polylactic acid, a popular resource derived from biomass such as corn starch, require industrial composters.

On the other hand, articles made through a different process involving potato and corn starch have done better in normal conditions, going by the experience in Britain.

Seaweed is also emerging as a choice to make edible containers.

In India, though, in the absence of robust testing and certification to verify claims made by producers, spurious biodegradable and compostable plastics are entering the marketplace.

Source: The Hindu

Global Liveability Index 2019

GS-III | 05 September, 2019

GS-III: Global Liveability Index 2019

ASPIRE IAS

News

New Delhi has dropped by six places to rank 118th on a list of the world's most liveable cities due to increase in cases of petty crimes and poor air quality. While New Delhi registered the biggest decline in Asia, Mumbai also fell two places since last year to rank 119th on the list topped by Vienna (Austria) for the second consecutive year.

About the ranking

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) publishes an annual Global Liveability Ranking.

The EIU ranking of 140 cities is based on their scores in five broad categories stability,

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healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure.

Why decline in liveability in India?

Abuses against journalists

1. The EIU also flagged "an escalation in abuses against journalists in recent years" in India.
2. It cited a decline in the country's ranking in Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index where India now sits in the bottom quartile of countries.

Rise in Crime rates

Climatic changes Several cities, such as New Delhi in India and Cairo in Egypt received substantial downgrades on their scores owing to problems linked to climate change, such as poor air quality, undesirable average temperatures and inadequate water provision," the report said.

Constrained liveability conditions

A score between 50-60 points, which is the case for India, indicates constrained liveability conditions.

The 2018 update to the WHO Global Ambient Air Quality Database shows that New Delhi has the sixth highest annual mean concentration of fine particulate matter among cities around the world.

Companies pay a premium to employees who move to cities where living conditions are particularly difficult and there is excessive physical hardship or a notably unhealthy environment.

Source: The Hindu

Higher Mortality from Cardio-Vascular Disease

GS-II | 05 September, 2019

GS-II: Higher Mortality from Cardio-Vascular Disease.



News

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- In India & the world, Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are the leading cause of death. More people die annually from CVDs globally than from any other ailment.
- According to a study conducted by PURE (Prospective Urban Rural Epidemiology), "the CVD mortality is highest in the Low-Income Countries (LIC) and lowest in the High-Income Countries (HIC)."
- Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are a group of disorders that are related to the heart and blood vessels.
- The study was conducted over 1.6 lacs individuals for over a decade, living in 21 countries.

Findings from the Study

- Most cardiovascular disease cases and deaths in Low-Income Countries (LIC) are attributed to:
 - Lower quality of health care, and it's low availability.
 - Lack of insurance - which acts as an affordability barrier.
 - Some of the factors like, hypertension and education have extensive global effects.
 - Household/Indoor air pollution acts as an emerging source of risk for cardiovascular disease in LIC.
- Other factors include Poor Diet, consumption of dairy-products causing CVD cases, etc.
- Some of these factors vary as per a country's economic level.
- Deaths from the cardiac disease were three times that of cancer-related deaths in LIC including India, while in high-income countries- death from cancer was twice that of CVD.
- The fact that cancer-related deaths are frequent in high-income countries indicates a transition in the predominant causes of death in the middle age group.

Way Forward

- Health policies should focus on risk factors that have the greatest effects on averting cardiovascular diseases and deaths globally.
- In specific groups of countries, additional emphasis must be laid on risk factors of greatest importance. Eliminating indoor pollution is the crucial step to be taken in this regard.
- The need of the hour is to insure each & every individual medically so that the finances do not act as a barrier in availing health facilities.

Source: The Hindu

Jurisprudence of the judicial rubber stamp

GS-II | 05 September, 2019

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

GS-II: Jurisprudence of the judicial rubber stamp



Background

- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (the Act) was enacted to provide for more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations, and for dealing with terrorist activities, and for matters connected therewith.
- The said Act has been amended in the years 2004, 2008 and 2013 to add certain provisions relating to various facets of terrorism.
- Its main objective is to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.
- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2011 was introduced to make it more effective in preventing unlawful activities, and meet commitments made at the Financial Action Task Force (an intergovernmental organization to combat money laundering and terrorism financing).
- It expands the definition of 'terrorist act' to Acts that threaten the economic security of India and damage its monetary stability by production, smuggling or circulation of 'high quality' counterfeit currency. The security features that define 'high quality' are **laid down in the Third Schedule**.

Key Features of the Bill

- It empowers the government to designate individuals as terrorists if the person commits or participates in acts of terrorism, prepares for terrorism, promotes terrorism or is otherwise involved in terrorism.
- This has been done as it is seen that when a terrorist organization is banned, its members form a new organization to spread terrorism.
- The bill also empowers the Director-General, National Investigation Agency (NIA) to grant approval of seizure or attachment of property when the case is being investigated by the agency.
- **Under the existing Act, the investigating officer is required to obtain the prior approval of the Director General of Police (DGP) to seize properties that bear any connection to terrorism.**
- It has been seen that many times a terror accused own properties in different states. In such cases, seeking approval of DGPs of different states becomes very difficult, and the delay caused by the same may enable the accused to transfer properties.
- It empowers the officers of the NIA of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases.
- The existing Act provides for investigation of cases to be conducted by officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police or above.
- No changes being made in arrest or bail provisions. Also, the provision that the burden of proof is on the investigating agency and not on the accused, has not been changed.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The International Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005) has also been added in the Second Schedule through the Amendment.

Why is it being opposed?

- This is a potentially dangerous amendment which will empower officials of Union Ministry to brand any person 'a terrorist', without following due process. The name of such a person will be included in the 'Fourth Schedule' proposed to be added in the parent Act. The only statutory remedy available to such a person is to make an application before the Central Government for de-notification, which will be considered by a Review Committee constituted by the Government itself.
- The amendment does not provide any legal consequence in case an individual is designated a terrorist. The inclusion of one's name in the Fourth Schedule as a terrorist per se will not lead to any conviction, imprisonment, fine, disqualifications or any sort of civil penalties. So this is simply a power for the government to brand any one as a terrorist.
- An official designation as a terrorist will be akin to 'civil death' for a person, with social boycott, expulsion from job, hounding by media, and perhaps attack from self-proclaimed vigilante groups following.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Eastern Economic Forum

GS-II | 06 September, 2019

GS-II: Eastern Economic Forum



News

The Plenary session of the 5th Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok.

Eastern Economic Forum

- The Eastern Economic Forum was established by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in **2015**.
- In accordance with the Decree, the Eastern Economic Forum takes place each year in Vladivostok.
- Every year, the Eastern Economic Forum serves as a platform for the discussion of key issues in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors.
- Global challenges facing Russia and other nations are discussed too.

Why is Vladivostok significant to India?

- During the India-Pakistan war in 1971, the U.S. and British Navies tried to threaten the Indian security.
- At that time, the Soviet Union dispatched nuclear-armed fleet from its Pacific Fleet based at Vladivostok in support of India.
- Ever since then, the city of Vladivostok, located in Russia's Far East, has had a special relevance for Indians.
- There are, now, plans to invest in Russia's Far East, thus, paying back the long-held Indian debt to Vladivostok.

What are Russia's priorities now?

- The Far East lies in the Asian part of Russia and is less developed than the country's European areas.
- As part of his 'Pivot to Asia' strategy, Russian President Vladimir Putin is inviting foreign countries to invest in this region.
- Russia's outreach to Asian nations has especially gained momentum after the 2014 Crimea crisis spoiled its relations with the West.
- Russia also wants to make sure that China does not become a hegemon in the Eurasian region.
- It is thus deepening cooperation with countries like India, Vietnam and Indonesia.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- Here, the Far East has the potential to become an anchor in deepening India-Russia cooperation.
- Moreover, New Delhi has expanded the scope of its 'Act East policy' to also include Moscow.

What are the concerns with Indo-Pacific strategy?

- The idea of an 'Indo-Pacific region' signals India's willingness to work with the U.S. mainly to counter China's assertive maritime rise.
- But this has left Russia concerned.
- It is apprehensive that the U.S. would exert pressure on India's foreign policy choices.
- Russia is thus worried that it could lose a friendly country and one of the biggest buyers of Russian military hardware.

India's interest in the Eastern Economic Forum

PM Modi has described the EEF as a "historic opportunity" to give new impetus to the cooperation between India and Russia.

He has said that the relationship between the two countries has "special chemistry, special ease", even pointing out that Siberian cranes migrate to "my home state Gujarat".

Extending to Act Far East Policy

The PM recalled that India was the first country in the world to open a consulate in Vladivostok, and underlined the age and depth of the country's relations with the Far East.

Engaging closely with East Asia was in line with India's policy goal of "Act East".

PM also unveiled the "Act Far East" policy to boost India's engagement with Russia's Far East region.

This will also give a new dimension to our economic diplomacy.

Source: Indian Express

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Travel and Tourism Competitive Index 2019

GS-III | 06 September, 2019

GS-III: Travel and Tourism Competitive Index 2019



News

A report released by World Economic Forum ranking the travel and tourism competitiveness index of 140 economies was released.

About the Index

- **Published biennially by World Economic Forum ,Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report and Index benchmarks the Travel & Tourism (T&T) competitiveness of 140 economies.**
- The study scored countries on four indicators enabling environment travel and tourism policy and enabling conditions, infrastructure natural and cultural rankings.
- The **four broad indicators looked at 14 variables**, which were further subdivided into 90 indicators such as **property rights, efficiency of the legal framework, quality of electricity supply, female labour force participation, visa requirements and the number of World Heritage cultural sites.**

India's Progress

- The biennial report shows that India has made the greatest improvement since 2017 among the top 25 per cent of the countries that were previously ranked.
- Overall, India is ranked 34, up six places from 2017.
- India's highest improvement was in enabling environment, by 10 places to 98.
- The least improvement is in infrastructure as well as in natural and cultural rankings, by just three places each, but India's rank was already high in the latter.

Global scene

Spain, France, Germany, Japan and the United States are the world's most travel-ready nations.

Japan remains Asia's most competitive travel and tourism economy, ranking 4th globally.

China is the largest travel and tourism economy in Asia-Pacific and 13th most competitive globally.

Source: IndianExpress

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Institution of Eminence Scheme

GS-II | 06 September, 2019

GS-II: Institution of Eminence Scheme



News

The HRD Ministry has awarded the status of Institute of Eminence to the IIT-Madras, the IIT-Kharagpur, Delhi University, Benares Hindu University and the University of Hyderabad. Four private universities the Vellore Institute of Technology, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Jamia Hamdard University and the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology were issued Letters of Intent to grant them the status. The new greenfield Bharti Institute, a project of Satya Bharti Foundation, has also been issued the letter.

Objectives

Excellence and Innovation: To provide for higher education leading to excellence and innovations in such branches of knowledge as may be deemed fit at post-graduate, graduate and research degree levels.

Specialization: To engage in areas of specialization to make distinctive contributions to the objectives of the university education system.

Global Rating: To aim to be rated internationally for its teaching and research as a top hundred Institution in the world over time.

Quality teaching and Research: To provide for high quality teaching and research and for the advancement of knowledge and its dissemination.

Criteria

1. Global Ranking
2. Public Institution
3. Private Institution
4. Greenfield Proposals

Benefits

Autonomy: Institution with OE tag will be given greater autonomy and freedom to decide fees, course durations and governance structures.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Grant: The public institutions under IOE tag will receive a government grant of ₹1,000 crore, while the private institutions will not get any funding under the scheme.

Source: The Hindu

Putting the pedal to the medal

GS-III | 06 September, 2019

GS-III: Putting the pedal to the medal



News

The automobile industry is cyclical. It is also a lead indicator for economic growth. And it has been experiencing signs of a slowdown. The decline began in the last quarter of the calendar year 2018 and intensified with the passage of every month in 2019.

Background

Though the industry goes through cycles of ups and downs the current slowdown is something to worry about seriously. The current downturn is like nothing that the industry has seen in a long, time in terms of depth, scale, and character.

Commercial vehicles – Revision in axle-load norms

- In 2018, the government revised axle-load norms (for the first time since 1983) for cargo carriers by between 12% and 25%. It was aimed to legalize overloading and help reduce freight costs for both consignors and consignees.
- By applying the higher cargo rules to all trucks on the roads, government raised existing carrying capacity and forced per-tonne freight rates down.
- This occurred at a time when carrying capacity was increasing due to the introduction of GST.

BS-VI

- Vehicle manufacturer's practice of clogging the pipeline by over-producing vehicles without care for demand, and dumping them on dealers to sell became a painful issue now.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- Because of the approaching deadline for the transition to BS-VI norms from April 1, 2020, dealers are saddled with the inventory of BS-IV vehicles that they need to clear out before the deadline.
- Manufacturers are unable to plan their production schedules for BS-VI vehicles.

Way Forward

The government should reduce GST on automobile industry from 28% to 18% as per the demand of the industry but not for all the vehicles with manufactures and dealers.

Source: The Hindu

Mapping lightning across India

GS-III | 06 September, 2019

GS-III: Mapping lightning across India



News

For the first time a report has mapped lightning strikes across the country, and the lives they have claimed.

About the report

It has been prepared by Climate Resilient Observing Systems Promotion Council (CROPC), a non-profit organisation that works closely with India Meteorological Department (IMD).

What has the report found?

- Lightning strikes have caused at least 1,311 deaths in the four-month period between April and July this year, according to a first-of-its-kind report on lightning incidents in India.
- UP accounted for 224 of these deaths, followed by Bihar (170), Odisha (129) and Jharkhand (118).
- It counted 65.55 lakh lightning strikes in India during this four-month period, of which 23.53 lakh (36 per cent) happened to be cloud-to-ground lightning, the kind that reaches

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

the Earth.

- The other 41.04 lakh (64 per cent) were in-cloud lightning, which remains confined to the clouds in which it was formed.

Why are these finding are important

The report is part of an effort to create a database that can help develop an early warning system for lightning, spread awareness, and prevent deaths.

Between 2,000 and 2,500 people are estimated as killed every year in lightning strikes in the country.

It is possible to predict, 30-40 minutes in advance, when a lightning strike heads towards Earth.

The prediction is made possible through study and monitoring of the in-cloud lightning strikes.

Timely dissemination of this information can save several lives.

After carrying out a pilot project in 16 states, the IMD has begun providing lightning forecasts and warnings through mobile text messages from this year.

Source: Indian Express

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Indus Valley settlers had a distinct genetic lineage.

GS-I | 07 September, 2019

GS-I: Indus Valley settlers had a distinct genetic lineage



News

Throwing fresh light on the Indus Valley Civilisation, a study of DNA from Skeletal remains excavated from the Harappan cemetery at Rakhigarhi.

Background

The history of India begins with the birth of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC), also known as Harappan Civilization.

It flourished around 2,500 BC, in the western part of South Asia, in contemporary Pakistan and Western India.

The Indus Valley was home to the largest of the four ancient urban civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China.

In 1920s, the Archaeological Department of India carried out excavations in the Indus valley wherein the ruins of the two old cities, viz. Mohenjodaro and Harappa were unearthed.

In 1924, John Marshall, Director-General of the ASI, announced the discovery of a new civilisation in the Indus valley to the world.

Town Planning and Structures

The Harappan culture was distinguished by its system of town planning.

Harappa and Mohenjodaro each had its own citadel or acropolis, which was possibly occupied by members of the ruling class.

Below the citadel in each city lay a lower town containing brick houses, which were inhabited by the common people.

The remarkable thing about the arrangement of the houses in the cities is that they followed the grid system.

Granaries constituted an important part of the Harappan cities.

The use of burnt bricks in the Harappan cities is remarkable, because in the contemporary buildings of Egypt mainly dried bricks were used.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

The drainage system of Mohenjodaro was very impressive.

In almost all cities every big or small house had its own courtyard and bathroom.

Origins of farming

In Europe, ancient-DNA studies have shown that agriculture tended to spread through an influx of people with ancestry in Anatolia. New study shows a similar dynamic in Iran and Turan where the researchers found that Anatolian-related ancestry and farming arrived around the same time.

Researchers had successfully sequenced the first genome of an individual from Harappa and combining it with archaeological data, found that hunter-gatherers of South Asia had an independent origin, and authored the settled way of life in this part of the world.

They do not contain genome from either the Steppe region or ancient Iranian farmers.

The genetic continuity from hunter gatherer to modern times is visible in the DNA results."

The same hunter gatherer communities developed into agricultural communities and formed the Harappan civilization.

The researchers also suggest that there was a movement of people from east to west as the Harappan People's presence is evident at sites like Gonur in Turkmenistan and Sahr-i-Sokhta in Iran.

Source: The Hindu

Prepare plan for protection of Great Indian bustard

GS-III | 07 September, 2019

GS-III: Prepare plan for protection of Great Indian bustard



News

Noting the high mortality rate of the Great Indian Bustard, the NGT has directed the centre to prepare a time bound action plan within two months for protection of the birds.

Great Indian Bustard

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The Great Indian Bustard, one of the heaviest flying birds, can weigh up to 15 kg and grow up to one metre in height.
- It is considered the flagship grassland species, representing the health of the grassland ecology.
- For long, conservationists have been demanding to secure this population, warning that the bird might get extinct in the coming decades.
- It would become the first mega species to disappear from India after Cheetah in recent times.
- Till 1980s, about 1,500-2,000 Great Indian Bustards were spread throughout the western half of India, spanning eleven states.
- However, with rampant hunting and declining grasslands, their population dwindled.
- In July 2011, the bird was categorised as "critically endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Protection Measures:

Birdlife International uplisted this species from Endangered to Critically Endangered (2011)

Protection under CITES Appendix I

Protection under Schedule I Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2002

Project Great Indian Bustard (Rajasthan): aims at identifying and fencing off bustard breeding grounds in existing protected areas as well as provide secure breeding enclosures in areas outside protected areas.

Source: The Hindu

Sea route from Chennai to Vladivostok

GS-II | 07 September, 2019

GS-II: Sea route from Chennai to Vladivostok



News

During PM's visit to Vladivostok this week, a MoU was signed to open a full-fledged maritime route between Russia's eastern port city and Chennai on India's eastern seaboard.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Vladivostok

In Russian, Vladivostok is 'Ruler of the East'.

Located on the Golden Horn Bay north of North Korea and a short distance from Russia's border with China, it is the largest port on Russia's Pacific coast, and home to the Pacific Fleet of the Russian Navy.

It is the eastern railhead of the legendary Trans Siberian Railway, which connects the far east of Russia to the capital Moscow, and further west to the countries of Europe.

At Vladivostok's massive port, shipping and commercial fishing are the main commercial activities.

Automobiles are a major item of import at the port, from where they are often transported further inland.

To Chennai by sea:

An ocean liner travelling from Vladivostok to Chennai would sail southward on the Sea of Japan past the Korean peninsula, Taiwan and the Philippines in the South China Sea, past Singapore and through the Strait of Malacca.

It will emerge into the Bay of Bengal and then cut across through the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago to Chennai.

Time and distance

This sea route covers a distance of approximately 5,600 nautical miles, or about 10,300 km.

A large container ship travelling at the normal cruising speed of 20-25 knots, or 37-46 km/hour, should be able to cover the distance in 10-12 days.

At suboptimal "slow steaming" speeds of 18-20 knots (33-37 km/hour), at which long-distance vessels sometimes travel to in order to save fuel, it might take slightly longer — 12-13 days.

Trade and strategy

India is building nuclear power plants with Russia's collaboration in Kudankulam on the sea coast in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district.

The opening of a sea route is likely to help in the project.

Even otherwise, a vibrant sea route will help in the upscaling of trade relations between the two nations.

It will also increase India's presence in the Indo-Pacific, and especially the South China Sea, a

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

deeply contested patch of the ocean that Beijing considers its stomping ground.

Significance of the route

Opening of this route between Chennai and Vladivostok assumes significance because it ensures there will be connectivity between the two major ports.

It will give impetus to the cooperation between India and the Russian Far East.

Source: India Express

**It's time officers renewed their commitment to the nation,
not the government of the day**

GS-IV | 07 September, 2019

GS-IV: It's time officers renewed their commitment to the nation, not the government of the day

News

We often hear questions on the integrity of civil services, organisations such as the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI and the intentions of taxmen when they do some tasks as part of their job.

Background

There is a belief that the country's "rusted steel frame" poses a challenge. But not many concrete measures to offer that can strengthen and refurbish it.

Civil services training

- The training academies in Mussoorie, Hyderabad, Nagpur, Baroda, Shimla, etc. are state-of-the-art and well-equipped to enhance the skills of trainees.
- These institutes impart training in subjects specific to the job profile of each service.
- But what about the spirit of the civil services? What about "the impartiality and incorruptibility of administration", that Sardar Patel expected?
- The backbone to withstand the pressures of expediency, politicians, media, and mobs is withering.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Role models who fought alone

- A commissioner of police who, when asked not to oppose the bail of a film star who was the son of a Mumbai politician, refused to comply, politely but firmly.
- A young IAS officer refused to write the interview marks of candidates in pencil — so the politicians on the board could "manipulate" them later.
- A tax officer refused to open a closed file to "teach a lesson to an unfriendly" business house.

Challenges

These actions are known only to a few.

There are awards for innovation and achieving targets, but none for awarding an officer for standing by the principles she is supposed to be true to.

Case studies have been developed for performance, but none exist for those who abide by their commitment to a just and equitable society and dare to differ with "orders from the top".

Civil Services for the common man

- Common man still sees a lot of hope in the civil services.
- His dream is to have his child join them for the prestige and power that the services seem to carry.
- To him, the services represent a very important tool to establish an equitable society through which he hopes to better his life and the future of his children.
- He does not think of "using" the services for his selfish ends but for the common good.

What civil servants have to do

- Spread the culture of performance and accountability and punish the corrupt.
- Resist undue pressures from different players, and concentrate on the delivery of services to the poor.

Justice Khanna – a case study

- Justice H R Khanna remains the most remembered for his principled stand against Emergency.
- Very few have heard of the other four judges.

Conclusion

We need the likes of Justice Khanna to motivate the civil services to take a principled stand.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Source: Indian Express

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UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Nilgiri Tahr

GS-III | 09 September, 2019

GS-III: Nilgiri Tahr



News

In more good news for the State animal, the Nilgiri tahr, its sightings in the Mukurthi National Park have risen from 568 in 2018 to 612 this year.

Why a good news?

There was a decrease in tahr numbers in 2017, when a population of only 438 was recorded, down from 480 in 2016.

This was the second consecutive year that an increase in the population of the animal had been recorded in the park, meaning the population of the Nilgiri tahr, also known as the Nilgiri ibex, has risen by 132 since 2016.

Nilgiri tahr

IUCN Conservation Status: Endangered

The Nilgiri tahr (*Nilgiritragus hylocrius*) aka the Nilgiri ibex or simply ibex.

It is endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in Southern India.

It is the state animal of Tamil Nadu.

The Nilgiri tahr inhabits the open montane grassland habitat of the South Western Ghats montane rain forests eco-region.

At elevations from 1,200 to 2,600 metres (3,900 to 8,500 ft), the forests open into grasslands interspersed with pockets of stunted forests, locally known as sholas.

Eravikulam National Park is home to the largest population of this Tahr.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Criticizing executive, judiciary and bureaucracy cannot be called sedition: SC Judge

GS-II | 09 September, 2019

GS-II: Criticizing executive, judiciary and bureaucracy cannot be called sedition: SC Judge



News

Justice Deepak Gupta, judge of Supreme Court, opined about the chilling effect caused by sedition law on legitimate criticism on the organs of state. As citizens, Indians have the right to criticize the government, and criticism cannot be construed as sedition, he said, adding that stifling such criticism will make us a police state.

Sedition and Right to dissent

- Criticism of the executive, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the armed forces cannot be termed sedition.
- If we stifle criticism of these institutions, we shall become a police state instead of a democracy."
- There is a very important right which is not spelt out in the Constitution... the right of freedom of opinion, the right of freedom of conscience, by themselves, include the most important right the right to dissent.

Why is dissent important?

Every society has its own rules, and over a period of time, when people stick to only age-old rules and conventions, the society degenerates; it doesn't develop.

New thinkers are born when they disagree with well-accepted norms of the society. If everybody follows the well-trodden path, no new paths will be created and no new vistas of the mind will be found.

A right to expression

He said that in a secular country such as India, a non-believer, an atheist, an agnostic, ritualistic or a spiritualist person all has the right to expression.

When we talk of dissent, it reminds of Justice H R Khanna in the habeas corpus case.

That dissent is more important than any decision that may have come before or after it. Today, it is the rule of law.

Judiciary not above criticism

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The judge emphasized that allowing a climate for free expression of thoughts and ideas without fear of criminal prosecution is essential for growth of civilization.
- The judiciary is not above criticism. If Judges of the superior courts were to take note of all the contemptuous communications received by them, there would be no work other than the contempt proceedings.

Source: Indian Express

Ration Card Portability

GS-II | 09 September, 2019

GS-II: Ration Card Portability



News

The government is showcasing the rollout of the 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme as one of the biggest achievements of its first 100 days in power. The launch of the nationwide food security net is scheduled for June 2020, but several challenges remain before migrants can take advantage of full portability.

Ration Card

A ration card is issued to the head of the family, depending on the number of members in a family and the financial status of the applicant.

It is used by households to get essential food grains at subsidised prices from designated ration shops (also called fair price shops) under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

Over the years, different types of ration cards were issued depending on the level of deprivation.

Later, in 2013, when the National Food Security Bill was passed, different ration cards were compressed to just two priority and Antyodaya (for the most poor).

One Nation One Ration Card scheme

- Until recently, this has been a location-linked benefit, leaving crores of migrant workers

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

and families out of the food safety net.

- Each household's ration card is linked to a specific fair price shop and can only be used to buy rations in that particular shop.
- Over the last few years, 10 States (partially in one) have implemented the Integrated Management of Public Distribution System, which allows beneficiaries to buy rations from any fair price shop within that State.
- The Centre is now in the process of expanding these efforts into a nationwide portability network which is called the 'One Nation One Ration Card' scheme.
- It is scheduled to come into full effect by June 2020, after which a ration card holder can buy subsidised grain at any fair price shop in the country.

Beneficiaries of the scheme

The main beneficiaries of the scheme are the country's migrant workers.

According to data from the Census 2011, there are more than 45 crore internal migrants in India, of whom more than half have not completed primary education, while 80% have not completed secondary education.

Registering for ration cards at their new location is an arduous process, especially if some members of the household still remain in their original home.

What is needed to make it work?

The scheme involves the creation of a central repository of NFSA beneficiaries and ration cards, which will integrate the existing databases maintained by States, UTs and the Centre.

Aadhaar seeding is also important as the unique biometric ID will be used to authenticate and track the usage of ration by beneficiaries anywhere in the country.

Currently, it is estimated that around 85% of ration cards are linked to Aadhaar numbers.

For the scheme to work, it is critical that all fair price shops are equipped with electronic point-of-sale machines (ePoS), replacing the old method of manual record-keeping of transactions with a digital real-time record.

Progress so far

- Two pairs of States Andhra Pradesh-Telangana and Maharashtra-Gujarat became the first to begin implementing portability between their States last month.
- From October 1, two more pairs Kerala-Karnataka and Rajasthan-Haryana will join the experiment.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Privatizing public sector banks

GS-III | 09 September, 2019

GS-III: Privatizing public sector banks



News

Former RBI governor D. Subbarao raised the question of whether India needs public sector banks at all in this day and age.

Reasons for privatization

- The country's financial sector is now wide enough and deep enough to take care of financial intermediation without state support.
- Even after the bank nationalization of 1969, the state dominance of the sector has kept competition levels low.
- There was unnecessary micro-management by RBI, resulting in poor lending decisions and market distortions.

Problem with interest rate benchmarking:

- Right now, banks are largely expected to do as they are told. Last RBI's directive to commercial banks to link their loan rates with its repo rate or other external benchmarks need not be issued in truly free markets.
- Competition for loan customers would not let a bank keep its lending rates higher. Rivalry for deposits and other funds would mean a bank pays as much as it could afford to.
- In India, state lenders are under little pressure to do this. Though the entry of private banks has upped service standards and induced some changes, the sector is saddled with non-performing loans, inefficiencies and heavy costs.

Cause for privatization

The sector's health requires banks to assess and price risks properly. For this, bankers need to act diligently in the interest of profit-seeking shareholders. This would be better enabled by privatization.

Challenges with privatization

- State's exit could result in foreign equity control of banks and even a loss of sovereignty.
- Since large banks would be "too big to fail", the government would still need to bail them out in case they approach bankruptcy. This would involve public funds and amount to the

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

socialization of losses.

Conclusion

With all the challenges above, the state could argue it needs to retain ownership control as well. Immediately, at least the appointment of public sector bank chiefs must be freed of state control.

Source: Indian Express

Throttled at the grass roots.

GS-II | 09 September, 2019

GS-II: Throttled at the grass roots.



Context

25 years after the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, very little actual progress has been made in this direction. Local governments remain hamstrung and ineffective; mere agents to do the bidding of higher-level governments.

Facts

About 32 lakh peoples' representatives are elected every five years to the local bodies.

Devolution is not mere delegation. It implies that governance functions are assigned by law to local governments, along with adequate transfer of financial grants, taxes, and staff so that they carry out their responsibilities.

Local governments are to report primarily to their voters, and not so much to higher-level departments.

The Constitution mandates that panchayats and municipalities shall be elected every five years.

States are mandated to devolve functions and responsibilities to them through law.

Issues remain – Finance

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

The volume of money set apart for them is inadequate to meet their basic requirements.

Much of the money given is inflexible; even in the case of untied grants mandated by the Union and State Finance Commissions, their use is constrained through the imposition of several conditions.

Functionaries

Local governments do not have the staff to perform even basic tasks.

As most staff are hired by higher-level departments and placed with local governments on deputation, they do not feel responsible for the latter; they function as part of a vertically integrated departmental system.

Problems with centralisation

- The current Union government has centralised service delivery by using technology, and panchayats are nothing more than front offices for several Union government programs.
- The 'Smart City' program does not devolve its funds to the municipalities; States have been forced to constitute 'special purpose vehicles' to ring-fence these grants.

Decentralisation

A decentralisation is always a messy form of democracy, but it is far better than the operation of criminal politicians at a higher level. We can keep track of corrupt local government representatives; at a higher level, we will never know the extent of dirty deals that happen.

Way Forward

Gram sabhas and wards committees in urban areas have to be revitalised.

Consultations with the grama sabha could be organised through smaller discussions where everybody can really participate.

Even new systems of Short Message Services or social media groups could be used for facilitating discussions between members of grama sabha.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

A minor win for India at WTO.

GS-II | 10 September, 2019

GS-II: A minor win for India at WTO



News

A WTO panel in June accepted India's claim in a dispute concerning U.S. regulations on the domestic content requirement in the production of renewable energy.

The dispute and the Verdict:

The dispute revolved around certain States in the U.S. that give incentives to local producers in the form of tax rebates, refunds, and credits when they produce renewable energy using locally manufactured products.

Article III of the WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) requires that countries do not provide less favorable treatment to 'like products' originating from other nations.

A solar PVC manufactured in the U.S. should be liable to the same amount of tax as one made anywhere else in the world.

WTO's determine whether an item is a 'like product' based on a product's end-use, composition, substitutability, consumer preferences, and tariff classifications.

In this case, the U.S. conceded that the import from India was a 'like product'.

But the U.S. argued that the figures quoted by India showing growth in the number of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems installed in Washington State between 2005 and 2015 do not support the argument that additional incentives have induced wide-scale adoption of locally made renewable energy products.

WTO panel rejected this argument, stating that Washington State's additional incentive accords an advantage on the use of local products not available for 'like imported products'.

Significance:

- India had earlier lost a similar dispute over its own domestic content requirements.
- The U.S. imported 44% of the Indian solar module exports in the 2018-2019 period.
- This dispute could have been easily avoided had the two countries settled their differences beforehand.

Conclusion:

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

There are various other disputes pending between the countries at the WTO involving the export promotion scheme brought in by India and the imposition of excess customs duty on steel and aluminium by the U.S.

Source: The Hindu

India's vape ban only deprives smokers of safer options.

GS-II | 10 September, 2019

GS-II: India's vape ban only deprives smokers of safer options

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Context

The world has embraced electronic cigarettes, commonly known as vapes, and other electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) as harm-reduction alternatives to combustible tobacco used in cigarettes.

e-Cigarettes:

- Globally, several tobacco control researchers have concluded that e-cigarettes are at least 95% less hazardous than combustible cigarettes.
- Studies by Public Health England show that the risk of passive smoking associated with them is also extremely low, as they do not produce tobacco fumes.

India – Tobacco

- The country bears 12% of the global burden of tobacco users, has 40% of its adults exposed to passive smoking.
- We have shown the lowest quit rate among all countries surveyed in the Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2.
- Since there is empirical evidence to suggest that countries, which have regulated ENDS, have witnessed a decline in smoking rates, India needs to take note and reconsider its stance on the matter.

Global Experience:

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- According to a study conducted by The British Medical Journal, as many as 68 countries, including the UK, US, Canada, France, and Japan, are using a range of regulatory mechanisms to enhance the discretionary power of their adult citizens.
- These include laws that prohibit sales of ENDS to minors, regulate advertising and promotion, impose limits on nicotine concentration, and place checks on product quality and battery standards.
- New Zealand is promoting ENDS by launching a website called Vaping Facts to clarify myths and make the country **smoking-free by 2025**.
- Canada, the UAE, and Seychelles have reversed their bans to regulate the product and allow access to adult smokers.

Conclusion

A ban on a widely accepted alternative to smoking regular cigarettes not only prevents consumers from making a less harmful choice, but it may also result in an illicit trade turning rampant. We need to check the entry of dangerous counterfeits and deny vulnerable groups access to these products via the black market.

Source: Live Mint

UN Peacekeeping

GS-II | 10 September, 2019

GS-III: UN Peacekeeping

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News

India has told the UN Security Council that peacekeeping currently is in a "no-man's land" and called for next generation of reforms in peacekeeping based on incentivisation, innovation and institutionalization.

UN Peacekeeping

- Peacekeeping by the United Nations is a unique and dynamic instrument developed by the organization as a way to help countries torn by conflict to create the conditions for lasting peace.
- It is distinguished from peace building, peacemaking, and peace enforcement although the UN does acknowledge that all activities are "mutually reinforcing" and that overlap

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

between them is frequent in practice.

- Peacekeepers monitor and observe peace processes in post-conflict areas and assist ex-combatants in implementing the peace agreements they may have signed.
- UN peacekeepers often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets because of their light blue berets or helmets can include soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel.

Need for reforms

- UN peacekeeping is a unique innovation of multilateralism to respond to threats to international peace and security.
- However, at the current stage, peacekeeping is in a "no-man's land, between trying to keep the peace in fragile environments and trying to enforce the maintenance of peace, where there is none to keep.

Need of hour: Institutionalization

- The institutionalization of an approach where all key actors, especially Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), are associated in a consistent and predictable manner in the decision-making matrix has been now discussed for decades.
- However, in practice, there is not effective improvement of the cooperation between TCCs, the Security Council and the Secretariat.

Innovation

- Innovation in capacity building of peacekeepers needs to be a priority, if nations are to move away from a culture of caveats that bedevils peacekeeping into a segmented activity.
- Innovative options such as co-deployment of peacekeepers from different countries engenders a genuine spirit of partnership for peace and needs to be promoted.

Source: The Hindu

India Iodine Survey 2018-19 Report

GS-II | 10 September, 2019

GS-II: India Iodine Survey 2018-19 Report



UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

News

Tamil Nadu has the lowest consumption of iodized salt despite being the third biggest producer of salt in the country, according to a first-of-its-kind national survey to measure the coverage of iodised salt.

Highlights of the Survey

- The study shows that 76.3% of Indian households consumed adequately iodised salt, which is salt with at least 15 parts per million of iodine.
- The five worst performers were Tamil Nadu (61.9%), Andhra Pradesh (63.9%), Rajasthan (65.5%), Odisha (65.8%) and Jharkhand (68.8%).
- The survey was conducted by Nutrition International in collaboration with the AIIMS and the Indian Coalition for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD).
- The survey tested the iodine content in samples of cooking salt from households to estimate the coverage of iodised salt.
- The survey revealed that 13 out of 36 States have already achieved Universal Salt Iodisation or have 90% of households with access to adequately iodised salt.

Salt production in India

- Rajasthan, which is the second largest producer of salt, also figured among the five worst covered States.
- Gujarat produces 71% of salt in the country, followed by Rajasthan at 17% and Tamil Nadu at 11%.
- The rest of the country accounts for a mere 1% of salt produced.

Significance of Iodised Salt

- Iodine is a vital micro-nutrient for optimal mental and physical development of human beings.
- Deficiency of iodine can result in a range of disabilities and disorders such as goitre, hypothyroidism, cretinism, abortion, still births, mental retardation and psychomotor defects.
- Children born in iodine deficient areas may have up to 13.5 IQ points less than those born in iodine sufficient areas.

Key recommendations

The key recommendation of the study is to sustain the momentum so that iodine coverage does not fall below current levels.

It also recommends that the States and the Centre work together to address the current gaps and look into issues that vary from one State to another, leading to adequately iodised salt not being produced.

Source: The Hindu

Registration of steel and iron imports.

GS-II | 10 September, 2019

GS-III: Registration of steel and iron imports.

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News

In a bid to clamp down on the dumping of iron and steel imports and also the over and under invoicing of these products the government has removed these items from the ;free category and has made it mandatory for importers to apply in advance for registration of their import.

Import and Export of Iron & Steel

- Although India started exporting steel way back in 1964, exports were not regulated and depended largely on domestic surpluses. However, in the years following economic liberalisation, export of steel recorded a quantum jump.
- Subsequently, the rapid growth of domestic steel demand has led to a decline in the rate of growth of steel exports from India to ensure that domestic requirements are adequately met. India is currently a net importer of total finished steel.
- Iron & steel are freely importable and freely exportable.

Steel Prices:

Price regulation of iron & steel was abolished on January 16, 1992. Since then steel prices are determined by the interplay of market forces.

Domestic steel prices are influenced by trends in raw material prices, demand – supply, conditions in the market, and international price trends among others.

As a facilitator, the Government monitors the steel market conditions and adopts fiscal and other policy measures based on its assessment. Currently, GST of 18% is applicable on steel and there is no export duty on steel items.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

A Steel Price Monitoring Committee has been constituted by the Government with the aim to monitor price rationalization, analyze price fluctuations and advise all concerned regarding any irrational price behaviour of steel commodity.

To avoid any distortion in prices in view of ad-hoc and rising imports, the Government had taken several steps including raising import duty and imposed a gamut of measures including anti-dumping and safeguard duties on a host of applicable iron and steel items.

Problems of Iron and Steel Industry:

- Poor demand, price slump, competition from cheaper imports and delays in project execution are major problems in Indian steel industry.
- Inadequate supply of power and coal, Inefficiency of public sector units and under-utilisation of capacity are other challenging issues.
- Indian banks are grappling with bad loans (NPA) and at the same time the industry which has a long gestation period, needed huge investment.
- Raw material and infrastructure bottlenecks issues are also there.
- Obsolete technology in PSUs led to inferior quality products.

Way Forward

The Indian steel industry has entered into a new development stage, post de-regulation, riding high on the resurgent economy and rising demand for steel.

Huge scope for growth is offered by India's comparatively low per capita steel consumption and the expected rise in consumption due to increased infrastructure construction and the thriving automobile and railways sectors.

The New Industrial Policy Regime provides opportunities for growth of Iron and Steel in private sector.

The Government has also announced a policy for providing preference to domestically manufactured Iron & Steel products in Government procurement.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Market Intervention Price Scheme

GS-II | 11 September, 2019

GS-II: Market Intervention Price Scheme



News

- Kashmir's famed apple is battling to get exported outside the State this year as militants are campaigning against the fruit's trade.
- The government is planning to procure almost 12 lakh metric tonnes of apple this season, under the MISP, with the help of the National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED).

About the Market Intervention Price Scheme:

- MIP is a price support mechanism implemented on the request of State Governments for procurement of perishable and horticultural commodities in the event of a fall in market prices.
- The Scheme is implemented when there is at least 10% increase in production or 10% decrease in the ruling rates over the previous normal year.
- MIP works in a similar fashion to Minimum Support Price based procurement mechanism for food grains, but is an adhoc mechanism.
- Its objective is to protect the growers of these horticultural/agricultural commodities from making distress sale in the event of bumper crop during the peak arrival period when prices fall to very low level.
- Thus it provides remunerative prices to the farmers in case of glut in production and fall in prices.

Implementation of MIS:

- The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation is implementing the scheme.
- Under MIP, funds are not allocated to the States.
- Instead, central share of losses as per the guidelines of MIP is released to the State Governments/UTs, for which MIP has been approved, based on specific proposals received from them.

Procurement:

- Under the Scheme, a pre-determined quantity at a fixed Market Intervention Price (MIP) is procured by NAFED as the Central agency and the agencies designated by the state government for a fixed period or till the prices are stabilized above the MIP whichever is earlier.
- The area of operation is restricted to the concerned state only.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The MIS has been implemented in case of commodities like apples, kinnow/malta, garlic, oranges, galgal, grapes, mushrooms, clove, black pepper, pineapple, ginger, red-chillies, coriander seed etc.

Source: THE HINDU

United Nation Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

GS-II | 11 September, 2019

GS-II: United Nation Human Rights Council (UNHRC)



News

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has expressed concern over the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, and the communications blackout and detention of political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir.

About UNHRC:

- UNHRC is an inter governmental body setup in 2006 with an aim of protecting and promoting human rights in worldwide as well as investigating alleged human rights.
- It is made up of 47 member states, which are selected by the UN General Assembly on a staggered basis each year for three-year-long terms.
- Members meet around three times a year to debate human rights issues and pass non-binding resolutions and recommendations by majority vote.
- The council also carries out the Universal Periodic Review of all UN member states, which allows civil society groups to bring accusations of human rights violations in member states to the attention of the UN.

Meeting:

- The Human Rights Council holds no fewer than three regular sessions a year for a total of at least 10 weeks.
- The meeting takes place for four weeks in March for 3 weeks in June ,and another 3 weeks of September.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The sessions are held at the UN office in Geneva, Switzerland.

Membership:

The council is made up of 47 member states, which are selected by UNGA through direct or secret ballot. The General Assembly takes into the account of contribution of the candidate states of the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as their voluntary pledges and commitment in this regard.

Seats of the Council of the State:

African States:13 seats

Asia-Pacific States-13 seats

Latin American and Caribbean States-7 seats

Western European States-7 seats

Eastern European States-6 seats

Source: Indian Express

Bombay Blood Group

GS-II | 11 September, 2019

GS-III: Bombay Blood Group



News

- Over the last two weeks, the "Bombay blood group", a rare blood type, has been at the centre of attention in Mumbai's healthcare scene.
 - Demand for the blood type has coincidentally spiked at hospitals, but supply has been scarce.
-

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Bombay blood group

- The four most common blood groups are A, B, AB and O.
- The rare, Bombay blood group was first discovered in Mumbai (then Bombay) in 1952.
- Each red blood cell has antigen over its surface, which helps determine which group it belongs to.
- The Bombay blood group, also called hh, is deficient in expressing antigen H, meaning the RBC has no antigen H.

News

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Source: India Express

Shades of Green

GS-III | 11 September, 2019

GS-III: Shades of Green



News

Prime Minister announced that India will scale up its ambition to restore degraded land at the ongoing **14th CoP** of the United Nation's Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Impact:

- The step is significant for India's global environmental commitments.
- This move will now restore 26 million hectares by 2030. That is 5 million hectares more than what is pledged at the **Paris Climate Change Meet**.
- This also acknowledges the growing crisis of desertification. According to ISRO's Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas, **nearly 30% of land in the country is degraded**.

Landscape restoration

- The plan is to reverse degradation by adopting a landscape-restoration approach.
- This needs a shift from plantation-oriented afforestation schemes to recognising the importance of ecosystem services of land and forests such as watershed management, biodiversity conservation and improving soil health.

Increasing forest cover

- Over the past two decades, the Forest Survey of India has reported a consistent increase in the country's forested area.
- But the question of how forests have not been impacted by pressure on land is not answered.
- The answer lies in a methodological problem with the FSI's audits: it uses satellite images to identify green cover as forest and does not discriminate between natural forests and plantations.

Land degradation and climate change

- An IPCC report last month has shown the links between global warming and land degradation.
- Climate change not only exacerbates land degradation processes but it becomes a dominant pressure that introduces degradation pathways in ecosystems.

CONCLUSION

India's environment establishment now needs to re-evaluate the methods to measure the country's green cover.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Source: India Express

One year after 'Navtej Johar', imagining an equality law

GS-II | 11 September, 2019

GS-II: One year after 'Navtej Johar', imagining an equality law.



News

One year since the SC judgment in Navtej Johar v. Union of India on Sec 377. We have moved from a society where transgender, intersex, lesbian, gay, bisexual and gender non-conforming persons were treated as criminals to constitutional recognition of rights to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Impact of the judgment:

- The recognition of these rights impacts not only LGBTI persons, but everyone as it protects our rights of self-expression, equality, and autonomy.
- It laid the ground for stronger equality recognition : Judgment in the Joseph Shine case decriminalising adultery (2018) and the judgment in the Sabarimala case recognising the rights of women to enter religious shrines (2018).
- It also led to the decriminalising of same-sex intercourse in other jurisdictions such as the High Court of Botswana and inspired a constitutional challenge to Section 377A in Singapore.

Challenges:

- **Decriminalization is the first step towards the recognition of equal rights.** Navtej decision has to be followed by positive steps for equality.
- Transgender persons still face a number of legal barriers and LGBTI people continue to face discrimination, exclusion, abuse, and harassment at work, school, health care settings and in public places.
- We still do not have equality and anti-discrimination law to protect persons from discrimination on different protected grounds.
- Even the only close statute, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. only addresses discrimination against persons with disabilities in the public sector and does not address the private sector.
- Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 make some discriminatory acts criminal offenses but do not provide civil remedies such as damages for acts of discrimination.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is limited to sexual harassment at work.
- The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019** addresses only transgender and intersex persons' rights. The rights of equality and non-discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation are not covered.

What's Next

- Overarching legislation is needed to guarantee equality to all persons on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex, caste, religion, age, disability, marital status, pregnancy, nationality, and other grounds.
- The law should impose obligations of equality and non-discrimination on all persons, public and private, and in the areas of education, employment, healthcare, land and housing and access to public places.
- Supreme Court comes held in its privacy judgment in K.S. Puttuswamy v. Union of India (2017) that equality and liberty cannot be separated, and equality encompasses the inclusion of dignity and basic freedoms.

Conclusion

Situations like what we seen in J&K show us that we need an equality law that not only addresses discrimination against individual but also addresses structural forms of discrimination and exclusion.

Source: THE HINDU

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

A case for differential global carbon tax.

GS-III | 12 September, 2019

GS-III: A case for differential global carbon tax.



News

Climate change is a global problem and a global problem needs a global solution. The most recent IPCC report suggests that we as human kind might have just over a decade left to limit global warming.

What is carbon tax?

A carbon tax is a fee for making users of fossil fuels pay for climate damage their fuel use imposes by releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and for motivating switches to clean energy.

India introduced a nationwide carbon tax in 2010, which is currently Rs.400/tonne.

Carbon as non-regressive:

Skewed consumption pattern: India's carbon emissions in 2014 were more than three times its level in 1990. While the emissions have increased sharply, their distribution across income groups is extremely skewed. The poor in India who contribute the least to climate change face the maximum brunt. Thus implementation of carbon tax and utilizing the proceeds for pollution control and augmenting health budget is a rational way forward.

Reducing demand: By taxing carbon revenue thus generated can be used for a systematic overhaul of the energy mix in the economy, carbon taxes address demand side of carbon based energy resources i.e. reducing it (by increasing prices of carbon-intensive products).

Health cost of pollution: By reducing carbon emission through taxing there are immense health benefits. A significant part of more than 3 % percent of India's GDP currently spent on pollution-induced diseases will inevitably come down and this cost is heavily borne by poor.

Climate finance: When it comes to mitigation of climate change the global North has to shoulder a higher burden of adjustment both because of their past and current contributions as well as their greater access to funds. Carbon tax in these nations can help to fund climate financing thus ensuring climate justice and equity.

Subsidizing renewable energy sources through cross subsidization from carbon tax can help in dealing with climate change by promoting solar energy, wind energy, cleaner biofuels etc.

Conclusion

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Thus, Carbon tax apparently gives impression of being a regressive tax; however by implementing it in conjunction with broader health and energy policy, it can help in redistribution and helping poor to ward off the negative impact of climate change.

At the same time Carbon tax will help in achievement of goals under Paris Agreement to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Source: The Hindu

Striking a blow for investigative credibility

GS-II | 12 September, 2019

GS-II: Striking a blow for investigative credibility



News

These are highly contentious times for India's criminal justice system. With sensational criminal cases, controversy erupts almost every day.

Criminal justice system

- The judiciary enjoys a certain insularity. It is not required to be overly communicative. Thus it can stay away from direct confrontation with others.
- Prosecutors and investigators face an issue of trust.
- In the defence team, a few private lawyers hired by influential accused persons enjoy an immunity.
- In all this, investigators have no mechanism to air their grievances.
- The prosecution lawyers and investigating officers are in an unequal battle against the defence.

Supreme Court judgement

- A bench of the Supreme Court recently observed that probe agencies such as the

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) needed a free hand to conduct their investigations.

- Recently certain defence lawyers requested that courts should scrutinise every piece of evidence collected by the agencies before passing any orders, including ones related to the granting of bail.
- The court believed that investigators should not be pressured to compromise on the confidentiality of evidence they have gathered during the process of data collection.

Changing the nature of criminal investigations

- In the early 1980s and 1990s, arrests were rare.
- Now, given the volume and complexity of investigative processes linked to multi-layered economic crime and pressure from the public and the executive, the pressure that the CBI should produce instant results is telling.
- The charge against the CBI is that it has been selective in its targets, pursuing a campaign of a vendetta at the behest of its political masters.
- Two issues were flagged in court recently:
 - the right of an accused to get bail
 - the need for custodial interrogation by probe agencies.
- Although the maxim that 'bail is the rule, and jail is an exception' was held since Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, the growing volume of crime and the dexterity of offenders have induced a change in judicial thinking.
- Courts at all levels now believe that granting bail cannot be a routine and mechanical process and that certain cases deserve an application of mind while ordering bail.

Custodial interrogation

- There is a controversy over the need for custodial interrogation of an accused person.
- The complexity of present-day crime and the ease with which the many details of a crime can be hidden enhance the need for the custodial examination.
- While courts are convinced of its utility they sparingly grant such custody.
- This could also lead to possible misuse in questioning under controlled conditions.
- Police custody is a serious responsibility for the investigating officer. Any pressure tactics or attempted physical violence on the person in custody is fraught with serious consequences.
- There are reasonable guarantees including accountability to the judiciary for civilised treatment of an accused in police custody.

Conclusion

Criminal law and its contours are evolving. It is easy to criticise and accuse police agencies charged with efficient solving of crime with arbitrariness. The attempt should not be to choke them. There's a need for allowing them more freedom to be professional without diluting the controls that are already in place.

Source: The Hindu

Stolen Nataraja Idol on the way back to Tamil Nadu after 37 years.

GS-I | 12 September, 2019

GS-I: Stolen Nataraja Idol on the way back to Tamil Nadu after 37 years.



Nataraja:

It's important to keep in mind that the bronze Shiva as Lord of the Dance ("Nataraja"—nata meaning dance or performance, and raja meaning king or lord), is a sacred object that has been taken out of its original context. In fact, we don't even know where this particular sculpture was originally venerated. In the intimate spaces of the Florence and Herbert Irving South Asian Galleries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Shiva Nataraja is surrounded by other metal statues of Hindu gods including the Lords Vishnu, Parvati, and Hanuman. It is easy to become absorbed in the dark quiet of these galleries with its remarkable collection of divine figures, but it is important to remember that this particular statue was intended to be movable, which explains its moderate size and sizeable circular base, ideal for lifting and hoisting onto a shoulder.

- Shiva's dance is associated with the end of the cosmic world.
- Nataraja means 'Lord of the Dance'.
- Shiva is seen balancing on his right leg. The foot of the right leg is suppressing the apasmara (the demon of forgetfulness or ignorance).
- His left hand is in Bhujangatrasita stance (depicting kicking away tirobhava or illusion from the devotee's mind).
- Four arms are outstretched.
- Main right hand is in Abhaya-hasta.
- Upper right hand holds the Damaru (his favourite musical instrument – a percussion instrument to keep rhythm).
- Main left hand is in Dolahasta and connects with the right hand's Abhaya-hasta.
- Upper left hand carries a flame.
- Entire dancing figure is surrounded by the jwala mala or the garland of flames.
- Shiva's locks fly on either side touching the jwala mala.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- Many variations of this model are found.

600-year-old idol:

According to sources the 600 year idol weighing around 100kg was looted from the temple after breaking open the doors of the sanctum sanctorum on July 5, 1982. Along with it other panchaloka idols of Sivakami, Manickavasagar and Sri-bali nayagar were also stolen.

Conclusion:

The idol was being brought by team member of Australian authorities and Art Gallery of South Australia from New Delhi and would reach Chennai. Later it would be handed over to the temple after obtaining necessary orders from the special court for idol wing cases in kumbakonam.

Source: The HINDU

Centre to bring ordinance to ban e-cigarettes in country

GS-II | 12 September, 2019

GS-II: Centre to bring ordinance to ban e-cigarettes in country



News

The union Cabinet is likely to approve an ordinance prohibiting the manufacture and sale of e-cigarettes in the country. The law would make production, manufacturing, import, export, transport, sale, distribution or advertisements of e-cigarettes a cognizable offence.

What are e-cigarettes?

An electronic cigarette (or e-cig) is a battery-powered vaporizer that mimics tobacco smoking. It works by heating up a nicotine liquid, called "juice."

Nicotine juice (or e-juice) comes in various flavors and nicotine levels. e-liquid is composed of five ingredients: vegetable glycerin (a material used in all types of food and personal care products, like toothpaste) and propylene glycol (a solvent most commonly used in fog machines.) propylene glycol is the ingredient that produces thicker clouds of vapor.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Proponents of e-cigs argue that the practice is healthier than traditional cigarettes because users are only inhaling water vapour and nicotine.

Why it's hard to regulate them?

As e-cigarettes contain nicotine and not tobacco, they do not fall within the ambit of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA), which mandates stringent health warnings on the packaging and advertisements of tobacco products.

Need for regulation: The current unregulated sale of e-cigarettes is dangerous for a country like India where the number of smokers is on the decline (WHO Global Report, 2015) as it increases the possibility of e-cigarettes becoming a gateway for smoking by inducing nicotine addiction and perpetuating smoking by making it more attractive, thereby encouraging persons to become users of tobacco as well as e-cigarettes.

WHO report on e- cigarettes and effects:

- As per the report, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) (also known as e-cigarettes) emits nicotine, the addictive component of tobacco products. In addition to dependence, nicotine can have adverse effects on the development of the foetus during pregnancy and may contribute to cardiovascular disease.
- The WHO report further says that although nicotine itself is not a carcinogen, it may function as a "tumour promoter" and seems to be involved in the biology of malignant disease, as well as of neurodegeneration.
- Foetal and adolescent nicotine exposure may have long-term consequences for brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders.
- The evidence is sufficient to warn children and adolescents, pregnant women, and women of reproductive age against ENDS use and nicotine.

Source: The Hindu

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

K2 18B

GS-III | 13 September, 2019

GS-III: K2 18B

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News

K2-18b is now the only planet orbiting a star outside the Solar System known to have both water and temperatures that could be potentially habitable.

K2 18b:

- About 110 light years from Earth, an exoplanet eight times the mass of Earth orbits a star. Called K2-18b, it was discovered in 2015 by NASA's Kepler spacecraft.
- The researchers used 2016-17 data from the Hubble Space Telescope and developed algorithms to analyse the starlight filtered through K2-18b's atmosphere.
- The results revealed the molecular signature of water vapour, also indicating the presence of hydrogen and helium in the planet's atmosphere.
- It resides in a habitable zone the region around a star in which liquid water could potentially pool on the surface of a rocky planet.
- Scientists have found signatures of water vapour in the atmosphere of K2-18b. The discovery of water vapour is not the final word on the possibility of life.
-
- That makes it the only planet orbiting a star outside the Solar System that is known to have both water and temperatures that could support life.

Not 'Earth 2.0'

- K2-18b is not 'Earth 2.0' as it is significantly heavier and has a different atmospheric composition.
- For one thing, K2-18b's size and surface gravity are much larger than Earth's. Its radiation environment may be hostile.

Source: THE HINDU

How world is losing fertile land

GS-III | 13 September, 2019

GS-III: How world is losing fertile land

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

News

For the last two weeks, India has been hosting the meeting of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. A major global agreement on issues related to land, the convention (UNCCD) seeks to address the phenomenon of desertification, the process through which fertile and productive land become degraded and unfit for useful activities like agriculture.

Why is desertification a concern?

- A variety of factors both natural and human-induced are known to be affecting the productivity of land and making them desert like.
- Increasing populations and the resultant demand for food and water feed for cattles and a wide variety of ecosystem services.
- Natural processes such as rising global temperature increase the frequency and intensity of droughts and changing weather patterns have put further pressure on the land.
- UN Environment Programme is said about 25% of world's land area has been degraded.
- IPCC came out with special report on land the rate of soil erosion in many areas of the world was up to 100 times faster than the rate of soil formation.

What is the Convention to combat Desertification?

- It is the first and only internationally legally binding framework set up to address the problem of desertification.
- **1992:** Rio conference of 1992 resulted in 5 document's. One of them was Agenda 21. UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) stems from a direct recommendation of agenda 21.
- **1994:** UNCCD was finally adopted in Paris, France on June 17, 1994. That's why June 17 has been observed as the 'World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD).
- **1996:** It was ratified in December 1996.

India and UNCCD:

- India became a signatory to UNCCD on October 14, 1994 and ratified it on December 17, 1996.
- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal Ministry for the Convention.

National action programmes:

- Member countries should constitute a National Action Programmes.
- Under this member countries will identify the factors contributing to desertification and the practical measures necessary to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

What changes can be expected on the basis of CCD meeting?

A meeting of UNCCD is not expected to come up with any heading-grabbing decision.

The discussions at the CCD have so far remained technical, mainly focusing on the kinds of activities that can be undertaken degraded lands 2030.

Approximately 80 per cent of the world's extremely poor live in rural areas and land degradation has become an important factor in rural poverty. Nearly three billion 38 per cent of the global population lived in dry lands, according to the report.

Source: Indian Express

NATGRID wants to link social media accounts to central database.

GS-III | 13 September, 2019

GS-III: NATGRID wants to link social media accounts to central database.



News

The ambitious National Intelligence Grid project wants to link social media accounts to the huge database of records related to immigration entry and exit banking and telephone details among others.

What is NATGRID?

NATGRID was among the ambitious slew of intelligence reforms undertaken in the wake of the Mumbai attacks of November 2008. NATGRID is a centralised agency which stores sensitive personal information on citizens from almost two dozen agencies to be made available for counter-terror investigations. It will be an attached office of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

It's role:

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- NATGRID will become a secure centralised database to stream sensitive information from 21 sets of data sources such as banks, credit cards, visa, immigration and train and air travel details, as well as from various intelligence agencies.
- The database would be accessible to authorised persons from 11 agencies on a case-to-case basis, and only for professional investigations into suspected cases of terrorism.

Why do we need NATGRID?

The danger from not having a sophisticated tool like the NATGRID is that it forces the police to rely on harsh and coercive means to extract information in a crude and degrading fashion. After every terrorist incident, it goes about rounding up suspects many of who are innocent. If, instead, a pattern search and recognition system were in place, these violations of human rights would be much fewer.

Social Media can be defined as any web or mobile based platform that enables an individual or agency to communicate interactively and enables exchange of user generated content and it is explained by a number of tools, which includes blogs, Wikis, discussion forums, micro-blogs, twitter and social networking sites.

NATGRID is intending to set up an ENTITY EXTRACTION, VISUALIZATION & ANALYTICS system that would collect and analyse information available from various data sources.

Source: THE HINDU

SC continues its stay on eviction of forest dwellers

GS-III | 13 September, 2019

GS-III: SC continues its stay on eviction of forest dwellers



News

The Supreme court on Thursday continued its stay on the eviction of lakhs of Scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers whose claims for forest land rights have been rejected under the Forest Rights Act of 2006.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

What does the Forest Rights Act provide for?

- The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act or FRA was passed by the Parliament in 2006 and came into effect in 2008.
- It was intended to correct the "historical injustice" done to forest dwellers from the colonial times.
- The traditional rights of such communities were derecognised by the British Raj in the 1850s.
- The Act recognises and vests the forest rights and occupation in forest land in the forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes.
- It also covers other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded.

The Act recognises -

- Individual rights to forest land and livelihood
- Community rights to forest 'land' exercised by their gram sabha
- Community forest 'resource' rights, giving gram sabhas the power to protect and manage their forest
- Conservation plans and developmental projects in these areas would have to be approved by gram sabhas.

Process of recognition of rights:

- The Act provides that the gram sabha, or village assembly, will initially pass a resolution recommending whose rights to which resources should be recognised.
- This resolution is then screened and approved at the level of the sub-division (or taluka) and subsequently at the district level.
- The screening committees consist of three government officials (Forest, Revenue and Tribal Welfare departments) and three elected members of the local body at that level. These committees also hear appeals.

Source: THE HINDU

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

A milestone in greater transparency, accountability.

GS-II | 14 September, 2019

GS-II: A milestone in greater transparency, accountability



News

The Jan Soochna Portal launched by the government of Rajasthan is a remarkable achievement in furtherance of RTI, especially **Section 4 of the RTI Act** that deals with proactive disclosure of information.

Importance of Accountability and Transparency:

- Transparency must be accompanied by accountability.
- JSP places the power of making the State government accountable to everyone who accesses the information made available on the portal.
- A National Judicial Data Grid was launched keeping transparency in the justice delivery system in mind. This gave information about all pending cases across the country.
- The justice delivery system was asked to account for the enormous delay in such a large number of cases.
- Chief Justices and Registrars in many courts appreciated the fact that they needed to answer questions relating to such enormous delays.
- Many courts have begun to concentrate on the disposal of old cases with considerable success.
- This is a good example of transparency accompanied by accountability brought about by civil society.

Jan Soochna Portal:

- Details of every activity of the government such as availability of **food grains and ration shops and their distribution, implementation of various schemes and their beneficiaries and a variety of other information are available on a real-time basis.**
- It is a virtual Janta Information System.
- The portal has been arrived at through a regular and rigorous consultative process between government officials, IT professionals and civil society.
- Since the information is available on the Internet, every citizen, right down to the **municipal ward and panchayat**, has access to the information.
- For example, if identified persons in a particular area had not availed themselves of any rations, they can be easily contacted.
- The portal gives the details of every farmer in every bank branch whose loans have been waived, along with the amounts.
- Another significant piece of information is about mining leases.
- This portal gives the list of mines in every district, provides geographical coordinates, and

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

the area where mining has been permitted, including the land deed identifiers.

- It also provides details about pollution and environment clearances.
- It provides details of production and royalties and taxes paid.

Challenges Remain:

Maintenance issues to ensure that there is no let-up in the availability of information.

System in place:

- Various line departments of the government of Rajasthan have been given a set of obligations that they are expected to fulfill. For example, they are expected to ensure digitisation of records.
- The Department of Information Technology will serve as the nodal department for the development, operationalisation, and maintenance of the JSP.
- Its obligations include adherence to the norms and standards laid down by a digital dialogue advisory group.
- The advisory group will be the monitoring agency.
- Grievance redressal officers will be appointed so that citizens can make the State government truly accountable.
- The government of Rajasthan has also taken steps to train citizens so that they are aware of the facilities available.
- It has been decided to host the JSP in decentralised locations, right down to the municipal ward and panchayat levels.

CONCLUSION

It would be wonderful if all other State governments follow the Rajasthan government's initiative, which aims to make people, including the marginalised sections, a part of the governance process.

Source: THE HINDU

SC asks government if it plans to link social media, Aadhaar

GS-II | 14 September, 2019

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

GS-II: SC asks government if it plans to link social media, Aadhaar.



News

The SC on Friday decided to hear a plea by Facebook to call forth petitions pending in various HC concerning the linking of social media accounts users with their Aadhaar numbers.

Aadhaar social media linking:

The Supreme Court on August 20, 2019 stressed on the need to find a balance between the right to online privacy and the right of the state to trace originators of messages that are fake, defamatory or aim to spread panic. The Supreme Court bench comprising Justices Deepak Gupta and Aniruddha Ghose expressed concern over the dangers of the dark web. The bench's observations came in response to the submissions made by Attorney General KK Venugopal appearing on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Government about the need to link user profiles on social media platforms with the Aadhaar database.

However, social media platforms, particularly Facebook have been resisting Aadhaar linking, stating that sharing of 12-digit Aadhaar number would violate the privacy policy of users. The facebook-owned messaging platform, WhatsApp will be one of the worst-hit if the Aadhaar-social media linkage is approved by the court, as the messaging platform is known to be a space for private conversations online.

How did Aadhaar-social media linking case originate?

The original PILs seeking Aadhaar-social media interlinking were filed by private citizens Antony Clement Rubin and Janani Krishnamurthy for authentication of identity. Both the petitioners sought Aadhaar linking to social media profiles due to rising instances of cyberbullying, spreading of defamatory and humiliating messages and other intolerable activities on social media. The cases were registered in the Madras High Court.

Why is Facebook resisting Aadhaar-social media linking?

Facebook has been resisting the move of linking user profiles with Aadhaar, as the social media platform feels that it would violate the privacy policy of users.

Why is Facebook seeking transfer of cases demanding Aadhaar-social media linking to the Supreme Court?

Facebook sought transfer of four petitions, two in Madras High Court and one each in the Bombay and the Madhya Pradesh High Courts on Aadhaar-social media linking to the Supreme Court stating that all the pending cases raise the same issue and that it was difficult for it to defend itself before high courts across the country.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

What happens if certain courts rule in favour of Aadhaar-social media linking and others don't?

The conflicting decisions by the four courts could lead to a situation where the social media platforms, which operate uniformly across India, will be ordered to link Aadhaar with user profiles in certain Indian states and not others.

What happens if user profiles on social media platforms are linked with their Aadhaar number?

The linking of user profiles on social media with Aadhaar would make every message and post by the user traceable. Though the move will serve as a deterrent to social media instigators and perpetrators of defamatory and fake posts, it would also violate the privacy of the users, keeping a record of each message along with the registered mobile number or email account. This would mean the end of private communications.

Conclusion:

The Madras High Court reiterated its stand that Aadhaar cannot be used to authenticate social media accounts. It has dismissed the plea made by the PIL petitioners, but given that the Supreme Court is hearing Facebook's transfer petition, the Madras HC has adjourned the hearing on WhatsApp traceability case until September 19. The Supreme Court said that there is a need to find a balance between the right to online privacy and the right of the state to trace the origins of hateful messages and fake news. The government needs to move away from relying on Aadhaar and linking as a one-stop solution for issues ranging from terrorism (SIM linking), money laundering (bank account linking), electoral fraud (voter ID linking) and now cybercrime (social media account linking).

Source: THE HINDU

Why sedition law has lost meaning

GS-II | 14 September, 2019

GS-II: Why sedition law has lost meaning?



News

Justice Deepak Gupta, a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, noted how the provision in the IPC

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provides for punishment for seditious speech is misused often than not. He wondered whether the time is ripe to have a relook at the law.

Freedom of speech

- **Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression.**
- It is subject only to **Article 19(2) which saves any law that imposes "reasonable restrictions" on the limited grounds of interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation etc.**

Sedition Law:

- Section 124A of the IPC defines sedition. It makes every speech that "brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the Government" a criminal offence.
- Such an offence is punishable with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.
- It is classified as "cognisable" — the investigation process can be triggered just by filing an FIR. A judicial authority need not have to take cognisance.
- It is also "non-bailable" — the accused cannot get bail as a matter of right, but is subject to the discretion of the sessions judge.
- An explanation to the provision clarifies that mere "disapprobation of the administrative or other action of the Government without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an offence under this section.
- A five-judge constitution bench decision of SC in *Kedarnath v. State of Bihar* (1962) read down Section 124A to mean that only those expressions that either intend to or have the tendency of causing violence are punishable under Section 124A.

Scope of Fundamental Rights expanded

The jurisprudence of fundamental rights was expanded through several decisions in *R C Cooper v. Union of India* (1969), *Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain* (1975), *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978), *I.R. Coelho v. State of Tamil Nadu* (2007) and, in *Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017).

Each of these decisions establishes that fundamental rights in the Constitution are not to be read as isolated silos but are to be read as if the content of each fundamental right animates the other.

Kedarnath judgement – limitations and expanding jurisprudence

- In *Kedarnath* case, the court merely tested the intent of the provision under the exceptions to the freedom of speech under Article 19(2) of the Constitution. It did not take into consideration the effect of the right to equality (Article 14) or due process (Article 21).
- Reading of Articles 14, 19 and 21 has evolved jurisprudence of testing legislation curtailing fundamental rights on substantive and procedural reasonableness, necessity

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

and proportionality.

- The requirement of "necessity" comes from India ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1976.
- Article 19 of the ICCPR requires speech-limiting state action to be backed by law and to be necessary on the grounds of respect for the rights and reputations of others, national security etc.

Way ahead

- The new thought focuses on understanding "necessity" of state action limiting fundamental freedoms.
- The burden is on the state to establish that such a limiting measure is "necessary in a democratic society"
- "Proportionality" should inform the understanding of "reasonableness" of restrictions in **Article 19**.

Source: Indian Express

Government has failed to bring in Uniform Civil code ,says SC

GS-II | 14 September, 2019

GS-II: Government has failed to bring in Uniform Civil code ,says SC.



News

The Supreme Court said the nation has still not endeavoured to secure for its citizen a uniform Civil Code.

What is uniform civil code?

Uniform civil Code is a proposal to have a generic set of governing laws for every citizen without taking into consideration the religion.

What the constitution says?

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Article 44 of the Constitution says that there should be a Uniform Civil Code. According to this article, "The State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India". Since the Directive Principles are only guidelines, it is not mandatory to use them.

India needs a Uniform Civil Code for the following reasons:

A secular republic needs a common law for all citizens rather than differentiated rules based on religious practices.

Another reason why a uniform civil code is needed is gender justice. The rights of women are usually limited under religious law, be it Hindu or Muslim. The practice of triple talaq is a classic example.

Many practices governed by religious tradition are at odds with the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Indian Constitution.

Courts have also often said in their judgements that the government should move towards a uniform civil code including the judgement in the Shah Bano case.

Goa Civil Code

Goa is the only Indian state to have a UCC in the form of common family law. The Portuguese Civil Code that remains in force even today was introduced in the 19th century in Goa and wasn't replaced after its liberation.

Features-

- The Uniform Civil Code in Goa is a progressive law that allows equal division of income and property between husband and wife and also between children (regardless of gender).
- Every birth, marriage and death have to be compulsorily registered. For divorce, there are several provisions.
- Muslims who have their marriages registered in Goa cannot practice polygamy or divorce through triple talaq.
- During the course of a marriage, all the property and wealth owned or acquired by each spouse is commonly held by the couple.
- Each spouse in case of divorce is entitled to half of the property and in case of death, the ownership of the property is halved for the surviving member.
- The parents cannot disinherit their children entirely. At least half of their property has to be passed on to the children. This inherited property must be shared equally among the children.

Arguments in favour of the Uniform Civil Code:

- It Will Integrate India- India is a country with many religions, customs and practices. A

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

uniform civil code will help in integrating India more than it has ever been since independence. It will help in bringing every Indian, despite his caste, religion or tribe, under one national civil code of conduct.

- Will Help in Reducing Vote Bank Politics- A UCC will also help in reducing vote bank politics that most political parties indulge in during every election.
- Personal Laws Are a Loophole- By allowing personal laws we have constituted an alternate judicial system that still operates on thousands of years old values. A uniform civil code would change that.
- Sign of a modern progressive nation- It is a sign that the nation has moved away from caste and religious politics. While our economic growth has been significant, our social growth has lagged behind. A UCC will help society move forward and take India towards its goal of becoming a truly developed nation.
- It will Give More Rights to Women- Religious personal laws are misogynistic in nature and by allowing old religious rules to continue to govern the family life we are condemning all Indian women to subjugation and mistreatment. A uniform civil code will also help in improving the condition of women in India.
- All Indians Should be Treated the Same- All the laws related to marriage, inheritance, family, land etc. should be equal for all Indians. UCC is the only way to ensure that all Indians are treated the same.
- It Promotes Real Secularism- A uniform civil code doesn't mean that it will limit the freedom of people to follow their religion, it just means that every person will be treated the same and all citizens of India have to follow the same laws whether they are Hindus or Muslims or Christians or Sikhs.

Source: THE HINDU

Government plea against SC\ST Act verdict goes to 3- judge Bench

GS-II | 14 September, 2019

GS-II: Government plea against SC\ST Act verdict goes to 3- judge Bench.



News

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

The Supreme court on Friday regered a review petition filed by the government against March 20, 2018 judgement of the court to 3-judge bench.

What's the issue?

- In March 2018, Supreme Court diluted the stringent provisions of SC/ST Act (Subhash Kashinath Mahajan v. State of Maharashtra).
- The verdict saw a huge backlash across the country. The government filed a review petition in the Supreme Court and subsequently amended the 1989 Act back to its original form.

Guidelines of the petitions:

- Supreme court gave the judgement on the pretext that Innocents cannot be terrorised by the provisions of the SC/ST Act and their fundamental rights need to be protected.
- The court said that public servants could be arrested only with the written permission of their appointing authority, while in the case of private employees, the Senior Superintendent of Police concerned should allow it.
- A preliminary inquiry should be conducted before the FIR was registered to check if the case fell within the ambit of the Act, and whether it was frivolous or motivated, the court ruled.

SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act

- For centuries, caste was the most prominent part of religious and social life in India. A person s caste was initially based upon his occupation, but it soon became hereditary and unalterable. Caste system gave various privileges to the upper castes while at the same time allowing repression of the lower caste. The caste system has often been criticized for being unjust and regressive.
- After India attained independence, the Indian constitution attempted to redress the historical injustices and tried to provide an equal platform to the marginalized and disadvantaged by banning caste-based discrimination. Article 17, the fundamental right provided by the constitution abolishes the practice of untouchability. Practising untouchability in any form is a felony, and anyone practising it is punishable by law. The Indian constitution guarantees equality to all, but despite that, there are various forms of inequalities present among the citizens of India due to the ancient caste system.

The government decided to retain original provisions because of the following reasons:

- There had been no decrease in the atrocities committed on SC/ST people despite the laws meant to protect their civil rights.
- The sad state of affairs was despite the existence of 195 special courts across 14 States to exclusively try Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) cases.

Way Forward:

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

The amendments to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 2018 is a move in the right direction. However, no matter how strong a piece of legislation is, all will depend on how well it is implemented. If the implementing agency does not do its bit then the legislative effort would not be successful in the long run. The administrative set up, which includes police machinery, investigating agencies and judiciary, has to work together to effectively implement such a law.

Source: THE HINDU

ASPIRE IAS

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Vulture culture: How the bird was saved from extinction

GS-III | 16 September, 2019

GS-III: Vulture culture: How the bird was saved from extinction.



News

In the late 1990s when the population of the vultures in the country had begun to decline sharply, one White backed Vulture was rescued from Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan where vultures were dying at an alarming rate.

Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction Project for Asian Vultures:

The captive-bred birds will be released into the wild by 2016 under the project would. The project has been planned following the devastation in the populations due to vetting of drugs named Diclofenac on cattle.

The three species of vultures that are critically endangered that has declined by more than 97 percent since 1990s are:

- Oriental white-backed (*Gyps bengalensis*)
- Long-billed (*Gyps indicus*)
- Slender-billed vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*)

In 2006, Diclofenac was banned from being used to vet and farmers. This decision was taken following its effect on the vultures. In 2004 it was established after the study on the sick birds in the wild that the decrease of the population of vultures is caused due to the anti-inflammatory drug being used to reduce swelling in injured or diseased animals. The study suggested that the vultures who were feeding on the carcasses of the animals vetted with Diclofenac were dying due to acute kidney failure or lost their ability to reproduce.

Indian Vulture Crisis

- India is most favourable region for Vultures: Hindus do not eat cows, which they consider sacred, and when a cow dies, it is left to be fed on by vultures. India has a high species diversity and hence vultures get lot of food.
- Nine species of vulture can be found living in India. But today, most are in danger of extinction due to a veterinary drug called diclofenac (vultures do not have a particular enzyme to break down diclofenac).

Diclofenac:

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- Diclofenac is a common anti-inflammatory drug administered to livestock and is used to treat the symptoms of inflammation, fevers and/or pain associated with disease or wounds.
- Diclofenac leads to renal failure in vultures damaging their excretory system [direct inhibition of uric acid secretion in vultures].
- Gyps species were the most affected by diclofenac.
- The population of the White-rumped vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) fell 99.7% between 1993 and 2002.
- The populations of the Indian vulture (*Gyps indicus*) and the slender-billed vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*) fell 97.4%.

Consequences of Depopulation of Vultures

- Vultures previously played an important role in public sanitation in India and their disappearance has resulted in an explosion of rats and wild dogs and the spread of diseases resulting in an estimated costs of up to ₹1700 billion (US\$25 billion) (as of 2015).
- The carcasses formerly eaten by vultures rot in village fields leading to contaminated drinking water.
- These newly abundant scavengers are not as efficient as vultures. A vulture's metabolism is a true "dead-end" for pathogens, but dogs and rats become carriers of the pathogens.
- The mammals also carry diseases from rotting carcasses such as rabies, anthrax, plague etc. and are indirectly responsible for thousands of human deaths.

Source: THE HINDU

Why India's growth figures are off the mark.

GS-III | 16 September, 2019

GS-III: Why India's growth figures are off the mark.



News

During the global financial crisis it was said that the experts were behind the curve. The IMF and financial sector experts continued to predict till October 2008 that the global economy would grow rather than shrink.

Explaining the markdown:

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- The economic growth rate (quarterly) has been sliding for the last 4 quarters from 8% to 7% to 6.6% to 5.8% and now to 5%.
- The Economic Survey in July talked of a growth rate of 7% for the current year.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its August policy statement, talked of a slowdown to 6.9%, from the 7% predicted in June and 7.2% predicted before that.
- The Asian Development Bank cut its growth forecast from 7.2% to 7% in April 2019.
- Similar is the case with the IMF which cut its forecast for the year from 7.3% to 7%.
- They are not independent data gathering agencies and depend on official data.
- The investment rate has hovered at around 30% for the last several years because the capacity utilisation in the economy has been around 75%.
- Unless this rises, fresh investment will mean even lower capacity utilisation and lower profitability since capital will be underutilised.
- Data from the Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd. shows that investment proposals are at a 14 year low.
- In the last year, the RBI has cut interest rates four times and by a total of more than 1% but the investment has not budged.

The source:

- In simple terms, the reason is that the data for this sector is collected once in 4 years (called reference years) since the sector has tens of millions of units for which data cannot be collected monthly, quarterly or even annually.
- In between the reference years, the data is only projected on various assumptions.
- Even for the annual estimates, basically data for the organised sector are used like in case of mining, banking, hotels and restaurants, and transport.
- For construction, steel, glass, etc. are used which are also derived from the organised sector production.
- Thus, the implicit assumption is that the organised sector can be a proxy for the unorganised sector.
- The decline in the workforce, the rise in the demand for work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, etc. Suggest that the unorganised sector has declined by at least 10%. If this is taken into account, the current rate of growth is much less than 5%.

Source: THE HINDU

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

The litmus test for free speech.

GS-II | 16 September, 2019

GS-II: The litmus test for free speech.



News

Freedom of speech and individual liberty are enshrined in Article 19(1)(a) and Art 21 of the Constitution. However these rights like all others are not absolute but subject to reasonable restrictions.

Freedom of speech:

Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression.

It is subject only to Article 19(2) which saves any law that imposes "reasonable restrictions" on the limited grounds of interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation etc.

Scope of Fundamental Rights expanded.

- The jurisprudence of fundamental rights was expanded through several decisions in R C Cooper v. Union of India (1969), Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain (1975), Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978), I.R. Coelho v. State of Tamil Nadu (2007) and, in Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017).
- Each of these decisions establishes that fundamental rights in the Constitution are not to be read as isolated silos but are to be read as if the content of each fundamental right animates the other.
- They tell us that the entire chapter on fundamental rights has also to be read "synoptically".

Article 21: Says that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. This article protects the right of life and personal liberty not only from executive action but also from the legislative action.

This right extends to citizens as well as non-citizens.

This article gives way an array of several human rights which are called Implied Fundamental Rights. They are:

Right to Speedy Trial

Right to Travel Abroad Right to Dignity

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Right to Privacy

Right to Clean Environment

Right to Livelihood

Right to marriage

Right against torture

Right against Bondage

Right to legal aid Right to Food.

Right to life does not include Right to Die or Right to get killed i.e. mercy killing.

Implications for free speech:

Under Section 69, the government can intercept personal information under any of the following conditions: when it is necessary in the interest of Indian sovereignty or integrity; security of the state; friendly relations with foreign states; public order; and for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognisable offence related to these. While the first four feature in Article 19(2) of the Constitution, the last, namely preventing incitement to commission of cognisable offences, is not an enumerated restriction. A restriction in the form of authorised surveillance would not be justified unless it is in order to maintain public order, a reasonable restriction under Article 19(2).

Source: THE HINDU

Let the farmer choose.

GS-I | 16 September, 2019

GS-II: Let the farmer choose.



News

Zero Budget Natural Farming may have reached endorsement from the NITI Aayog, the finance minister's budget speech and Prime Minister of India himself.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Zero Budget Natural Farming in India:

Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) is a set of farming methods, and also a grassroots peasant movement, which has spread to various states in India.

It has attained wide success in southern India, especially the southern Indian state of Karnataka where it first evolved. The movement in Karnataka state was born out of collaboration between Mr Subhash Palekar, who put together the ZBNF practices, and the state farmers association Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS).

Four wheels of ZBNF to be implemented in practically:

- The "four wheels" of ZBNF are 'Jiwamrita', 'Bijamrita', 'Mulching' and 'Waaphasa', says Palekar, a Padma Shri awardee.
- Jiwamrita is a fermented mixture of cow dung and urine (of desi breeds), jaggery, pulses flour, water and soil from the farm bund. This isn't a fertiliser, but just a source of some 500 crore micro-organisms that can convert all the necessary "non-available" nutrients into "available" form.
- Bijamrita is a mix of desi cow dung and urine, water, bund soil and lime that is used as a seed treatment solution prior to sowing.
- Mulching, or covering the plants with a layer of dried straw or fallen leaves, is meant to conserve soil moisture and keep the temperature around the roots at 25-32 degrees Celsius, which allows the microorganisms to do their job.
- Waaphasa, or providing water to maintain the required moisture-air balance, also achieves the same objective.
- Palekar also advocates the use of special 'Agniastra', 'Bramhastra' and 'Neemastra' concoctions again based on desi cow urine and dung, plus pulp from leaves of neem, white datura, papaya, guava and pomegranates for controlling pest and disease attacks.

Issues that need to be addressed in ZBNF:

- However, not all farmers are convinced about ZBNF.
- The important concern is "what about the cost of labour for collection of dung and urine, apart from the other inputs used in preparation of Jiwamrita, Neemastra or Bramhastra".
- Keeping cows is also a cost that has to be accounted for. How many farmers can afford to keep desi cows that yield very little milk.
- It is hard to explain it to fellow farmers and had to "face taunts" as there was no guidance and market for organic produce in rural areas.
- It points out that if ZBNF is practiced in isolation, the crop grown would be vulnerable to attacks by insects and pests which may move there from fields where chemical pesticides are being sprayed.
- It is where the government should step in and reduce dependence on middle men.

Conclusion:

More encouraging is that the programme can have a positive effect on many of the **sustainable**

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

development goals through improvements in soil, biodiversity, livelihoods, water, reduction in chemicals, climate resilience, health, women's empowerment and nutrition. Many state governments, including Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka have **openly supported ZBNF** after studying its efficacy. Agricultural scientists in India have to **rework their entire strategy** so that farming is in consonance with nature. The dominant paradigm of chemical-based agriculture has failed and **regenerative agriculture** is the emerging new science.

Source: Indian Express

RBI report on Loan Waivers impact

GS-III | 16 September, 2019

GS-III: RBI report on Loan Waivers impact



News

Recently the RBI shared the report of an Internal Working Group (IWG), which was set up in February to look at, among other things, the impact of farm loan waivers on state finances. Since 2014-15, many state governments have announced farm loan waivers.

Highlights of the report

- The report has shown how farm loan waivers dented state finances and urged governments both central and state to avoid resorting to farm loan waivers.
- This was done for a variety of reasons including relieving distressed farmers struggling with lower incomes in the wake of repeated droughts and demonetization.
- Also crucial in this regard was the timing of elections and several observers of the economy including the RBI warned against the use of farm loan waivers.

Impact of Loan Waivers:

- Chart 1 from the RBI report details the impact on state finances in successive years.
- Typically, once announced, farm loans waivers are staggered over three to five years.
- Between 2014-15 and 2018-19, the total farm loan waiver announced by different state

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

governments was Rs 2.36 trillion. Of this, Rs 1.5 trillion has already been waived.

- For perspective, the last big farm loan waiver was announced by the UPA government in 2008-09 and it was Rs 0.72 trillion. Of this, actual waivers were only Rs 0.53 trillion staggered between 2008-09 and 2011-12.
- In other words, in the past five years, just a handful of states have already waived three-times the amount waived by the central government in 2008-09.

Impact on economic growth

- In essence, a farm loan waiver by the government implies that the government settles the private debt that a farmer owes to a bank.
- But doing so eats into the government's resources, which, in turn, leads to one of following two things: either the concerned government's fiscal deficit goes up or it has to cut down its expenditure.
- A higher fiscal deficit, even if it is at the state level, implies that the amount of money available for lending to private businesses both big and small will be lower.
- It also means the cost at which this money would be lent (or the interest rate) would be higher. If fresh credit is costly, there will be fewer new companies, and less job creation.
- If the state government doesn't want to borrow the money from the market and wants to stick to its fiscal deficit target, it will be forced to accommodate by cutting expenditure.

Overall impact

As such, farm loan waivers are not considered prudent because they hurt overall economic growth apart from ruining the credit culture in the economy since they incentivise defaulters and penalise those who pay back their loans.

Recommendations

- The IWG recommends that Govt and state governments should undertake a holistic review of the agricultural policies and their implementation.
- Both should evaluate the effectiveness of current subsidy policies with regard to agri inputs and credit in a manner which will improve the overall viability of agriculture in a sustainable manner.
- It stated that loan waivers should be avoided.

Source: Indian Express

ASPIRE IAS

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

The reality check

GS-II | 17 September, 2019

GS-II: The reality check

Context

The satisfaction about the abrogation of Art 370 in the rest of India stems from years of frustration at the failure of our efforts to establish durable peace in Kashmir and the perception that its special status was a mistake.

What the future holds

Three principal arguments have figured in our national discourse:

- It has altered the terms of our engagement with Pakistan
- Better central control over a sensitive region
- Ushering in an era of peace and development in J&K, whose progress was hampered by its special status

Lessons from the past

Pakistan's questioning of J&K's accession to India will not stop as the issue didn't start with Art 370.

We took the issue of Pakistan aggression in J&K to the UN, but the power politics of the day turned it into one of the futures of the territory.

In the Simla Agreement, we agreed to hold bilateral negotiations for "a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir". We have not renounced this agreement.

Since the late Eighties, when widespread terror and violence broke out in Kashmir, we have talked to Pakistan on this issue for various reasons:

- International pressure
- To manage the relationship and reduce violence
- The expectation that Pakistan could be moved in a positive direction through dialogue
- The role of international pressure has diminished considerably. J&K's special status figured nowhere in these considerations.

PoK

On the return of PoK, we reiterated in every round of dialogue with Pakistan the finality of J&K's accession.

The remaining issue for discussion is the vacation of its parts under Pakistan's illegal occupation.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

It is thought that our government's move was aimed at forcing Pakistan's hand to settle for the existing territorial status quo.

But it is negated by the chorus for the recovery of PoK being our next step.

Its recovery militarily will pit us against China, besides Pakistan, because of its deep interest in the so-called Gilgit-Baltistan, with its entry to the CPEC.

Security

The central government will have direct control over law and order in the Union Territory of J&K.

J&K's statehood and special status were never serious impediments to operations by security forces against internal turmoil or their deployment for the defence of our external boundaries.

The instrumentality of the Governor's/President's rule was available, when necessary.

Problems with the move on 370:

A key asset in a sensitive region is the loyalty of the local populace. The scrapping of the special status will not make much difference to the life of people in the Valley.

The abrupt move, break-up, and downgrading of the state will feed into the already prevailing sense of alienation and religious radicalisation, which Pakistan has been exploiting.

Peace as a prerequisite for the settlement of citizens from the rest of India in J&K and investment by them, faces serious challenges in the Valley and any turmoil there will not leave the Jammu region untouched.

Influencing public opinion requires a massive effort to engage with the people, which has been missing in the last few years.

Mainstream parties are marginalised and actively discredited by the government.

Pakistan's security establishment finds Kashmir as a means to for its institutional interest of keeping a stranglehold on the country's polity and has using terrorism to keep the Valley on the boil. These considerations had nothing to do with J&K's special status and will not disappear with its withdrawal.

Pakistan has opportunistically sought to exploit the Indian move to bring international focus on Kashmir.

Way ahead

Addressing it requires a different set of measures.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Devote our energies to building not only immediate but durable peace in the Valley.

This requires engagement with the people.

Source: Indian Express

Cleaning Air

GS-III | 17 September, 2019

GS-III: Clearing the air



News

The odd-even scheme will make a comeback in Delhi four years after it was first implemented.

Fighting pollution

- Delhi Chief Minister announced that the road rationing scheme will be a part of a seven-point programme to combat pollution.
- The scheme will be implemented when Delhi's air is at its worst
- post-festival pollution combines with
- smog from stubble burning in Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh
- particulate matter from tailpipes of vehicles
- In the last three years, the government resorted to knee-jerk reactions which did very little to improve the city's air quality.

Odd-Even scheme

- The road rationing scheme allows vehicles to ply on alternate days, depending on odd and even number plates.
- It was introduced in 2016 as a desperate measure after the Delhi High Court asked the state government to submit a time-bound plan.
- A fight between the Delhi government and NGT came in the way of its implementation in 2017.
- The NGT said that any relaxation would come in the way of improving the city's air quality.
- But the government wanted exemptions for two-wheelers.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The government argued that Delhi's public transport wasn't equipped to handle the fallout of extending road-rationing to two-wheelers.

Way ahead

The government has nearly two months to iron out glitches and sort out differences that could come in the way of smooth implementation of the plan.

It needs to ensure that the city's public transport system is able to meet the needs of commuters on days when their vehicles will be off the roads.

The odd-even scheme is not a magic bullet to clean up Delhi's bad air. But the scheme is a part of a bouquet of pollution-control measures.

Source: Indian Express

Nirvik Scheme

GS-II | 17 September, 2019

GS-III: Nirvik Scheme



News

To enhance the loan availability of exporters, and the MSME sector the Export Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) has launched a new scheme called 'Nirvik'. To revive the export sector, Commerce Ministry also launched the common digital platform for the issuance of certificates of origin.

Nirvik Scheme

- If there is any loss, then ECGC provided credit guarantee of up to 60% loss approximately.
- Now under new scheme Nirvik consumers and exporters will covered up to 90% and if there is any loss then in that case ECGC will refund 90% to the banks including principal and interest.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- Both pre and post shipment credit will also be covered under the new scheme.
- Banks will get up to 50 % within 30 days of complain lodge.
- Enhanced cover will ensure that Foreign and Rupee export credit interest rates will be below 4% and 8% respectively for exporters.
- The scheme envisages simplified procedure for settlement of claim and for provisional payment up to 50% within 30 days on production of proof of end-use of the advances in default by the Insured Bank.

Electronic Certificates of Origin (CoO)

- This platform will be a single access point for all exporters, for all Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)/ Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) and for all agencies concerned.
- As we know, for exports to countries with which India has free trade agreements (FTA), exporters have to show a certificate that the consignment originated in India.
- With the launch of this platform, these certificates can be obtained online and all the issuing authorities will be on the same portal.
- Certificate of Origin will be issued electronically which can be in paperless format if agreed to by the partner countries.
- Authorities of partner countries will be able to verify the authenticity of certificates from the website.

Source: THE HINDU

How attack on Saudi oil facility could impact Indian and world economics.

GS-III | 17 September, 2019

GS-III: How attack on Saudi oil facility could impact Indian and world economics.



News

The Houthis a rebel shia group of Yemen that is backed by Iran, bombed the Abqaiq plant as well as the Kuraish oil field in Saudi Arabia.

Extent of Supply Shock:

According to IEA an autonomous Paris based organisation with 30 member countries of the

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

OECD as its member and second half of the current calendar year would have seen a decline 0.8mbd because of already stagnating supplies. The latest disruption of an additional 6 mbd is substantial.

Extent of the price stock:

To the extent that the world has enough inventories to tide over the immediate shortfall and assuming that this attack is not the start of a long streak of international hostilities between US led bloc and an Iran led bloc the price shock could be relatively limited.

However prices will keenly reflect not just the immediate disruption but also the likely disruptions should the US initiate some kind of military response.

Impact of India:

India imports 80% of the oil it consumes which means there are multiple ways in which there multiple ways in which the country will be impacted by this disruptions. India is already trying to make up for the loss of supply from Iran after US imposed sanctions . After Iraq, Saudi Arabia is India's second largest supplier of crude oil it accounts almost 17% of the country import. Although Saudi Arabia has assured that there will be no loss supply if the process of restoration takes more time than anticipated ,India would have to look for alternatives.

Way Forward:

As such rising oil prices will worsen the Indian government fiscal balance. Moreover crude oil prices would also lead to higher domestic oil prices which in turn will further depress the demand of all things especially of those that use oil as the primary input to the extent that the current crisis is contained the damage would be limited but an escalation.

Source: Indian Express

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Uniform Civil code – the debate, the status

GS-II | 18 September, 2019

GS-II: Uniform Civil code — the debate, the status



News

- Recently while hearing a matter relating to properties of a Goan, the Supreme Court described Goa as a “shining example” with a Uniform Civil Code.
- The court observed that the founders of the Constitution had “hoped and expected” a UCC for India but there has been no attempt at framing one.

What is a Uniform Civil Code?

- A Uniform Civil Code is one that would provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.
- Article 44, one of the directive principles of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
- These, as defined in Article 37, are not justiciable (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.

Greater role for State

- Fundamental rights are enforceable in a court of law.
- While Article 44 uses the words “state shall endeavour”, other Articles in the ‘Directive Principles’ chapter use words such as “in particular strive”; “shall in particular direct its policy”; “shall be obligation of the state” etc.
- Article 43 mentions “state shall endeavour by suitable legislation” while the phrase “by suitable legislation” is absent in Article 44.
- All this implies that the duty of the state is greater in other directive principles than in Article 44.

What are more important fundamental rights or directive principles?

- There is no doubt that fundamental rights are more important.
- The Supreme Court held in *Minerva Mills* (1980): Indian Constitution is founded on the bed-rock of the balance between Parts III (Fundamental Rights) and IV (Directive Principles).
- To give absolute primacy to one over the other is to disturb the harmony of the Constitution.
- Article 31C inserted by the 42nd Amendment in 1976, however, lays down that if a law is

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

made to implement any directive principle, it cannot be challenged on the ground of being violative of the FRs under **Articles 14 and 19**.

Does India not already have a uniform code in civil matters?

- Indian laws do follow a uniform code in most civil matters Indian Contract Act, Civil Procedure Code, Sale of Goods Act, Transfer of Property Act, Partnership Act, Evidence Act etc.
- States, however, have made hundreds of amendments and therefore in certain matters, there is diversity even under these secular civil laws.
- Recently, several states refused to be governed by the uniform Motor Vehicles Act, 2019.

Is there one common personal law for any religious community governing all its members?

- All Hindus of the country are not governed by one law, nor are all Muslims or all Christians.
- Not only British legal traditions, even those of the Portuguese and the French remain operative in some parts.
- In Jammu and Kashmir until August 5, 2019, local Hindu law statutes differed from central enactments.
- The Shariat Act of 1937 was extended to J&K a few years ago but has now been repealed.

How does the idea of a Uniform Civil Code relate to the fundamental right to religion?

- **Article 25** lays down an individual's fundamental right to religion;
- **Article 26(b)** upholds the right of each religious denomination or any section thereof to "manage its own affairs in matters of religion";
- **Article 29** defines the right to conserve distinctive culture.
- An individual's freedom of religion under Article 25 is subject to "public order, health, morality" and other provisions relating to FRs, but a group's freedom under **Article 26 has not been subjected to other fundamental rights**
- In the Constituent Assembly, there was division on the issue of putting UCC in the fundamental rights chapter. The matter was settled by a vote.
- By a 5:4 majority, the fundamental rights sub-committee headed by Sardar Patel held that the provision was outside the scope of FRs and therefore the UCC was made less important than freedom of religion.

How did the debate on a common code for Hindus play out?

- In June 1948, Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, warned Nehru

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

that to introduce "basic changes" in personal law was to impose "progressive ideas" of a "microscopic minority" on the Hindu community as a whole.

- Others opposed to reforms in Hindu law included Sardar Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, M A Ayyangar, M M Malaviya and Kailash Nath Katju.
- When the debate on the Hindu Code Bill took place in December 1949, 23 of 28 speakers opposed it.

Source: Indian Express

National Recruitment Agency

GS-II | 18 September, 2019

GS-II: National Recruitment Agency



News

- The Finance Ministry has approved a proposal to streamline recruitment of some posts in the government along with various equivalent recruitment in public sector banks.
- A new National Recruitment Agency (NRA) will be set up to conduct the Common Eligibility Test (CET) for all these competitive examinations, in which an estimated 2.5 crore candidates appear annually.

National Recruitment Agency (NRA)

- The proposed NRA will conduct preliminary examinations for all these recruitment, which are at present conducted by the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS).
- As per the proposal, the NRA will subsequently forward the list of qualifying candidates to the respective recruiting agencies to conduct the mains examinations.
- The SSC and IBPS, it is learnt, will not be disbanded for now and will conduct the mains examinations as usual.
- The basic idea behind this proposal is to shortlist qualifying candidates through a Common Eligibility Test before sending them for the mains examination.

Why a new agency is proposed?

- The proposal for a new agency is meant to streamline recruitment process on subordinate-rank posts in the government.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The proposed NRA is expected to reduce the burden of SSC and the IBPS, among others, from holding preliminary recruitment exams, which is an extensive exercise.
- Once up and running, NRA will work as a preliminary single-window agency to shortlist qualifying candidates from bulk of applicants and forward the list to SSC, IBPS, etc, to hold the mains.
- According to an estimate, more than 2.5 crore candidates sit for these prelims, most of them conducted by SSC.
- Recruitment conducted at present through the SSC and proposed to go to the new agency include the Combined Graduate Level (CGL) examination to enter government departments.

For clerical level

- Similarly in line with CGL, recruitment tests for clerical-level recruitment in public sector banks are proposed to go to the NRA.
- The proposed agency, however, will not be in charge of recruitment of Probationary Officers (PO) in banks.

Source: Indian Express

Fire to fuel

GS-II | 18 September, 2019

GS-III: Fire to fuel



News

- India must brace for the impact of oil supply cuts after the drone attacks in Saudi Arabia.
- The immediate impact of last weeks drone attacks on the Saudi Aramco owned Khurais oilfield and Abqaiq oil processing facility has been suspension of more than half of Saudi Arabia's daily crude oil output thereby affecting contribution to global supply.

Impact of the attack:

Saudi Aramco, the state-owned oil company, had to suspend the production of almost 6 million barrels per day (about 6 per cent of global oil supply).

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

It had to restrict the use of 2 mbd of spare capacity.

This is the largest-ever disruption in crude oil production in Saudi Arabia.

Potential impact on India:

Current account deficit:

Higher crude oil prices will widen the trade deficit and current account deficit, given that the value of imports goes up with crude oil, and that the quantity imported tends to be sticky in general.

Rupee:

The currency could be impacted if the trade and current account deficits were to widen. An increase in the import bill will tend to put pressure on the rupee.

Inflation:

There could be significant impact on inflation, given how crude oil prices move and the extent to which the government allows the pass-through to the consumer.

Concerns for India:

- Saudi supplies 10 per cent of global world supply and is the world's largest crude oil exporter.
- India imports 80% of the oil it consumes, which means there are multiple ways in which the country will be impacted by this disruption. With this attack, Oil prices may go up
- India is already trying to make up for the loss of supply from Iran after US-imposed sanctions. After Iraq, Saudi Arabia is India's second-largest supplier of crude oil.
- Besides, the global supply has been volatile because of disruptions in some of the other big suppliers such as Venezuela, Libya and Nigeria.
- Supply constraints and rising oil prices would mean that the rupee will weaken further against the dollar that's because, as the dollar prices of crude oil rise, India would need to buy more dollars for the same amount of oil, thus depreciating the value of the rupee vis-à-vis the dollar.
- Rising oil prices will worsen the Indian government's fiscal balance.
- Higher crude oil prices would also lead to higher domestic oil prices, which, in turn, will further depress the demand for all things, especially those that use oil as the primary input, say, cars.
- This dip in consumption demand, which is already under strain as the recent growth slowdown has shown, would likely mean lower economic activity and consequently lower revenues for the government.

Conclusion

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

International energy markets are critically dependent on reliable transport.

Over 60% of the world's petroleum and other liquids production moves on maritime routes.

Blocking the maritime choke points can lead to huge increases in energy costs and world energy prices.

Choke points are also the places where tankers are most vulnerable to pirates, terrorist attacks, political unrest, war, and shipping accidents.

For India, If India is to protect its interests in the ever-volatile global oil market, the government will need to take steps to diversify its supplier base and also work towards increasing domestic sources of energy supplies.

Opening up the renewable energy sector for more investments will also help avoid over-dependence on oil from the global market to meet the country's ever-increasing energy needs.

Source: THE HINDU

Deadly Spread

GS-II | 18 September, 2019

GS-II: Deadly Spread



News

Overcoming vaccine hesitancy can reduce the global spread of measles infection.

With 30% increase in measles cases worldwide in 2018 the World Health Organization, in January 2019 included vaccine hesitancy as one of the 10 threats to global health this year.

Report Says

In 2018, there have been around 3,65,000 measles cases reported from 182 countries in the first six months of 2019. The biggest increase, of 900% in the first six months this year compared with the same period last year, has been from the WHO African region, with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar and Nigeria accounting for most cases. There has been a sharp increase in the WHO European region too with 90,000 cases recorded

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

in the first six months more than the numbers recorded for the whole of 2018. The infection spread in the European region has been unprecedented in recent years 1,74,000 cases from 49 of the 53 countries between January 2018 and June 2019. Last month the U.K., Greece, the Czech Republic and Albania lost their measles elimination status.

A 2018 report on vaccine confidence among the European Union member states shows why vaccine coverage has not been increasing in the European region to reach over 90% to offer protection even to those not vaccinated.

It found younger people (18-34 years) and those with less education are less likely to agree that the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine is safe. According to a March 2019 report, only 52% respondents from 28 EU member states agree that vaccines are definitely effective in preventing diseases, while 33% felt they were probably effective.

More alarming is that 48% of the respondents believed that vaccines cause serious side effects and 38% think vaccines actually cause the disease that they are supposed to protect against.

A striking similarity was seen in India too. A 2018 study found low awareness to be the main reason why 45% of children missed different vaccinations in 121 Indian districts that have higher rates of unimmunised children.

While 24% did not get vaccinated due to apprehension about adverse effects, 11% were reluctant to get immunised for reasons other than fear of adverse effects. Thus, much work remains to be done to address misinformation.

With social media playing a crucial role in spreading vaccine disinformation, the commitment by Facebook to "reduce distribution" of vaccine misinformation will be helpful in winning the war against vaccine deniers.

Measles vaccine not only provides lifelong protection against the virus but also reduces mortality from other childhood infections. This is because measles viruses kill immune cells, leaving the child vulnerable to infectious diseases for two to three years.

What is vaccine hesitancy?

- The WHO defines 'vaccine hesitancy' as "the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines and it threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases."
- Vaccines are effective preventive tools in a government's public health kit and it is accepted as among the most cost-effective ways of avoiding disease.
- Calling out vaccine hesitancy as public health threat, the WHO pointed out that measles had seen a 30 per cent increase in cases globally.
- The reasons for this rise are complex and not all of these cases are due to vaccine hesitancy. However, some countries that were close to eliminating the disease have seen a resurgence.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Conclusion

The WHO expects 2019 to see transmission of wild polio virus being stopped in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well. Less than 30 cases were reported last year in both countries, the WHO says, casting its might behind their vaccination programme.

"Trust in the vaccine, trust in Government, trust in the system and trust in the manufacturer."

Parents should raise questions on vaccines, its necessity and safety. But it is up to the Government and doctors to keep this communication with parents ongoing, transparent and scientific so that benefits to the child and larger community are not lost in misinformation.

Empower paediatricians to project the value of vaccines and equip them to respond to concerns effectively and accurately. Sensitise media to an evidence based rather than sensational approach.

Source: THE HINDU

Government-funded NGOs come under RTI ambit: SC

GS-II | 18 September, 2019

GS-II: Government-funded NGOs come under RTI ambit: SC



News

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) "substantially" financed by the government fall within the ambit of the Right to Information Act, the Supreme Court held in a judgment.

About the judgment

NGOs which receive considerable finances from the government or are essentially dependent on the government fall under the category of "public authority" defined in Section 2(h) of the RTI Act of 2005.

This means that they have to disclose vital information, ranging from finances to hierarchy to decisions to functioning, to citizens who apply under RTI.

An NGO, the court said, may also include societies which are neither owned or controlled by the government, but if they are significantly funded by the government, directly or indirectly, they

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

come under the RTI Act.

Why such move?

RTI Act was enacted with the purpose of bringing transparency in public dealings and probity in public life.

If NGOs or other bodies get substantial finance from the government we find no reason why any citizen cannot ask for information.

With the judgment citizens can find out whether his/her money which has been given to an NGO is being used for the requisite purpose.

'Substantial' means how much?

The court defined "substantial" as a "large portion."

It does not necessarily have to mean a major portion or more than 50%.

No hard and fast rule can be laid down in this regard. Substantial financing can be both direct or indirect.

If government gives land in a city free of cost or on heavy discount to hospitals, educational institutions or any such body, this in itself could also be substantial financing, the judgment explained.

Source: THE HINDU

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

New FCRA Rule

GS-II | 19 September, 2019

GS-II: New FCRA Rule

News

The Union home ministry has revised its rules on NGOs receiving foreign funding.

New FCRA Rules

- In a notification, the ministry announced the changes in the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules, 2011, which include that individuals need not declare personal gifts to the tune of ₹1 lakh anymore.
- Earlier, gifts worth **more than ₹25,000** were required to be declared.
- The office bearers, key functionaries and members of the organizations will have to declare that they are neither prosecuted nor convicted of religious conversion nor charged with sedition.
- It is also mandatory for office bearers and key functionaries and members to certify that they have not been "prosecuted or convicted" for "conversion" from one faith to another and for creating "communal tension and disharmony".
- Earlier, as per the FCRA 2010, only applicants such as directors who sought permission to receive foreign funds were required to make such a declaration.
- Now, every member of an NGO must, under oath, through an affidavit, declare that they have never been involved in diverting foreign funds or "sedition" or "advocating violent means".

About FCRA

- Government of India enacted the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) in the year 1976 with an objective of regulating the acceptance and utilization of foreign contribution.
- The act was majorly modified in 2010 with several amendments because many NGOs were found using illegal use of foreign funding.
- It is a consolidating act whose scope is to regulate the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by certain individuals or associations or companies.
- It aims to prohibit funding for any activities detrimental to the national interest and for matters connected therewith.
- In 2016 license of about 20,000 NGOs were cancelled after reviewing their work

Source: LIVE MINT

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)

GS-II | 19 September, 2019

GS-II: Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)



News

The RBI has expanded the scope of the Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) by adding other categories of recurring payments through the portal.

Why in news?

- With the expansion of the scope of the payment facility, other recurring payments such as school fees, municipal taxes, insurance premiums can also be paid via BBPS.
- Till now, the Bharat Bill Payment System used to cater to just five segments direct to home (DTH), electricity, gas, telecom and water.

About BBPS

- The Bharat Bill Payment System was launched by the National Payment Corporation of India on 31 August 2016 under the recommendation of RBI executive director G. Padmanabhan committee.
- The platform allows customers across the country to use one single website or outlet to pay all their bills with reliability and safety of transactions.
- According to a report, a total of 338 million transactions took place on the BBPS network over the course of 2018-19.
- BBPS payments can be made using cash, cheques as well as through digital methods such as internet banking, debit, credit card, among others.
- The payment service is provided to customers through a network of agents, enabling multiple payment modes, including cash, and an instant confirmation of payment is provided after the transaction.
- It even has a standardized system to handle grievances for both online and offline transactions.

Source: Live Mint

International Migrant Stock 2019

GS-I | 19 September, 2019

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

GS-I: International Migrant Stock 2019



News

India has emerged as the leading country of origin for immigrants across the world, with 17.5 million international migrants in 2019 coming from India, up from 15.9 million in 2015.

International Migrant Stock 2019

- The data is released by the UN DESA's Population Division.
- Data shows that the number of international migrants in the world had reached an estimated 272 million in 2019 **51 million more than in 2010**.
- The percentage of international migrants of the total global population has increased to 3.5% from 2.8% in 2000.

India at the top

- While India remained as the top source of international migrants, the number of migrants living in India saw a slight decline from 5.24 million in 2015 to an estimated 5.15 million in 2019 – both 0.4% of the total population of the country.
- **Bangladesh** was the **leading country** of origin for **migrants in India**.

Global scene

- In a statement, the UN DESA Population Division said that one-third of all international migrants originated from 10 countries.
- After India, Mexico ranked second as the country of origin for 12 million migrants, followed by China (11 million), Russia (10 million) and Syria (8 million).
- The European region hosted the highest number of the immigrants at 82 million in 2019, followed by North America (59 million) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (49 million).
- Among countries, the U.S. hosts the highest number of international migrants (51 million), about 19% of the global population.
- Forced displacements continue to rise, with the number of refugees and asylum seekers increased by about 13 million from 2010 to 2017.

Source: THE HINDU

The burden of malnutrition in under-5 children in India

GS-II | 19 September, 2019

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

GS-II: The burden of malnutrition in under-5 children in India



News

A report published in **The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health** gives comprehensive estimates of disease burden due to child and maternal malnutrition and the trends of its indicators in every state of India from **1990 to 2017**.

Key findings

- The death rate attributable to malnutrition in under-5 children in India has dropped by two-thirds from 1990 to 2017.
- Malnutrition is, however, still the underlying risk factor for **68% of the deaths** in under-five children in India.
- The **Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALY)** rate attributable to malnutrition in children varies 7-fold among the states a gap between a high of 74,782 in Uttar Pradesh and a low of 11,002 in Kerala.
- Other states with a high burden are **Bihar, Assam and Rajasthan followed by Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Nagaland and Tripura**.
- The proportion of **under-5 deaths attributable to malnutrition**, which is 68.2% across India, ranges between a high of 72.7% in Bihar and a low of **50.8% in Kerala**.
- Among the **malnutrition indicators**, **low birth weight is the largest contributor** to child deaths in India, followed by child growth failure which includes stunting, underweight, and wasting.

Under 5 mortality:



- The proportion of under-5 deaths attributable to malnutrition, which is 68.2% across India, ranges between a high of 72.7% in Bihar and a low of 50.8% in Kerala.
- Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh are states with a high such proportion, while Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu, Mizoram and Goa have the lowest proportions of such deaths.
- Among the **malnutrition indicators**, **low birth weight is the largest contributor to child deaths in India**, followed by child growth failure which includes stunting, underweight, and wasting.

Source: Indian Express

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Cabinet approves ban on e-cigarettes

GS-II | 19 September, 2019

GS-II: Cabinet approves ban on e-cigarettes



News

The Union Cabinet approved a **ban on e-cigarettes**, citing the need to take early action to protect public health.

Prohibition of E-cigarettes Ordinance, 2019

- Upon promulgation of the ordinance, any production, manufacturing, import, export, transport, sale (including online sale), distribution or advertisement (including online advertisement) of e-cigarettes shall be a cognizable offence.
- It is punishable with imprisonment of up to **one year, or fine up to ₹1 lakh**, or both for the first offence and imprisonment of up to **three years and fine up to ₹5 lakh for a subsequent offence**.
- Storage of electronic-cigarettes shall also be punishable with **imprisonment of up to 6 months or a fine of up to ₹50,000 or both**.
- The sub-inspector has been designated as the authorised officer to take action under the ordinance.
- The Central or State governments may also designate any other equivalent officer as authorised officer for enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance.

What are e-cigarettes?

- E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that heat a solution of nicotine and different flavours to create aerosol, which is then inhaled.
- These devices belong to a category of vapour-based nicotine products called ENDS.
- E-cigarettes and other ENDS products may look like their traditional counterparts (regular cigarettes or cigars), but they also come in other shapes and sizes and can resemble daily use products, including pens and USB drives.
- Several companies selling ENDS in India have positioned these products as a safer, less harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes or as devices that could help users quit smoking.

Why does the government want to ban these devices?

- The **Health Ministry and Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation**, India's drug regulatory authority, had attempted in the past to ban the import and sale of these

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products citing public health concerns.

- Before the ordinance was announced, the government had been facing hurdles in the form of court cases against the move, as **ENDS were not declared as 'drugs' in the country's drug regulations.**
- These products have neither been assessed for safety in the national population, nor been approved under provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. Yet, they have been widely available to consumers

Does this mean traditional tobacco products are safer?

- Traditional tobacco products like cigarettes and chewing tobacco are already known to be harmful.
- According to the CDC in the US, cigarette smoking harms "nearly every organ of the body, causes many diseases, and reduces the health of smokers in general".
- A study published in The Lancet found tobacco use was the "leading" risk factor for cancers in India in 2016.
- ICMR estimates that India is likely to face over 17 lakh new cancer cases and over eight lakh deaths by 2020.
- In 2018, India had nearly 27 crore tobacco users and a "substantial" number of people exposed to second-hand smoke, putting them at an increased risk for cardiovascular diseases, according to WHO.

Who gains from the move?

- The government feels its decision will help "**protect the population, especially youth and children, from the risk of addiction through e-cigarettes**".
- It says enforcement of the ordinance will complement its efforts to reduce tobacco use and, therefore, help in reducing the economic and disease burden associated with it.
- Apart from this, traditional tobacco firms, too, could potentially gain from the ban.

Source: Indian Express

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Access to Internet is a basic right, says Kerala High Court

GS-II | 20 September, 2019

GS-II: Access to Internet is a basic right, says Kerala High Court



News

The Kerala High Court held that the right to have access to the Internet is part of the fundamental right to education as well as the **right to privacy under Article 21** of the Constitution.

Right to access Internet

- The court ordered to re-admit a student who had been expelled from the college hostel for using her mobile phone beyond the restricted hours.
- The court observed that when the Human Rights Council of the UN has found that the right of access to Internet is a fundamental freedom and a tool to ensure right to education.
- A rule or instruction which impairs the said right of the students cannot be permitted to stand in the eye of law.
- The bench contended that the use of mobile phones amounted to a violation of fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

Restrictions on Art. 19(1)(a)

- The court cited the observations of the Supreme Court in the S.Rengarajan and others v. P. Jagjivan Ram (1989) case.
- It said that the **fundamental freedom under Article 19(1)(a)** can be reasonably **restricted only for the purposes mentioned in Article 19(2)**.
- And the restriction must be justified on the anvil of necessity and not the quicksand of convenience or expediency.
- **19(2) provides for reasonable restrictions on Art. 19(1)(a)** in the interests of the **sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.**
-

Source: THE HINDU

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PoK and Gilgit Baltistan, parts of J&K under Pakistan occupation

GS-II | 20 September, 2019

GS-II: PoK and Gilgit Baltistan, parts of J&K under Pakistan occupation



News

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said this week that "we expect one day we will have physical jurisdiction" over Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Supporting regulation

- A resolution unanimously adopted by Parliament on February 22, 1994 affirmed that "the State of Jammu & Kashmir has been, is and shall be an integral part of India.
- It demanded that Pakistan must vacate the areas of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, which they have occupied through aggression.
- PoK and GB are both part of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, which is an integral part of India by virtue of its accession to India in 1947.

The PoK:

- Pakistan Occupied Kashmir is an area of 13,297 sq km, which was under the control of the Pakistani forces when the ceasefire line came into effect on January 1, 1949.
- That was after a 14-month period of hostilities between India and Pakistan, which began with an invasion of Kashmir by Pashtun tribesmen, and later its Army, to seize Kashmir.
- In 1963, through an agreement, Pakistan ceded to China over 5,000 sq km of J&K land under its control, in the Shaksgam area, in northern Kashmir, beyond the Karakoram.

And what is Gilgit Baltistan?

- This is a picturesque, hilly region to the north of PoK and east of the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The British sold it, along with the rest of Jammu and Kashmir, to the Dogra ruler of Jammu, Gulab Singh, after defeating the Sikh army in 1846.
- However they retained controlled over the area through a lease extracted from the Maharaja. This lease was last renewed in 1935.
- In 1947, a British army officer of the rank of Colonel imprisoned Maharaja Hari Singh's governor in the region, and handed over the area for accession to Pakistan.
- Gilgit Baltistan (GB) is spread over 72,871 sq km, and is five-and-a-half times the size of

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PoK. But it is sparsely populated, with just under 20 lakh people.

- GB is divided into three administrative divisions and 10 districts.

What is the administrative status in Gilgit Baltistan?

- Though both PoK and GB are ruled directly from Islamabad, neither is officially listed as the territory of Pakistan.
- Pak has just four provinces: Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (which now includes the Federally Administered Tribal areas or FATA), Balochistan, and Sindh.
- PoK and Gilgit Baltistan are both "autonomous territories".
- Pakistan has kept this fiction going, as incorporating these areas into its map would damage its international position in the UN and elsewhere that the entire Jammu and Kashmir is "disputed".

Source: Indian Express

India unlikely to meet 'Poshan Abhiyan' targets ,finds study

GS-II | 20 September, 2019

GS-II: India unlikely to meet 'Poshan Abhiyan' targets ,finds study



News

India is unlikely to meet targets under the ambitious Poshan Abhiyan or National nutrition Mission for reduction in prevalence of stunting , underweight , low birth and anaemia in women and children by 2022.

Poshan Abhiyan:

- There are many little things that can be employed in our country's effective fight against malnutrition. Today, due to lack of awareness, both poor and affluent families are affected by malnutrition. The month of September will be celebrated as 'Poshan Abhiyaan' across the country. You must get connected with it, get information about this initiative, add some new facet to 'Poshan Abhiyaan' by contributing to it. If you manage to save a few people from malnutrition, it would mean that we can bring the country out of the circle of malnutrition".
- Poshan Month was launched last year by the government to improve the nutritional status

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of children up to 6 years, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers to achieve specific targets for reduction in low birth weight babies, stunting growth, under nutrition and prevalence of anaemia over next three years.

- **Ministry of Women and Child Development** under POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) was launched by the government on March 8, 2018.
- The Abhiyaan targets to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce **low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum** respectively.
- The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the **age group 0-6 years** from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to **ensure service delivery and interventions by use of technology, behavioural change through convergence and lays-down specific targets to be achieved across different monitoring parameters.**
- Under the **Abhiyaan, Swasth Bharat Preraks** will be deployed one in each district for coordinating with district officials and enabling fast and efficient execution of the Abhiyaan across the country. Swasth Bharat Preraks would function as catalyst for fast tracking the implementation of the Abhiyaan.

Malnutrition Causes 45 Per Cent Child Deaths In India

Malnutrition is a medical condition caused due to an unbalanced diet that is deficiencies, excesses or imbalance in a person's intake of one or more vital nutrients. Malnutrition is broadly classified into two categories – under nutrition and obesity. Mal means bad therefore malnutrition means bad nutrition. Earlier malnutrition implied undernutrition, but over the years the meaning has changed. It also includes obesity and being overweight.

India ranked 103 out of 119 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2018. India slipped by three positions as compared to 100th rank in 2017. With a score of 31.3, India suffers from a level of hunger that is serious. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool that comprehensively measures and tracks hunger at global, regional, and national levels, while taking into account undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality. All the four parameters are directly related to lack of food and malnutrition, which was the leading cause of death and disability in India in 2017, states the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 prepared by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).

Way Forward

Health and nutrition are the priority areas of our government. Health remains one of the key areas in our quest of building an inclusive and new India. An integral part of our vision is achieving 'kuposhan mukt bharat' (malnutrition-free India) by 2022. Balanced and nutritious food is essential for all of us, more so for women and the new-born, since these two categories are the foundation of the future of our society. Under the 'Poshan Abhiyaan' campaign, nutrition made available with the help of modern scientific methods is being converted into a mass

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movement all over the country.

Source: THE HINDU

Issues in debate around setting an age limit for IVF

GS-IV | 20 September, 2019

GS-IV: Issues in debate around setting an age limit for IVF



News

A 74-year-old woman from AP was recently recorded as the oldest in the world to give birth to twins through in-vitro fertilization or IVF. The medical community has expressed ethical and medical concerns over conception at such an advanced age.

Why this is a concern?

- The average life expectancy of an Indian woman is 70 and of a man 69 and the medical community has expressed concerns over future of children born to such an elderly couple.
- Medical technology has reached a stage where we can get even a 90-year-old pregnant. But there are complications that can risk human life.
- Pregnancy in old age poses multiple risks hypertension, diabetes, convulsions, bleeding, and cardiac complications to name a few.

Can a doctor face action?

- Internationally this pregnancy is being condemned. Everything could have gone wrong. It sets a wrong precedent said doctors organization.
- Several experts have demanded punitive action, saying the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) should deregister his Andhra Pradesh centre.
- But with no law in place a Bill is pending the assisted reproductive technology (ART) industry continues to operate in a grey zone.
- In 2005, when ICMR drafted guidelines for ART, it had not set an age limit keeping in mind that reproductive rights were a fundamental right for a woman.

The Assisted Reproductive Technologies (Regulation) Bill, 2010

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- Globally, an estimated 15% of couples are infertile.
- The ART Regulation Bill, 2010, states that in the Indian social context, children are "old-age insurance".
- The Bill proposes the upper age limit at 45 for women and 50 for men to undergo the IVF procedure.
- As of now, several centres rely on ICMR's 2017 guidelines that recommend the same age limits. Even for adoption, the total age of the couple must not exceed 110 years.
- With increasing life expectancy, doctors are in talks with the government to increase the IVF age limit to 50-52 years for women.

Laws in other countries

- Most countries that have a law range the upper limit for IVF between 40 and 50 years.
- In the US, the upper limit for IVF is 50, and for ovum donation, 45.
- In Australia, guidelines prohibit IVF beyond menopause (52 years).
- In the UK, 42 is the age limit for women to seek free insurance under National Health Service. In Canada, the age limit is 43.

Source: Indian Express

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Global Climate Strike movement

GS-III | 21 September, 2019

GS-I: Global Climate Strike movement.



News

Students in more than 2,000 cities across the world are holding demonstrations under the #FridaysforFuture movement, protesting inaction towards climate change.

The Global Climate Strike movement:

- The #FridaysforFuture movement, also known as the Youth Strike for Climate Movement was started in August 2018 by Greta Thunberg.
- She sat outside the Swedish parliament every school day for three weeks to protest against inaction towards climate change and called for concrete government action.
- Then in September 2018, Thunberg called for a strike every Friday until the Swedish parliament revised its policies towards climate change.
- Gradually, students and adults from across the world started mobilizing and demonstrating in front of parliaments and local city halls in their respective countries, making global, a local movement.

Who is Greta Thunberg?

- Thunberg describes herself as a "16-year-old climate activist with Asperger's".
- She says that she first heard about "something called climate change or global warming" when she was eight years old.
- Since 2018, when she started skipping school, Thunberg has come a long way to become one of the world's youngest climate change crusaders.
- **She has delivered speeches at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the EU Parliament, COP24, and to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres.**
- Earlier this year, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 2019, the winners of which will be announced in October.

What started the global school student movements?

- The global school movements began in 2015.
- A Climate Strike was organised in November 2015, the idea for which came to the organisers at the Global Youth Summit of 2015.
- Under this strike, students were urged to skip school and join other protestors. The strike was meant to be a "wake-up call" for the young generation.
- Their demands at that time were to stop the extraction of fossil fuels and to make the transition to 100 per cent clean energy.

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Why are students protesting this time?

- Even though climate change affects everyone, the present generation of youngsters is the ones who are going to be bearing the brunt of it in the coming decades.
- The sentiments behind these are the "broken promises" of older generations, members of which continue to extract and use fossil fuels, leading to increased CO2 emissions and subsequently, increasing average global temperatures.
- Distrust of political leaders among the younger generation is also a reason why they feel the need to take things into their own hands.

Source: Indian Express

A Deep Cut

GS-III | 21 September, 2019

GS-III: A Deep Cut.



News

Tax cuts have enthused Corporate India, but there is the fiscal problem to deal with. Finance Minister announcement of deep cut of corporate taxes and roll back of some market unfriendly proposals in the budget she presented in July.

Corporate Tax Cut:

Finance Minister Sitharaman's announcement to cut corporate tax rates was a welcome surprise for the Indian economy that has been struggling with growth deceleration.

The government has cut the corporate tax rate for domestic companies to 22 per cent (inclusive of all cesses and surcharges) for domestic companies from the existing 30 per cent.

New tax rate will be applicable from the current fiscal which began on April 1.

The move is a lift for the Modi government who was facing increasing pressure to relight once-stellar economy after five consecutive quarters of slowing growth saw India this year loses its

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status as the fastest-expanding major economy to China.

Finance Minister announcement:

- New provision inserted in the income tax act with effect from fiscal year 2019-20, that allows any domestic company to pay income tax at the rate of 22% subject to condition they will not avail any incentive or exemptions
- Manufacturing companies set up after October 1 to get option to pay 15% tax. Effective tax rate for new manufacturing firms to be 17.01% inclusive of surcharge & tax.
- Listed companies that have announced buyback before July 5, 2019, tax on buyback of shares will not be charged
- Higher surcharge will also not apply on capital gains on sale of security including derivatives held by FPIs
- Enhanced surcharge will not apply to capital gains arising on equity sale or equity-oriented funds liable to STT stabilise flow of funds into capital markets
- To provide relief to companies availing of concessions and benefits, a MAT relief by reducing it from 18% to 15%
- CSR 2% spending to include government, PSU incubators and public funded education entities, IITs.

Benefits:

- Essentially, a lower corporate tax is aimed at boosting investment by the private sector.
- The continuing deceleration of the Indian economy was being blamed both on depressed consumption by private individuals and decline in investment by private businesses.
- The two other factors contributing to growth – government expenditure (where the fiscal deficit is under pressure) and exports (which have been stagnant), both have little space to boost growth.
- The cut in corporate tax chooses to single out private investment.
- This is a long-term measure that would make it more attractive for existing and new businesses to invest and increase production will create employment.

Source: THE HINDU

An independent fiscal watchdog for Parliament.

GS-II | 21 September, 2019

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

GS-II: An independent fiscal watchdog for Parliament.



News

When most people arrive at the ballot box, they vote with their gut. But getting there requires absorbing and shaping months and years of conservation, long held opinions and ideally hard facts and evidence.

What is Parliamentary Budget Office?

- A PBO is an **independent and impartial body linked directly to Parliament**.
- It provides technical and objective analysis of Budgets and public finance to the House and its committees.
- It can generate quality public debate on Budget policy and public finance, enabling parliamentarians to engage meaningfully in the Budget process.
- Traditionally, independent budgetary units are more common in developed countries.

What is the need for such office?

Multiple indicators suggest that executive-led budgetary governance has not been successful in India.

The Indian Parliament is a Budget-approving body contributing to budgetary matters in the following notable ways:

- Presentation of the Budget.
- Scrutiny of the demands for grants of various ministries.
- Debate.
- Consideration and approval of the Budget.
- To carry out these functions effectively, Parliament requires institutional, analytical and technical competence.
- There is a growing trend among legislatures, particularly within the OECD countries to establish specialised Budget research units.

What are the functioning roles of PBO?

The majority of PBOs have **four core functions**:

1. Independent and objective economic forecast.

- Budgets generally start with an economic forecast.
- A PBO can present either its own independent forecast or it can validate the government's, providing an objective analysis on the official forecast.

2. Baseline estimate survey.

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- It will provide options for spending cuts, outlining a budgetary framework that reflects priorities of the nation, bespoke policy briefs.

Analysing the executive's Budget proposal.

- A PBO is comprised of independent and specialised staff, such as Budget analysts, economists, and public finance experts.
- These may include general economic analysis, tax analysis, long-term analysis.

3 . Providing medium- to long-term analysis.

- Its output, and the methods by which those outputs are prepared, must be transparent, accessible and understandable.

Source: THE HINDU

Joining RCEP should be seen as an extension of Look East policy.

GS-III | 21 September, 2019

GS-II: Joining RCEP should be seen as an extension of Look East policy.

Context

RCEP

- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) aims to bring the 10 countries of ASEAN with Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, India, China and Japan to create the world's largest trading block.
- If it comes into being, RCEP will constitute more than 40 per cent of the global population and almost half of world's economy.
- It consists of three of the six largest economies of the world, especially, the two fastest growing large economies India and China.
- Out of the top 16 countries with the largest GDP, six belong to the proposed RCEP.

Act of Balancing with China

- There is a huge debate in India over joining RCEP. India's allies in Southeast Asia, as

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well as Australia, want India to join it to balance China.

- On the other hand, many in India feel that RCEP will aggravate India's burgeoning trade deficit with China.
- The Indian industry feels that China does not provide a level playing field for items that they could export, especially in fields like pharma, IT, films, indigenous medicines, wellness and yoga.
- Some of these are founded on opacity that surrounds the Chinese government's decision making.

The Indian protectionism

- There is a tendency in Indian industry to seek protection, whenever any steps towards globalization are taken.
- The "Bombay Club" long used for protectionism, protested when liberalisation was introduced and tried to prevent imports for as long as they could.
- However, it is an acknowledged fact that globalisation did benefit the Indian economy, it brought in newer technology and made Indian industry far more competitive.
- RCEP does provide Indian industry a huge market to grow and expand, provided it transforms and the government frees it from bureaucratic controls that have been stifling growth.

Not to blame anyone

- When import access was given to Chinese goods, it did not eliminate Indian industry.
- Of course, some industries which are uneconomical, have not modernized and imbibed new technologies will fall by the way side.
- More significantly, opening up markets and reducing tariffs will benefit consumers.
- The automobile, telecom and even IT boom would not have been feasible without liberalisation.
- Similarly, the recent spurt in solar power generation is directly a result of the availability of cheap imported solar films.

Visible benefits for joining:

- India's presence in this trading block could lead to a large number of multinationals shifting their production facilities from China to India.
- RCEP being effective would enable them to access Chinese markets, without being present there, to comply with US sanctions.
- This could also bring in huge investments from many companies in the West.
- With the Trans-Pacific Partnership having unraveled, it is quite feasible that a post-Trump US administration may join RCEP if it takes off.

A win-win situation

RCEP is one sure shot way of forcing China to provide a level playing field.

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India has the largest arable land and one of the largest pool of scientists, engineers, technicians, so there is no reason for India to be concerned.

Way forward

India's welcome to RCEP is one way of controlling China and keeping it in check.

In a big grouping like this, China is unlikely to have its way, nor is it going to antagonize everyone.

India's absences from RCEP will virtually handover this significant grouping to China, which is certainly not in India's interest.

Thus RCEP is a huge opportunity which India should not miss.

Source: Indian Express

ASPIRE IAS

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The nationalist hindrance to climate actions

GS-III | 23 September, 2019

GS-III: The nationalist hindrance to climate actions.



News

The UN Climate Actions Summit is likely to hand out hard lessons about climate politics in an era of nationalism.

Visible signs and science:

- The scientific advisory group to the summit the five years since 2015 is set to the warmest of any period sea level rises is accelerating and ocean have become 265 more acidic since the dawn of the Industrial era.
- Recent weather events bring into focus the likely implications of a warming world. This year saw Delhi like temperature in southern Europe, Hurricane Dorian rendered large parts of Bahamas unliveable and witnessed simultaneous raging fires in the Amazon, central Africa and even Siberia.
- Heat wave in France and Germany was made **8 to 10 times** more likely by climate change concentrations of carbon dioxide continue to rise, and current country pledges would not stem this increase even by 2030.

A political Disconnect:

- If science experience and public alarm are increasing on the side of action, unfortunately, national politics in country after country is trending in the wrong direction.
- The US President not only refuses to enhance actions he has actively rolled back measures in the electricity sector and actions to limit methane emissions in the name of competitiveness.
- In Brazil, President has made it clear he sees environmental protections as limiting Brazilian business and nationalism in some countries where the politics is more conducive.
- By contrast several large countries like US, Brazil, Australia, Canada, Japan and Mexico are reportedly not even going to participate in the event at a high level.
- China and India have issued statements hinting that they are doing quite enough and India has high lightened the need for enhanced finance if it is to do more.

A path for India:

- India has the potential to show the pathway to accelerating action on climate change even while pursuing its development interests.
- A notable example is its energy efficiency track record, which helps limit greenhouse

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gases energy. India is justifiably recognised for promoting renewable energy, also muddies water by sending mixed signals on future coals use.

- India needs some domestic energy policies that are more clearly and policies turned to a future low carbon world.
- India committed to a low –carbon future that brings development benefits, strike common cause with others power ? India and china both jostling for influence in African nations but also both losers from climate impacts, jointly help ensure that Africa's development is powered by renewable energy than fossil fuels and based on energy efficient future .

Source: THE HINDU

Lifeline for India

GS-II | 23 September, 2019

GS-II: Lifeline for India



CONTEXT

Ayushman Bharat is a conscious attempt to holistically address health, encompassing prevention, promotion and ambulatory care at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

PMJAY

- It promises to bring healthcare to the poorest through two components:
- Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) delivering comprehensive primary healthcare through the **development of 1.5 lakh HWCs**
- PM-JAY, the health assurance scheme delivering secondary and tertiary care to 55-crore people through a health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year.
- **Ayushman Bharat has been designed based on the idea that prevention is better than cure.**
- No one should fall into poverty because of expenditure on healthcare, or die because they cannot afford treatment.
- It promises free healthcare to the poorest 55 crore people in the country.
- It would help them avoid the catastrophic healthcare expenditure that pushes 6 crores below the poverty line each year in India.

The journey so far – healthcare

- More than 20,000 HWCs have been made operational.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- More than five crore people have been screened for a whole range of common non-communicable diseases.
- More than 45 lakh hospital admissions have taken place for cashless treatment in more than 18,000 empaneled hospitals across the country, resulting in savings of more than Rs 13,000 crore for the beneficiary families.
- Ayushman Bharat has provided a platform and framework for the country to accelerate its progress towards comprehensive universal healthcare.

Working with States

- In several states and union territories, it has an opportunity to extend the benefits to far larger numbers, beyond those covered under the scheme.
- 11 states/UTs have expanded the coverage to include almost all families. 23 states/UTs have expanded the beneficiary base with the same benefit coverage as under PMJAY or lower.
- Several states have merged their many ongoing schemes with PMJAY to make implementation simpler for both beneficiaries and participating hospitals.
- They don't need to deal with different target groups, rates, and reporting systems.
- Karnataka has merged seven different existing schemes into one, while Kerala has merged three different schemes.

Private sector participation

- More than half of the empaneled hospitals are private. Over 62% of the treatments have been done by private hospitals.
- PM-JAY has created a massive demand for private and public sector services by making hospital facilities accessible to 55 crore people.
- In tier II and tier III cities, private sector hospitals are witnessing an almost 20% increase in footfall.
- Public sector facilities have streamlined their processes so as to improve service quality and amenities with funds from PMJAY.

Employment

- With the setting up of 1.5 lakh HWCs by 2022, an expected 1.5 lakh jobs will be created for community health officers, including 50,000 multi-purpose health workers.
- It has generated approximately 50,000-60,000 jobs in the first year itself and is expected to add over 12.5 lakh jobs in both public and private sectors over the next three to five years.
- 90% of them are in the healthcare sector and the remaining in allied sectors such as insurance and implementation support.
- 1.5 lakh beds will be added to existing and new hospitals. This will lead to the creation of around 7.5 lakh new opportunities for doctors, nurses, technicians, pharmacists and frontline healthcare workers such as Pradhan Mantri Arogya Mitras.

Way Forward

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- Tap the potential of collective bargaining and leveraging economies of scale to deliver affordable and quality healthcare through devices, implants, and supplies.
- Prescribing and ensuring adherence to standard treatment protocols.
- Strengthening the linkage between HWCs and PMJAY to improve the backward and forward referrals and enhance overall healthcare services to the poor.
- "Greenfield" states with no past experience of implementing healthcare schemes have to work harder to scale up their progress.

Source: Indian Express

Ganga Data Collector

GS-III | 23 September, 2019

GS-III: Ganga Data Collector



News

Ganga Data Collector

- Dehradun based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has launched a mobile application "Ganga Data Collector".
- This is under the "Biodiversity and Ganga Conservation" project initiated by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) of Union Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- The app will provide field researchers with a complete data entry solution to monitor the aquatic population in the river.
- The scientists of WII, Ganga Prahri volunteers and staff of the forest department in the Ganga Basin will use this application on their mobile phones.
- The Ganga basin covers 11 states including Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Delhi.
- It will make faster collection of more authentic and accurate data related to water quality and aquatic life in Ganga.

Working

- The associates will collect data related to quality of water, presence of different species of fishes, amphibians and reptiles, crocodiles and turtles, dolphins, birds, water level and weather.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- They will file these details in data-sheets along with information of date, time and location of collection data.

Source: Indian Express

Sagittarius A*

GS-III | 23 September, 2019

GS-III: Sagittarius A*



News

Sagittarius A*

- It is a supermassive black hole that sits 26,000 light years away from Earth, near the Galactic Centre, or the centre of the Milky Way.
- It is one of the few black holes where we can witness the flow of matter nearby.
- Since the discovery of Sagittarius A* 24 years ago, it has been fairly calm.

Why in news?

- This year Sagittarius A* has shown unusual activity, and the area around it has been much brighter than usual.
- It may be that the Sagittarius A* has become hungrier, and has been feeding on nearby matter at a markedly faster rate, which one researcher described as a "big feast".
- A black hole does not emit light by itself, but the matter that it consumes can be a source of light.
- A large quantity of gas from the S0-2 star, which travelled close to the black hole last year, may now have reached the latter.
- Other possibilities of the heightened activity are that it could be growing faster than usual in size, or that the current model that measures its level of brightness is inadequate and is in need of an update.

Source: Indian Express

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Seeking to Secure

GS-II | 23 September, 2019

GS-II: Seeking to Secure



News

The move to link Aadhaar with GST registration is a tentative step in the right direction. Since the Centre and States passed the landmark legislation in 2016 adopting the single countrywide GST.

What is GST?

- It is a destination-based taxation system.
- It has been established by the **101st Constitutional Amendment Act**.
- It is an **indirect tax for the whole country** on the lines of "One Nation One Tax" to make India a unified market.
- It is a single tax on supply of Goods and Services in its entire product cycle or life cycle i.e. from manufacturer to the consumer.
- It is calculated only in the "Value addition" at any stage of a goods or services.
- The final consumer will pay only his part of the tax and not the entire supply chain which was the case earlier.
- There is a provision of GST Council to decide upon any matter related to GST whose chairman is the finance minister of India.

GSTN to make Aadhaar authentication mandatory for new dealers from January 2020:

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Network has decided to make Aadhaar authentication or physical verification mandatory for new dealers from January 2020 so as to check malpractices in GST. Aadhaar authentication was earlier optional.
- This decision was taken after noticing in last two years that there are a good number of fly-by-night operators, who make fake invoices.
- For those who do not want Aadhaar authentication, physical verification will be carried out, which will be completed in 3 days.
- As refunding is a big issue, the GST Network has also decided on complete online refunding from 24 September 2019 from a single source, either by Central GST or State GST.
- Moreover, no State government is in favour of slashing the GST slab for Automobile sector from 28% to 18%, fearing loss of revenue.

Way Forward :

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

In its 37th meeting in Goa the council also agreed to appraise the possibility of making the also agreed to appraise the possibility of making the bio-metrics unique identifier mandatory for claiming refunds . GSTN the information technology backbone on which the whole tax systems runs . The council too needs to follow the network's lead and move swiftly to recommend mandatory link for refunds especially since that has proved to be the main sources of most frauds.

Source: THE HINDU

ASPIRE IAS

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Renewable energy target to be more than doubled

GS-III | 24 September, 2019

GS-III: Renewable energy target to be more than doubled.



News

India's renewable energy target will be increased to 450GW, PM Modi said at United Nations Climate Action Summit. India today has come not just to talk about the seriousness of this issues but to present a practical approach a road map.

Renewable energy in India –Progress, Challenges, Opportunities

The government had set an ambitious target to achieve 175GW renewable energy but India extended the target 450GW of Renewable Energy capacity by 2022. According to BP Energy Outlook report 2019 the consumption of coal 56% in 2017 decline to at least 48% in 2040. This shows that India has adopting clean energy technology. If necessary measure are not taken, India will not be able to adapt to the era defining by sustainable energy technologies.

What is Renewable Energy?

- Energy generated from renewable sources (which are constantly replenished) is known as renewable energy. Example: solar power, wind energy, tidal energy, geothermal energy etc.
- In recent years renewable energy is globally established as the mainstream energy sources.
- This is mainly due to policy initiatives and targets that have sent a positive signal to the industries.
- Despite the progress in renewable adoption it is insufficient to achieve the goals under the Paris Agreement or SDG 7 within the deadline.

Why is it important for India?

Reduce Oil Demand:

- It is evident that India has a vast amount of renewable resources.
- What India doesn't have is the conventional energy sources like petrol and diesel.
- India imports 84 % of its oil needs.
- If India opts for renewable energy source the global oil prices won't affect India's economy.

Rural Electrification:

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- India still has many locations that do not have access to electricity.
- Electrification of remote areas and inaccessible terrains is not possible using grid connectivity.
- This is because renewable energy sources are inexhaustible and the sourcing is versatile.

Government Policy Initiatives in the Renewable Energy Sector:



Way forward:

It is estimated that India has the capacity to extract 900GW from commercially available sources like wind, hydro energy, bio energy etc.

High financial assistance is essential for this nascent sector to grow.

Bulk production can reduce the production cost.

It is essential to integrate the new technologies with the existing infrastructure to reduce the cost of renewable technology.

Source: THE HINDU

Multipurpose National ID Card

GS-II | 24 September, 2019

GS-II: Multipurpose National ID Card



News

India could have a single multi-purpose unique card that will serve as an identity card and double up as a voter card, PAN and even a passport said Union Home Minister.

Multipurpose National ID Card (MPNIC):

- MPNIC was first suggested by a 2001 report on "Reforming the National Security System" by an empowered Group of Ministers during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The GOM report itself was a response to the K Subrahmanyam-led Kargil Review Committee, which was instituted in the wake of the Kargil conflict of 1999.
- The GOM included LK Advani, (MHA), George Fernandes (Minister of Defence), Jaswant Singh (MEA), and Yashwant Sinha (Minister of Finance) recommended MPNIC in relation to the growing threat from illegal migration.

Are we seeing the reprise of the MPNIC?

- It is difficult to surmise if MPNIC exactly is being reprised.
- Although there is no such scheme in the offing, it was possible to get rid of excess processes and cards such as the Aadhaar card, the voter card, the identity card etc.
- But the government would want to link various databases if it intends to create a card that works as a single point of access to various accounts held by an individual.
- Moreover, technology has taken a giant leap since the MPNIC was first proposed in 2001.
- A good example of that is the existence of the Aadhaar database, which now has almost all residents of India on it.

Source: Indian Express

Inequality of another kind.

GS-II | 24 September, 2019

GS-II: Inequality of another kind.



News

Kerala HC declared the Right to Internet access as a fundamental right forming a part of the right to privacy and the right to education under **Art 21** of the Constitution.

What's the issue?

- A college student from Kozhikode was recently expelled from the college hostel for using her mobile phone beyond the restricted hours.
- This was challenged in the court.
- The petitioner contended that the internet, accessible through mobile phones or laptops, provided an avenue for the students to gather knowledge.

Digital Inequality:

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

In recent times, several government and private sector services have become digital. Some of them are only available online. This leads to a new kind of inequality, digital inequality, where social and economic backwardness is exacerbated due to information poverty, lack of infrastructure, and lack of digital literacy. According to the Deloitte report, 'Digital India: Unlocking the Trillion Dollar Opportunity', in mid-2016, digital literacy in India was less than 10%. We are moving to a global economy where knowledge of digital processes will transform the way in which people work, collaborate, consume information, and entertain themselves. This has been acknowledged in the Sustainable Development Goals as well as by the Indian government and has led to the Digital India mission. Offering services online has cost and efficiency benefits for the government and also allows citizens to bypass lower-level government bureaucracy. However, in the absence of Internet access and digital literacy enabling that access, there will be further exclusion of large parts of the population, exacerbating the already existing digital divide.

Moving governance and service delivery online without the requisite progress in Internet access and digital literacy also does not make economic sense. For instance, Common Service Centres, which operate in rural and remote locations, are physical facilities which help in delivering digital government services and informing communities about government initiatives. While the state may be saving resources by moving services online, it also has to spend resources since a large chunk of citizens cannot access these services. The government has acknowledged this and has initiated certain measures in this regard. The Bharat Net programme, aiming to have an optical fibre network in all gram panchayats, is to act as the infrastructural backbone for having Internet access all across the country. However, the project has consistently missed all its deadlines while the costs involved have doubled.

Similarly, the National Digital Literacy Mission has barely touched 1.67% of the population and has been struggling for funds. This is particularly worrying because Internet access and digital literacy are dependent on each other, and creation of digital infrastructure must go hand in hand with the creation of digital skills.

Importance of digital literacy:

Internet access and digital literacy have implications beyond access to government services. Digital literacy allows people to access information and services, collaborate, and navigate socio-cultural networks. In fact, the definition of literacy today must include the ability to access and act upon resources and information found online. While the Kerala High Court judgment acknowledges the role of the right to access Internet in accessing other fundamental rights, it is imperative that the right to Internet access and digital literacy be recognised as a right in itself. In this framework the state would have (i) a positive obligation to create infrastructure for a minimum standard and quality of Internet access as well as capacity-building measures which would allow all citizens to be digitally literate and (ii) a negative obligation prohibiting it from engaging in conduct that impedes, obstructs or violates such a right. Recognising the right to internet access and digital literacy will also make it easier to demand accountability from the state, as well as encourage the legislature and the executive to take a more proactive role in

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

furthering this right. The courts have always interpreted Article 21 as a broad spectrum of rights considered incidental and/or integral to the right to life.

Way Forward:

A right to Internet access would also further provisions given under **Articles 38(2) and 39** of the Constitution. It has now become settled judicial practice to read **fundamental rights along with directive principles** with a view to defining the scope and ambit of the former. We are living in an **'information society'**. Unequal access to the Internet creates and reproduces socio-economic exclusions. It is important to recognise the right to Internet access and digital literacy to alleviate this situation, and allow citizens increased access to information, services, and the creation of better livelihood opportunities.

Source: THE HINDU

Making the grand India PSB mergers work

GS-III | 24 September, 2019

GS-III: Making the grand India PSB mergers work.



News

The initial enthusiasm of market analysts to the bank merger announcement is giving way to wariness and scepticism.

Procedure of Bank Merger

- An application for merger is submitted by the concerned banks to the Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies (CRCS).
- A copy of the application is also sent to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) along with valuation report and information relevant for consideration of the scheme of merger.
- The RBI then examines the scheme in respect to the interests of depositors and conveys its decision to the CRCS.

What is the rationale behind the mergers?

- It was the **Narasimham Committee in the late 1990s** that recommended consolidation through a process of merging strong banks.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- There are too many banks in India with sizes that are minuscule by global standards with their growth constricted by their inability to expand.
- Given this, the biggest plus of the mergers is that they will create banks of scale.
- According to the government, banks have been merged on the basis of likely operating efficiencies, better usage of equity and their technological platform.
- But the move marks a departure from the plan to privatise some of the banks or bringing in strategic investors to usher in reform in the sector.
- The government has decided amalgamation as the "best route" to achieve banking sector scale.
- This is also expected to support the target of achieving a \$5 trillion economic size for India in 5 years.
- However, mergers may not lead to any immediate improvement in their credit metrics.

How effective could the merger be?

- Bank consolidation is a good move towards improving efficiency of the PSBs.
- This would enable the consolidated entities to meaningfully improve scale of operations and help their competitive position.
- Given that the merged banks are on similar technology platform, the integration should be smoother.
- However, there may not be any immediate improvement in their credit metrics as all of them have relatively weak solvency profiles.

What are the challenges and priorities now?

- Mergers are driven by synergies in products, business, geographies or technology and the most important, cost synergies.
- There may be some geographical synergies between the banks being merged now.
- But unless banks realise cost synergies through branch and staff rationalisation, the mergers may not mean much to them or to the economy.
- This is where the government's strategy becomes significant.
- Evidently, public sector banks are overstaffed.
- But the **key reforms to be made are at the board level**, including in appointments, especially of government nominees.
- These are often political appointees, with little exposure to banking.

Way forward:

While such consolidation can result in handsome productivity gains, what matters is the quality of execution by a stable and committed leadership aided by a shrewd and benign ownership.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Source: THE HINDU

Sign language dictionary gets 4,000 new words

GS-I | 24 September, 2019

GS-I: Sign language dictionary gets 4,000 new words.



News

Around 4000 words are likely to be added to the Indian sign language dictionary in 2020.

Aim:

The aim of developing the Indian Sign Language Dictionary was to remove communications barriers between the deaf and hearing communities.

Work Under Way:

On the occasion of International Sign Language Day Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment said the addition of 4,000 words to the sign language dictionary would be done by 2020. Right now the work of identifying signs for words across categories including administration, medical, legal, education, agriculture with the help of the hearing impaired community.

About ISL Dictionary :

- Dictionary has developed in both print & video format.
- ISLR&TC has developed this dictionary for offering deaf & hearing people maximum words to learn & expressing their feelings, ideas.
- Dictionary consists of various categories of words, like, everyday terms, legal terms, medical terms, academic terms & technical terms.

Source: THE HINDU

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

IPCC report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate.

GS-III | 26 September, 2019

GS-I: IPCC report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate.



News

With representatives from nearly 200 countries at the UN Climate Summit underway in the United States, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made public a special report. It underlined the dire changes taking place in oceans, glaciers and ice-deposits on land and sea.

About the report

- The 'Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate' was prepared following an IPCC Panel decision in 2016 to prepare three Special Reports.
- It follows the Special Reports on Global Warming of 1.5°C (SR1.5), and on Climate Change and Land (SRCCL).

Unprecedented conditions ahead:

- Over the 21st century, the ocean is projected to transition to unprecedented conditions with increased temperatures, further ocean acidification, marine heatwaves and more frequent extreme El Niño and La Niña events," according to the report.
- It is virtually certain that the global ocean has warmed unabated since 1970 and has taken up more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate system (high confidence).
- Since 1993, the rate of ocean warming has more than doubled.
- Marine heatwaves have very likely doubled in frequency since 1982 and are increasing in intensity, the report notes.
- The Southern Ocean accounted for 35%–43% of the total heat gain in the upper 2,000 m global ocean between 1970 and 2017, and its share increased to 45%–62% between 2005 and 2017.

Sea level rise:

Globally sea levels are estimated to rise 1.1 metre by 2100, if countries are not able to restrict emissions "well below" 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

This is likely to have a direct impact on the lives of 680 million people living in low-lying coastal zones.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The IPCC is an intergovernmental body of the UN dedicated to providing the world with an objective, scientific view of climate change, its natural, political and economic impacts and risks, and possible response options.
- The IPCC was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and was later endorsed by the UNGA.
- Membership is open to all members of the WMO and UN.
- The IPCC produces reports that contribute to the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the main international treaty on climate change.
- In addition to climate assessment reports, the IPCC publishes Special Reports on specific topics.

Source: THE HINDU

Impeachment of a US President

GS-II | 26 September, 2019

GS-II: Impeachment of a US President.



News

The speaker of US House of Representatives announced that it would launch an impeachment inquiry against President Trump.

Trump is accused for his efforts to pressure Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden, Trump's potential rival in the 2020 elections.

Impeachment in US:

- Impeachment is a provision that allows Congress to remove the President of the United States.
- Under the US Constitution, the House of Representatives (Lower House) has the "the sole power of impeachment" while the Senate (Upper House) has "the sole power to try all impeachments".

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court has the duty of presiding over impeachment trials in the Senate.

Grounds for impeachment:

- The President can be removed from office for "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors".
- What constitutes these "high crimes" and "misdemeanors" (misdemeanors), however, is not clearly spelt out.
- Essentially, it means an abuse of power by a high-level public official. This does not necessarily have to be a violation of an ordinary criminal statute.
- Historically, in the US, it has encompassed corruption and other abuses, including trying to obstruct judicial proceedings.

The Process:



House Vote:

- It begins with an investigation by a House committee.
- In the Nixon and Clinton cases, the House Judiciary Committee held that investigation and recommended articles of impeachment to the full House.
- In Trump's case, six committees are investigating him on impeachable offences.

Senate Trial and Vote:

- The Senate holds a trial, overseen by the chief justice of the Supreme Court.
- A team of lawmakers from the House, known as managers, play the role of prosecutors.
- The President has defence lawyers, and the Senate serves as the jury.
- If at least two-thirds of the Senators present find the President guilty, he is removed and the Vice President takes over as President.

Source: THE HINDU

Draft National Resource Efficiency Policy

GS-III | 26 September, 2019

GS-III: Draft National Resource Efficiency Policy

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

News

Against the backdrop of resource depletion in India the MoEFCC has drafted a National Resource Efficiency Policy (NREP).

About the Policy

- It aims to double the recycling rate of key materials to 50% in the next five years and enable upcycling of waste.
- The agenda is to develop a circular economy.
- This can be achieved by two measures:
 - By recycling the materials, and
 - By increasing the efficiency of use of these resources.
- The draft has proposed significant policy instruments like addressing regulatory gaps in implementation of waste laws, landfill taxes, high tipping fees especially for bulk generators of waste, etc.

National Resource Efficiency Authority

The draft policy envisions setting up a National Resource Efficiency Authority which will help develop resource efficiency strategies for different sectors and adopt them into a three-year action plan.

To begin with, seven key sectors have been identified automobile, plastic packaging, building and construction sector, electrical and electronic equipment sector, solar photo-voltaic sector, and steel and aluminium sector.

Why need such Policy?

Linear production and consumption is leading to a lot of wastage in the entire value chain.

Opportunities exist at each and every stage of the product cycle which can be utilized, especially at a time, when the economy is going through a rough patch.

For various sectors

The Automobile Sector

- The NGT had imposed ban on diesel vehicles more than ten years old in the National Capital Region in view of the rising pollution levels.
- Following which, more vehicles will end up as end-of-life vehicles.
- Under the policy, the government plans to set up centres to collect such vehicles and carry out the deregistration process, and shredding centres which would segregate materials for recycling.
- As many as 20 official dismantlers would be established across major urban centres by 2020.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- The plan is to ensure 75% recycling rate for vehicles made before 1990, 85% recycling rate for vehicles made between 1990 and 2000, and 90% recycling rate for vehicles made after 2000.

Plastic wastes

Another concern is plastic waste, contributing 8% of the total solid waste.

The draft policy aims to achieve a 100% recycling and reuse rate polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic by 2025.

Construction materials

The draft policy also aims to gradually reducing dependence on virgin materials and enhance re-use of construction and demolition waste.

There will be emphasis on developing codes and standards for quality of secondary raw materials to ensure confidence in the product, so that by 2025, at least 30% of total public procurement of construction materials can be from recycled materials.

Source: Live Mint

Quantum Supremacy
GS-III | 26 September, 2019

GS-III: Quantum Supremacy.



News

A draft research paper claimed Google researchers have achieved a long-ought-after goal in physics called "quantum supremacy".

Quantum Supremacy:

- It refers to a quantum computer solving a problem that cannot be expected of a classical computer in a normal lifetime.
- This relates to the speed at which a quantum computer performs.
- The phrase "quantum supremacy" was coined in 2011 by John Preskill, Professor of Theoretical Physics at the California Institute of Technology in a speech.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- According to reports the quantum processor took 200 seconds to perform a calculation that the world's fastest supercomputer, Summit, would have taken 10,000 years to accomplish.
- The draft paper is believed to be an early version of a paper that has been submitted to a scientific journal.

What is quantum computing?

- Quantum computing takes advantage of the strange ability of subatomic particles to exist in more than one state at any time.
- Due to the way the tiniest of particles behave, operations can be done much more quickly and use less energy than classical computers.

How is Quantum computer different from a traditional computer?

- What differentiates a quantum computer from a traditional computer is the way the two store information.
- Quantum computers perform calculations based on the probability of an object's state before it is measured instead of just 1s or 0s which means they have the potential to process exponentially more data compared to classical computers.
- Classical computers carry out logical operations using the definite position of a physical state.
- These are usually binary, meaning its operations are based on one of two positions. A single state – such as on or off, up or down, 1 or 0 is called a bit.
- In quantum computing, operations instead use the quantum state of an object to produce what's known as a qubit.
- These states are the undefined properties of an object before they've been detected, such as the spin of an electron or the polarisation of a photon.

Source: Indian Express

Peekaboo, guess who

GS-II | 26 September, 2019

GS-II: Peekaboo, guess who

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UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Context

The Supreme Court, responding to a plea by Facebook, has expressed serious concern about the electronic Wild West that internet technology has opened up. It directed the government to file an affidavit within three weeks outlining a strategy to get social media platforms to share information with law enforcement without compromising the privacy of citizens.

What the court said

It asked why citizens must suffer being trolled and maligned with the impunity conferred by anonymity, and without hope of easy legal remedy.

What are the problems in handling the issue

- The society has become eager to both give and take offence.
- There are countervailing claims of different rights.
- None of the stakeholders involved have practised fully ethical practices.
- The government itself permits the rampant misuse and abuse of the law against citizens who speak out online.
- Some governments have stooped to using the instrument directly against their own people.
- Supreme Court ruling in Shreya Singhal vs Union of India said that "It is clear that Section 66A arbitrarily, excessively and disproportionately invades the right of free speech and upsets the balance between such right and the reasonable restrictions." In the judges' view, Section 66A suffered from the deficit of "vagueness", encouraging arbitrariness.
- The guidelines which the government is required to produce may be as arbitrary in practice, because perceptions of right and wrong are socially determined, rather than legally.
- The social media platforms which would follow these guidelines have not consistently been ideal guardians of the balance between privacy and accountability.

Way Forward:

The court, has, over the years has expanded the contours of free speech. It may finally rely on existing laws and processes. If applied prudently and morally, they should suffice the purpose.

Source: Indian Express

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Institutions weakened, economy crippled

GS-III | 27 September, 2019

GS-III: Institutions weakened, economy crippled.



News

The credibility of the RBI, the CSO and the NITI AAYOG has taken a beating in recent times due to political interference. Why are the ambitions of economic development practitioners and reformers so often disappointed?

Institutions weakened:

The slowdown in GDP growth rate has been dissected digressed and disowned by analysts, commentators and policymakers. However the diagnosis is far from complete and the growth engine is running out of fuel.

Both the demand and supply side factors have been central in all the analyses but the crucial role of institutions in shaping the outcomes of both the factors in this episode of slowdown has been neglected.

A market centred economic model necessitates creating and sustaining credible institutions that further the efficiency of market mechanism.

The credibility of three such important institutions – the RBI, the Central Statistical Organisation and NITI AAYOG has taken a beating in recent times.

Major Factors Affecting India's Growth:

Consumption:

Private consumption, which contributes nearly 55-60% to India's GDP, has been slowing down.

While the reduced income growth of households has reduced urban consumption, drought/near-drought conditions in three of the past five years coupled with the collapse of food prices have taken a heavy toll on rural consumption.

Savings:

Savings by household sector – which are used to extend loans for investment -- have gone down from 35% (FY12) to 17.2% (FY18).

Households, including MSMEs, make 23.6% of the total savings in the GDP.

Investment:

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), a metric to gauge investment in the economy, too has declined from 34.3 per cent in 2011 to 28.8 per cent in 2018, government data show. Similarly, in the private sector, it has declined from 26.9% in 2011 to 21.4% in 2018.

NBFC crisis triggered by IL&FS default led to a liquidity crunch in the economy.

RBI's Annual report highlighted that there are still structural issues in land, labour, agricultural marketing and the like that need to be addressed.

Erosion in RBI's autonomy:

The RBI which was clamouring for more autonomy, has been systematically brought under the ambit of the central government. A three pronged strategy resulted in this first the RBI was bypassed on matters relating to currency, secondly its role as regulator of the banking sector was questioned when banks flattered and finally its reserve were siphoned. The net result has been that the RBI has been reduced into an institutions which presides over a limited space of monetary policy that is inflation targeting.

Way Forward:

It is useful to focus on understanding and reforming the forces that keep bad institutions in place, especially political institutions and the distribution of political power. This requires the understanding the complex relationship between political institutions and the political equilibrium. The use of high quality academic information which the present establishment lacks, is valuable both to think about these issues and generate better policy advice.

Source: THE HINDU

National Population Register 2020

GS-I | 27 September, 2019

GS-I: National Population Register 2020.

News

Government has revived National Population Register (NPR) project at a time when National

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Register of Citizens has been published in Assam.

National Population Register (NPR):

- The NPR is a list of "usual residents of the country". The exercise is conducted at the local, sub-district, district, state and national levels.
- According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, a "usual resident of the country" is one who has been residing in a local area for at least the last six months, or intends to stay in a particular location for the next six months.
- The NPR is being prepared under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
- It is mandatory for every "usual resident of India" to register in the NPR.
- The data for the NPR were first collected in 2010 along with the houselisting phase of Census 2011. In 2015, this data was further updated by conducting a door-to-door survey.
- It will be conducted in conjunction with the houselisting phase, the first phase of the Census, by the Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) under the MHA for Census 2021.

How is NPR different from NRC?

- Unlike the NRC, the NPR is not a citizenship enumeration drive, as it would record even a foreigner staying in a locality for more than six months.
- Only Assam will not be included, given the recently completed NRC.

Controversy around it

- It comes in the backdrop of the NRC excluding 19 lakh people in Assam.
- With the government insisting that the NRC would be implemented across the country, the NPR has raised anxieties around the idea of citizenship in the country.
- Even as a debate continues on Aadhaar and privacy, the NPR intends to collect a much larger amount of personal data on residents of India.
- The idea of conducting a nationwide NRC would only happen on the basis of the upcoming NPR.
- After a list of residents is created, a nationwide NRC could go about verifying the citizens from that list.

Is the NPR a new idea?

- The idea actually dates back to the UPA regime and was put in motion in 2009.
- In fact, at that time it had clashed with Aadhaar (UIDAI) over which project would be best suited for transferring government benefits to citizens.
- The MHA had then pushed the idea of the NPR being a better vehicle because it connected every NPR-recorded resident to a household through the Census.
- Back then, the Home Ministry push had even put the UIDAI project on the backburner.
- The exercise to update the 2015 NPR with additional data has begun and will be completed in 2020.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

What kind of data will NPR collect?

- The NPR will collect both demographic data and biometric data.
- There are 15 different categories of demographic data, ranging from name and place of birth to education and occupation, that the RGI is supposed to collect in the NPR.
- For biometric data it will depend on Aadhaar, for which it will seek Aadhaar details of the residents.
- Apart from this, in a test run going on across the country, the RGI is seeking details of mobile number, Aadhaar, PAN card, Driving Licence, Voter ID card and passport (in case the resident is Indian).

Why does the government want so much data?

Identifying own citizens:

- The first is the assertion that every country must have a comprehensive identity database of its residents with relevant demographic details.
- It says it will help the government formulate its policies better and also aid national security.

Streamlining data:

- The second, largely to justify the collection of data such as driving licence, voter ID and PAN numbers, is that it will only ease the life of those residing in India by cutting red tape.
- Not only will it help target government beneficiaries in a better way, but also further cut down paperwork and red tape in a similar manner that Aadhaar has done.

Preventing duplication of data:

- It is common to find different date of birth of a person on different government documents. NPR will help eliminate that.
- With NPR data, residents will not have to furnish various proofs of age, address and other details in official work. It would also eliminate duplication in voter lists, government insists.

Source: Indian Express

A climate emergency

GS-III | 27 September, 2019

GS-III: A climate emergency.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

News

The Indian government must take corrective measures immediately to combat climate change. A few generations from now our descendants may not see the animals and plants. Nearly 500 species have become extinct in just last century. We are depleting 25% more natural resources than the planet can sustain right now.

What is Climate Emergency?

There is no single definition of what that means but many local areas say they want to be carbon-neutral by 2030. It's a much more ambitious target than the UK governments, which is to reduce carbon emissions by 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050.

Climate Change is real:

Al Gore's 2006 film, An Inconvenient Truth, awakened the world to the dire causes and consequences of global warming. It made an impact on millions and initiated global debates on climate change. However, many of us were sceptical of the warnings. Some of us did not believe that our planet would ever run out of resources. We thought that discussions would take place among scientists and environmentalists, but that the impact of climate change would never really be felt by us. And that if it were to be felt, it would take a long time, perhaps a couple of centuries.

In just 13 years, Al Gore's predictions have become real and haunting. Now the effects of climate change are at our doorsteps. Cyclones such as Thane, Vardah, Ockhi and Gaja have affected Tamil Nadu in recent times; Chennai saw terrible floods in 2015. Floods wreaked havoc in Assam, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar this year, and Mumbai received record monsoon rains. Kerala witnessed floods for the second consecutive year. Cyclone Fani devastated Odisha, Cyclone Vayu ravaged Gujarat this year. All these are because of climate change. Meanwhile, Europe saw the highest temperatures ever in recorded history. This July, Paris recorded its highest temperature of 42.6°C.

Global warming will drastically affect agriculture the production of rice, wheat, maize and soya will decrease significantly. Apart from malnutrition, climate change will give birth to newer infections and illness. This imbalance will in turn affect the economy which will lead to conflict, war and global unrest. Global warming is already melting the polar ice caps. If this continues, sea levels will rise and submerge coastal cities. These natural disasters will make millions of people climate refugees.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report states that averting a climate crisis will require reinvention of the global economy. By 2040, there could be global food shortages, inundation of coastal cities and a huge refugee crisis,

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Steps to be taken:

- UN and climate experts have called for the declaration of a global climate emergency. Countries like the U.K., Canada, France and Ireland have already declared climate emergencies. So have local bodies and NGOs worldwide.
- Unfortunately India and U.S. are still slow to act. Which countries are responsible for historical emissions is now past the stage of debate. Global warming will affect every individual in every country.
- It is the duty of every human and government to take steps to stop the climate crisis. The Indian government should declare a climate emergency immediately.
- Immediate policy changes should include reducing the usage of fossil fuels by half by 2030, encouraging the use of public transport, increasing forest area, promoting non-conventional energy, devising good water management policies, implementing the plastic ban stringently, banning the burning of waste, promoting innovative urban planning policies and reducing mass rearing of cattle for human consumption.
- Let us all join together to save the only planet we have.

Source: THE HINDU

Call money rates should be close to policy rate , says liquidity panel.

GS-III | 27 September, 2019

GS-III: Call money rates should be close to policy rate , says liquidity panel.



News

An internal working group formed by the RBI to review the current liquidity management framework has suggested that the framework should be guided by the objective of maintaining the target rate.

What is Call Money?

The call money market is an essential part of the Indian Money Market, where the day-to-day

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

surplus funds (mostly of banks) are traded. The money market is a market for short-term financial assets that are close substitutes of money. The most important feature of a money market instrument is that it is liquid and can be turned into money quickly at low cost and provides an avenue for equilibrating the short-term surplus funds of lenders and the requirements of borrowers.

The loans are of short-term duration varying from 1 to 14 days, are traded in call money market. The money that is lent for one day in this market is known as "Call Money", and if it exceeds one day (but less than 15 days) it is referred to as "Notice Money". Term Money refers to Money lent for 15 days or more in the Inter Bank Market.

Way Forward:

The current provision of assured liquidity upto 1% of NDTL is no longer necessary since the proposed liquidity framework would entirely meet the system's liquidity. In case build up of a large liquidity deficit or surplus is expected to persist it should be offset through appropriate durable liquidity operations.

Source: THE HINDU

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Not their business: OIC remarks on Art 370

GS-II | 28 September, 2019

GS-II: Not their business: OIC remarks on Art 370



News

The OIC's Kashmir Contact Group issued a statement calling on India to "rescind its actions revoking Article 370".

Impact of the statement

- It allows the **Pakistan Prime Minister to sell the theory back at home** that his trip to New York has met with some success.
- From the **mid-1990s, when this Contact Group was formed**, it has issued several statements on behalf of Pakistan.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation:

- Pakistan is a member along with Turkey, Niger, Azerbaijan, and Saudi Arabia. It boasts of a membership of 57 countries
- It is headquartered in Jeddah and receives its financial raison d'être from its chief benefactor, Saudi Arabia.
- Its influence on world affairs has always been marginal.

Differences within OIC:

- It is doubtful if the statement issued by the Contact Group reflects the national positions of the individual member states.
- UAE conferred the Order of Zayed, its highest civilian award on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, more than a week after New Delhi's moves on Article 370, and declared that Kashmir was India's internal matter.
- The OIC's record of conflict resolution on issues between OIC member states is poor.
- Its attempts to meddle in Kashmir by appointing a so-called special envoy on Jammu and Kashmir, have amounted to nothing.

Need for reforms in OIC:

- It should ask Pakistan to change its state policy on terrorism.
- Pakistan should abjure support to Kashmir-centric groups such as the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Lashkar-e-Taiba
- It can mediate between warring Saudi Arabia and Yemen.
- India, though not a part of the OIC, has the second-largest number of Muslims in the world.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Way Forward:

India must demonstrate to the world that its new Kashmir policy is in the larger interest of all Kashmiris.

Source: THE HINDU

The Morbidity of Jihad

GS-II | 28 September, 2019

GS-II: The Morbidity of Jihad.



News

The absence of exact data on crime could pose serious problems. In India, crime is under-reported and under-registered.

Problems with crime data:

- The manner in which crime data are collected and compiled.
- Crime data in India are collected and published by NCRB.
- The data reported in this publication is based on the crime reported to local police stations.
- Police stations getting information about the crime is one thing and such incidents being recorded as an FIR is another.
- Challenges of a complainant – All kinds of pressures and obstacles are put on a complainant, especially when the nature of crime is that of sexual assault, domestic violence or when it involves family members, relatives or powerful people.
- There is enormous resistance put up by the police station personnel in registering such crimes or reducing the seriousness of the incident.
- The NCRB data fall short of expectations in many respects.
- It is short on information about crime victims and witnesses.

The potential of a victimisation survey:

- A victimisation survey is often seen as a solution to such shortcomings.
- Many countries have conducted victimisation surveys to supplement their official crime data, India has yet to make a start.
- Such surveys reveal details that are missed out by the local police.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

- They describe how crime has impacted the lives of victims and convey their safety concerns.
- These surveys gather information through personal or telephonic interviews with a set of people who represent the geographical and social correlates of a city or state over a period of time.
- The information may detail the victimisation suffered by a person but not recorded by the police for a variety of reasons.
- The other data include risk and vulnerability, perceptions about the local police and the views of people about the criminal justice system.

Indian crime data – road ahead:

- India-specific yardsticks, which the NCRB does not cover, could be evolved.
- There could be several challenges to such surveys. People might not reveal more than what they have divulged to the police.
- There are several methodological innovations to overcome bottlenecks.
- It should be assigned to an institution that specialises in criminology, victimology and criminal justice administration.

Source: Indian Express

Ranitidine

GS-II | 28 September, 2019

GS-II: Ranitidine



News

- India's drug regulator this week began looking into concerns of potential cancer-causing substances contaminating popular acidity drug ranitidine.
- The move came over a week after the US flagged the issue to American patients, some companies have suspended sales of the product worldwide, and some have ordered recalls of the product.

Ranitidine:

- Ranitidine is an over-the-counter prescription antacid used in the treatment of acid reflux and peptic ulcer diseases.
- It is popularly known through brand names like Aciloc, Zinetac, Rantac and Rantac-OD, R-

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Loc and Ranitin.

- It is commonly used to relieve acid-related indigestion and heartburn by decreasing stomach acid production.
- While other medicines like pantoprazole and omeprazole (omez) too treat these symptoms and are more commonly prescribed today, ranitidine is still widely used in India.

Why in news?

- Ranitidine is a much older medication, but it was always thought to be a very safe drug because it has less side effects than the other drugs that patients use nowadays to treat these symptoms.
- The US FDA stated in a release that it had learned that some ranitidine medicines contained "low levels" of a substance called N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA).
- An environmental contaminant found in water and foods, NDMA has been classified as probably carcinogenic to humans, which means it has the potential to cause cancer.

How has India responded?

- The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) wrote to state regulators asking them to direct ranitidine active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) manufacturers to verify their products and take appropriate measures to ensure patient safety.
- DCGI asked states to inform him of action taken in this matter "at the earliest".
- So far, the DCGI has not called for any halting of supplies, which means the ranitidine brands marketed in the country can continue to be sold until further notice.
- APIs are the ingredients that give a medicine its therapeutic effect.

How have other countries responded?

- While India and the US are still looking into the issue, regulators of around 15 countries are learnt to have called for recalls of ranitidine sold in their markets.
- These include Singapore, Canada, Italy, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Switzerland and Pakistan.

Source: Indian Express

Goldschmidtite
GS-I | 28 September, 2019

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

GS-I: Goldschmidtite



News

A new, curious mineral has been discovered inside a diamond unearthed from a mine in South Africa.

Goldschmidtite

- The mineral has been named goldschmidtite, after Victor Moritz Goldschmidt, the Norwegian scientist acknowledged as the founder of modern geochemistry.
- Goldschmidtite has an unusual chemical signature for a mineral from Earth's mantle, according to the University of Alberta, a student of which discovered it.

Formation:

- While the mantle is dominated by elements such as magnesium and iron, goldschmidtite has high concentrations of niobium, potassium and the rare earth elements lanthanum and cerium.
- It is **dark green and opaque**.
- Though the mantle makes up about 80 per cent of the Earth's volume, very little is known about it.
- Reaching the mantle is not easy; it is **about 2,900 km thick** and no attempt to drill into it has been successful.
- Diamonds hold clues as they are found up to 160 km beneath the surface, in the upper mantle.
- Diamonds that are unearthed were brought up closer to the surface, probably as a result of violent volcanic eruptions when the Earth was hotter, according to the Smithsonian Magazine.

Source: Indian Express

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Trust Deficit

GS-III | 30 September, 2019

GS-III: Trust deficit

News

It has been a nightmare of a week for thousands of customers of the Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank (PMC), who were told last Tuesday by the RBI that no more Rs.1,000 could be withdrawn from their accounts for a period for 6 months.

What are the implications of the decision?

- The PMC bank is a leading **urban cooperative bank** headquartered in Mumbai.
- The decision sent shock waves among thousands of its depositors.
- Panic-stricken customers rushed to bank's branches across the state and were unable to withdraw more than Rs 1,000.
- The Bank has a deposit base of **Rs 11,617 crore and operations across 7 states**.
- It has been put under the scanner by the RBI after "irregularities" were disclosed to RBI.
- It ranks among the top 10 cooperative banks in the country.
- Moreover, the RBI restrictions will remain in force for 6 months.
- Given these, the unrest among customers is likely to continue.

What went wrong?

- Reporting - With a deposit base of just over Rs 11,000 crore, PMC bank reported a net profit of Rs 99.69 crore in 2018-19 as against Rs 100.90 crore in 2017-18.
- The bank showed 3.76% (or Rs 315 crore) of advances (Rs 8,383 crore) as gross nonperforming assets (NPAs) in March 2019.
- This was a good performance considering that public sector banks recorded over 10% gross NPAs.
- With this, the total bad loans could be between Rs 2,000-2,500 crore.
- Though this was not flagged in the Annual Report of 2018-19, the RBI was following it in the wake of huge divergence in bad loan reporting.
- HDIL - The bank was funding a clutch of companies, mainly in the troubled real estate sector, led by Housing Development & Infrastructure Ltd (HDIL).
- Notably, the Wadhawans of HDIL group had close links with PMC Bank for a long time.
- PMC had given loan to Wadhawan even after HDIL defaulted on its loans to other banks.
- Notably, commercial banks have already declared HDIL a defaulter.
- HDIL was also taken to National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for insolvency proceedings.
- Recently, NCLT admitted an insolvency plea moved by the Bank of India against HDIL in connection with a Rs 522-crore loan default.
- PMC, however, claimed that the loan was much lower than Rs 2,500 crore quoted in the media.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Way Forward:

RBI shares regulatory responsibilities over such banks with states register of co-operative society further mires the problem. With over 1,500 urban co-operative banks operating the country and a few of them already under RBI imposed restrictions, a new road map is essential for their future course.

Source: THE HINDU

VP Menon's role in accession of J&K and other states.

GS-I | 30 September, 2019

GS-II: VP Menon's role in accession of J&K and other states.



News

Today marks the 126th birth anniversary of V P Menon. The nation remembers Sardar Patel's herculean efforts in ensuring that over 500 princely states seamlessly joined the Union of India. However it was Menon working in the background, travelling across the country and persuading different Maharajas and Nawabs to accede.

V.P. Menon:

Born on **September 30, 1893**, Menon was the Secretary in the Ministry of States which was established by the Government of India in 1947 to deal with the accession of princely states.

His contributions:

- Menon's greatest contribution was coming up with the original policy on accession that required the princely states to accede only in the three matters of defence, external affairs and communications.
- These the basic unity of India would be achieved and, when the new constitution was framed, we could thrash out the necessary details.
- It was Menon's policy piloted by Sardar Patel that was finally reflected in the Instrument of Accession (IoA) executed by the states becoming a part of the Union of India in 1947 and their seamless integration thereafter.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Role in J&K's accession:

- One of the states to which Menon travelled to secure its accession was Jammu and Kashmir.
- By October 25, 1947, an attack by Afridi tribesmen had reached the outskirts of Srinagar, forcing the Maharaja of J&K to escape the city and relocate to Jammu.
- On October 26, the Defence Committee of the Indian Government held a meeting to discuss the viability of a military intervention in J&K.
- Lord Mountbatten, who was part of this meeting observed that since J&K had not acceded to either India or Pakistan, it was an independent country.
- According to Mountbatten, if the Maharaja acceded to India, troops could be sent to rescue the state.
- Subsequently, it was Menon who immediately flew to Jammu and secured the Maharaja's signature on the loA.

The integration:

- With accession secured, the next challenge for Menon and his team in the Ministry of States was to ensure complete integration.
- This was a legally complex but politically straightforward matter in respect of most princely states.
- The negotiations between representatives of the Government of India and Sheikh Abdullah, then PM of J&K, in relation to J&K's status in India failed to produce a mutually acceptable result.
- It was thus decided that the Constitution of India would reflect the position under the 1947 loA.

Birth of Article 370

- The final text of Article 370 introduced in the Constitution of India is based on this understanding.
- Sheikh Abdullah proposed an alternative formulation which simply stated that the Indian Parliament would be entitled to legislate only on defence, external affairs and communications.
- Seemingly making light of Abdullah's objection, Menon asked that the following be conveyed to Patel:
- Parts II (citizenship), III (fundamental rights) and IV (directive principles) of the Constitution would apply automatically to Kashmir unless the position is expressly saved
- What worried Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference was that if these general provisions become applicable to Kashmir also, their legislation against other citizens of India in respect of acquisition etc. of property will become invalid.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Source: India Express

Galo community in Arunachal Pradesh

GS-I | 30 September, 2019

GS-I: Galo community in Arunachal Pradesh.



News

Members of the Galo community in Arunachal Pradesh can recall the name of their ancestor from 20 generations, and this is made possible by their system of naming.

Galo community:

- At about 1.5 lakh people, the Galos are one of the 26 major communities of Arunachal Pradesh, and dominate West Siang, Lepa Rada and Lower Siang districts.
- They have a big population in East Siang, Upper Subansiri and Namsai districts too.
- The Galos belong to the Tani group inhabiting Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, besides Tibet.
- They trace their common origin to a primeval ancestor, Abotani.

Uniqueness

- But unlike the Mising (Assam), Adi, Apatani, Nyishi and Tagin, the other communities, only the Galos maintain genealogy through given names.
- They have a system of prefixing the second syllable of a father's name to that of a son, who passes on the suffix in his name to his son.
- Hence they can trace the names of ancestors from the first syllable or prefix of our names.
- They have nine sub-clans: Angu, Bagra, Doji, Kamnyi, Karso, Naho, Ngomdir, Rasa or Rame, and Yorsi or Kamsi. The numbers of sub-clans of the other clans vary.

Source: THE HINDU

Asteroid named after Pandit Jasraj.

UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

GS-I | 30 September, 2019

GS-I: Asteroid named after Pandit Jasraj.



News

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) has named an asteroid, discovered in 2006, after Indian classical singer Pandit Jasraj.

About the asteroid:

- The asteroid, or more formally known as a minor planet, is located between Mars and Jupiter, and was discovered on November 11, 2006, by the Catalina Sky Survey in the United States.
- The privilege of naming a planet is first given to discoverers, who have 10 years to propose a name.
- All names proposed are judged by the Working Group for Small Body Nomenclature (CSBN) of the IAU, comprising professional astronomers with research interests in minor planets and comets from around the world.

International Astronomical Union:

- It is an international association of professional astronomers, at the PhD level and beyond, active in professional research and education in astronomy headquartered at Paris
- It acts as the internationally recognized authority for assigning designations to celestial bodies (stars, planets, asteroids, etc.) and any surface features on them.
- The IAU is a member of the International Council for Science (ICSU).
- Its main objective is to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects through international cooperation.
- The Indian National Science Academy is a member of this group.

About Pandit Jasraj:

- Pandit Jasraj (b. 1930) is an exponent of Indian classical vocal music.
- Jasraj is the recipient of numerous awards, honours, and titles, including the prestigious Padma Vibhushan and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award.
- His distinctive voice traverses a remarkable four-and-a-half octaves.

Source: THE HINDU

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