

# 22 Mar 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## B. GS2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. [Political parties yet to comply with RTI Act](#)

##### Issue:

- Despite a June 2013 ruling from the Central Information Commission (CIC) that they fall within the ambit of the transparency law, parties insist that they cannot be considered public authorities under the Act. Supreme Court to hear the petitioner.

##### Background:

- The issue goes back to October 2010, when ADR filed an RTI request seeking information on donations and contributions received by political parties.
- Following no response from the political parties except for Communist Party of India (CPI), ADR

complained to the CIC, the highest appellate body under the RTI Act.

- In a landmark judgment, in 2013, the Central Information Commission (CIC) had ruled that political parties come within the ambit of the Right to Information Act and that the national parties are public authorities.
- The CIC order said that since the National Political Parties INC/AICC, BJP, CPI(M), CPI, NCP and BSP have been substantially financed by the Central government, they are held to be public authorities under Section 2(h) of the RTI Act.
- The criticality of the role being played by these political parties in the democratic set-up and the nature of duties performed by them also point towards their public character, bringing them in the ambit of Section 2(h).
- They had asked the six political parties to make available details of voluntary financial contributions received by them and the donors' names and addresses.
- The CIC also directed the political parties to comply with the provisions of mandatory proactive disclosure by putting those details on their websites.
- While rejecting the arguments made by counsel of the political parties of their being out of the ambit of the RTI, the CIC referred to a Supreme Court judgment, which said that "the little man of this country would have the basic elementary right to know full particulars of a candidate who is to represent him in Parliament where laws to bind his liberty and property may be enacted."
- "The people of India must know the source of expenditure incurred by political parties and by the candidates in the process of election," the CIC concluded.
- However, the political parties, with the exception of the CPI refused to give away information, claiming that they do not come under the RTI Act.

#### Details:

- The petitioners say that the petition was filed because parties were defying the law and the CIC was unable to do anything about it.
- They are of the opinion that "National political parties are the main players as far as elections are concerned. In a democratic system of governance, it is essential that they are held accountable by informed citizens."
- RTI activists say that only limited financial information is available. "Especially given that limits on corporate funding have been removed, and the issues with electoral bonds and foreign funding, and the potential for conflict of interest, it is important that parties are subject to RTI.
- Petitioners have argued that national parties receive hundreds of crores worth of indirect funding in the form of complete tax exemption, free airtime on government television and radio and bungalows and large tracts of land given free or at nominal rates in prime parts of Delhi and state capitals. They also have constitutional and legal responsibilities as they are registered with the Election Commission of India (ECI) and play a vital role in public life and governance. A number of non-governmental organisations, trusts, schools and clubs have also been declared public authorities under the Act.
- Six years later, the Supreme Court is set to adjudicate on the issue.

## C. GS3 Related

### Category: ENVIRONMENT

#### 1. Enforcing a ban will not end the menace of stubble burning, say researchers

##### Issue:

A team of Swiss and Indian researchers who interviewed 600 farmers over 2 years say that only educating farmers about the monetary costs of burning stubble can address the environmental crisis triggered every

### **Background:**

- For the last few years, farmers of Punjab and Haryana have faced public wrath and governmental action as one crop season ends and stubbles are burnt by them, causing massive air pollution not only in these two states but also in the nearby national capital.
- Burning stubble, the rice chaff left over after harvesting, is linked to winter air-pollution in the State as well as down-wind Delhi.
- The problem becomes more acute for big cities like Delhi, Gurugram and Ludhiana as they already have an unacceptable level of contaminated air due to heavy traffic, unplanned growth, polluting industries and depleting green cover.
- Under pressure from the green tribunal, state governments have even imposed penalties on farmers who do not adhere to the ban on stubble burning.
- Unfortunately, stubble burning continues unabated. The farmers instead of being apologetic, are belligerent in their defiance as they point to the cost involved if they have to buy or engage farm equipment required for crop residue management.
- They also refer to the prevalent three-crop economy in these two states, which means they have a very small time window before the next crop is planted.
- The increase in wages for farm labour and the decrease in migrant labour also prompts farmers to continue with stubble burning.

### **Details:**

- According to the team, the government's efforts — earmarking funds for specialised farming equipment (for straw management) or enforcing the state-led ban on the practice — are unlikely to solve the problem.
- Farmer cooperative groups — a key link between government and farmers — ought to be playing a more active role in educating farmers, say key authors.
- They opine that there are deeper causes beyond economic incentives or awareness about the health consequences of burning at play.

### **Way forward:**

- There are other alternatives. For example, the states can purchase the residues from the farmers and handle it for their benefits in a cost-effective way.
- Focus should also be on year-long awareness programmes on the benefits of managing crop residues.
- The farmers need to be made aware that it is not just an urban problem, but, smog and its related dangers kills their own people, and deteriorates the soil quality.
- The State's activism should be focused on generating resources by seeking assistance from the global agencies created under the Paris agreement on climate change, such as the Global Climate Fund, or by involving corporate houses through CSR.
- Media can also play a role in creating awareness among farmers about the long-term benefits of becoming willing partners in putting an end to this harmful practice.
- Rather than trying to enforce a ban on stubble burning, the state governments' efforts should be to spread awareness and ways to incentivise productive use of the stubble.
- There needs to be greater participation by village cooperatives in being able to impose social norms that would dissuade burners.

### **Category: ECONOMY**

## 1. A mere statement sans motive is not fraud, rules SAT

### Context:

Securities Appellate Tribunal's ruling Quashed SEBI penalty on Emami chief, who said was he interested in acquiring Amrutanjan.

### Details:

- In an important ruling, the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has ruled that statements, including those related to mergers and acquisitions made in good faith and without any element of motive, cannot be construed as fraud by the capital markets regulator.
- The tribunal's ruling came after hearing an appeal on whether a reported statement of a chairman of a company regarding his interest to acquire another company was sufficient to invoke provisions of the Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices (PFUTP) Regulations.
- "While dealing with a serious issue of fraud, the authorities need to ascertain the motive in the absence of any connecting evidence," the SAT stated in its order.
- "In the absence of any motive or a scheme or any evidence, a reported news item alone is not sufficient to prove a serious charge like fraud. If at all the reported statement is correct, it could [be] an expansive mood of the person. Silence as a sign of wisdom cannot be stretched to a point of total silence in the world of securities market," added the order.
- The judgment of SAT has affirmed that unless speech by a key managerial personnel of a listed company is made dishonestly or in bad faith, it cannot be assumed fraudulent.

### Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices (PFUTP) Regulations:

The Prohibition of fraudulent and unfair trade practices regulation passed in 2003 lists down the following points as unacceptable in securities market for regulating the securities market from frauds and scams. It states that:

- Nobody directly or indirectly should indulge in fraud relating to selling, buying or dealing with securities;
- No one should use any manipulative or deceptive means to violate the provisions of the Act;
- No one should employ any scheme or device or a strategy to defraud the dealings connected with securities.

Any breach to the above-mentioned statements would be considered, unlawful. If any of those breaches are done by any individual or a company it would be investigated by SEBI and appropriate actions would be taken against the party who commits such unlawful activity by SEBI.

## 2. Rupee-dollar swap could boost foreign fund flows under voluntary retention route

### Context:

The central bank will conduct dollar-rupee buy/sell swap action of \$5 billion for a three-year tenor. Such a swap route has been explored by various emerging market economies as an effective tool to manage liquidity.

### Details:

- The RBI's decision to infuse rupee liquidity through long term foreign exchange swap, a first of its kind in liquidity management policy, is likely to boost investments by foreign portfolio investors under the voluntary retention route (VRR).

- Apart from liquidity infusion, the move will boost the country's foreign exchange reserves and is likely to support the exchange rate.

### **Foreign Portfolio Investment:**

FPI stands for those investors who hold a short term view on the company, in contrast to Foreign Direct Investors (FDI). FPIs generally participate through the stock markets and gets in and out of a particular stock at much faster frequencies. It is investment by non-residents in Indian securities including shares, government bonds, corporate bonds, convertible securities, infrastructure securities etc.

### **Voluntary Retention Route:**

#### What is VRR?

It is a new channel of investment available to FPIs to encourage them to invest in debt markets in India over and above their investments through the regular route. The objective is to attract long-term and stable FPI investments into debt markets while providing FPIs with operational flexibility to manage their investments.

#### How are they different from the regular FPI investments?

Guidelines say that investments through VRR will be free of the macro-prudential and other regulatory prescriptions applicable to FPI investments in debt markets; provided FPIs voluntarily commit to retain a required minimum percentage of their investments in India for a period of their choice. But the minimum retention period shall be three years; or as decided by RBI.

#### How much money can an FPI invest through this route?

Investments under this route as of now shall be capped at Rs 40000 crore for government securities and Rs. 35,000 crore per annum. But the limit could be changed from time to time based on macro-prudential considerations and assessment of investment demand. There will be separate limits for investment in government securities and investment in corporate debt.

#### Are there any other facilities for investors through VRR?

FPIs investing through this route will be eligible to participate in repos for their cash management, provided that the amount borrowed or lent under repo were not to exceed 10 per cent of the investment under VRR. They will also be eligible to participate in any currency or interest rate derivative instrument, OTC or exchange-traded instrument to manage their interest rate risk or currency risk.

## **D. GS4 Related**

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## **E. Editorials**

### **Category: INDIAN POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

#### **1. When free speech is truly free**

#### Note to Students:



- The points covered in this editorial analysis can also help students while writing essays on the topic concerning free speech.

### Larger Background:

- Responsible speech is the essence of the liberty granted under article 21 of the Constitution.
- One of the greatest challenges before the principle of autonomy and free speech principle is to ensure that this liberty is not exercised to the detriment of any individual or the disadvantaged section of the society. In a country like India, with diverse castes, creed, religions and languages, this issue poses a greater challenge.
- Article 19(2) of the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression to all citizens of India. This article is subjected to certain restrictions, namely, 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.
- The Constitution of India acknowledges that liberty cannot be absolute or uncontrolled and makes provisions in clauses (2) to (6) of article 19 authorising the State to restrict the exercise of the freedom guaranteed under that article within the limits specified in those clauses.
- Thus, clause (2) of article 19, as subsequently amended by the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951 and the Constitution (Sixteenth Amendment) Act, 1963, enabled the legislature to impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right to freedom of speech and expression in the interests of (i) the security of the State and sovereignty and integrity of India, (ii) friendly relations with foreign States, (iii) public order, (iv) decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
  - Right to freedom of speech and expression is one of the most essential liberties recognized by the democratic States.
  - The concept of liberty has been primarily influenced by the principle of individual autonomy.
  - The liberal theory of free speech views speech as an intrinsic aspect of autonomous individual, hence any restriction on exercise of this liberty is always subject to judicial scrutiny.
  - The objective of free speech in a democracy is to promote plurality of opinions.

### Brief Perspective on Hate Speech:

- It is important to note that hate speech can be curtailed under article 19(2) on the grounds of public order, incitement to offence and security of the State.
- The Supreme Court in ***Brij Bhushan v. State of Delhi*** opined that public order was allied to the public safety and considered equivalent to security of the State.

This interpretation was validated by the First Constitution Amendment, when public order was inserted as a ground of restriction under 19(2).

- However, in ***Ram Manohar Lohiya v. State of Bihar***, the Honourable Supreme Court distinguished law and order, public order and security of State from each other. Observing that: "One has to imagine three concentric circles. Law and order represents the largest circle within which is the next circle representing public order and the smallest circle represents security of State. It is then easy to see that an act may affect law and order but not public order just as an act may affect public order but not security of the State."
- It is important to note that the standard applied for restricting article 19(1)(a) is the highest when imposed in the interest of security of the State. Also, a reasonable restriction under article 19(2)

implies that the relation between restriction and public order has to be proximate and direct as opposed to a remote or fanciful connection.

- In ***Ramji Lal Modi v. State of U.P.***, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of this section 295A IPC and ruled that this section does not penalise every act of insult to or attempt to ‘insult the religion or the religious beliefs of a class of citizens but it penalises only those acts of insults to or those varieties of attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of a class of citizens, which are perpetrated with the deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of that class.
- It was also held by the Court that the expression in the ‘interest of public order’ mentioned in article 19(2) is much wider than ‘maintenance of public order’.
- Therefore, even if an act does not actually cause breach of public order, its restriction ‘in the interest of public order’ will be deemed reasonable.

### Editorial Analysis:

- **It is important to note that freedom is a theme which is going to come up again and again during the election season.**
- **It is a term, like truth, that has globally become extremely important today.**
- **But it is not an easy concept to understand, especially in a public political discourse.**
- **First of all, there are many kinds of freedom:**
  - a) **freedom to speak,**
  - b) **to write, to think, to imagine,**
  - c) **to live our lives, to eat what we want, and so on.**

**However, since this term is invoked so quickly and so easily — it is important that we understand its diverse meanings in our everyday use of this term.**

### **Freedom to hold forth?**

- We often tend to think that among the main elements of democracy are the holding of elections and a free media.
- Both elections and free media are important because they stand, among other things, for the notions of free speech and free expression.
- Casting a vote anonymously, of one’s own free will, is an example of free expression and is broader than just ‘free speech’. Similarly, when the media has the freedom to air all kinds of views, it is seen to be an example of free speech. An important question arises: ***Is free speech really the essence of democracy? Is it really so important for an effective democracy?***
- Paradoxically, there is an inherent tension between free speech and democracy. If free speech is understood merely as the freedom to say what one wants, then that is obviously not conducive to meaningful social behaviour. ***For example, one can spread falsehood about another in the name of free speech. One can insult, lie, create harm and hatred through free speech.***
- The answer to the problem of defining what really constitutes free speech lies in understanding the meaning of ‘free’ in free speech. ***What is really free in free speech?*** The freedom to say what one wants? We can’t really say what we want all the time since all speech is constrained.
- We are constrained by language, words, concepts and grammar, and even by the physical contours of our mouth. We are constrained by the biological and cognitive structures related to thought and its expression through language. Socially, we are not fully free to say what we want. We cannot make

certain utterances in certain places. A commentator, commenting on a game of cricket, cannot suddenly give a lecture on philosophy saying that he is protected by free speech!

### **The Costs of Free Speech:**

- In addition to constraints, all speech also has a cost. When we utter something, good or bad, there is a price to pay.
- Even in personal relations with family and friends, we cannot say what we want. If we do so — that is, if we are honest and outspoken — there is a price to pay.
- Relationships get broken, wars are declared between people because somebody spoke ‘freely’.
- Thus, the essence of free speech is not really about the freedom to say what we want. It is more about speech which is free, which comes with no cost.
- Some experts opine that free speech is actually speech for which you don’t pay a price. But paying a price is not in the hands of the speaker.
- Free speech is nothing but the conditions under which the hearer is not allowed to take offence and intimidate the speaker.
- The real freedom in ‘free speech’ lies not in the freedom of the speaker to say what she wants but in the constraint on hearers to allow the speaker to say what she wants.
- Thus, when we demand the right to free speech, we are essentially demanding the right to stop others from not letting us speak.
- The most important consequence of the idea of free speech is that it shifts the responsibility of free speech from the speaker to the hearer.
- But does this mean that anybody can say what they want? Can they slander a person through falsehood in the name of free speech? Is slandering a person the same as criticising the government or the nation? After all, our governments, independent of which party is in power, have effectively used the charge of sedition to stop certain utterances in public.

### **Criticism as a duty:**

- Crucially, it is not free speech to purposefully slander a person. But criticising the government or nation is not the same as slandering an individual.
- Experts opine that such criticism is not just a right, it is more a duty of democratic societies. In a true democracy, there is nothing that can be considered as slandering the government, even if a criticism may be wrong and unjustified. That is because free speech is a tool to make democracy workable and it is not really about the individual freedom to say what one wants.
- Democracy is about governance for others and on behalf of others.
- It is a social and public system of responsibility of governance. The very foundation of democracy is collective action and the real freedom in a democracy is the freedom of choosing who will govern on our behalf.
- The ideal of democracy is that we are all potential rulers — any one of us can be the Prime Minister of our country. When we elect somebody, we are only putting a group of people to govern on behalf of us. Free speech is the mechanism to make sure that they govern correctly and on our behalf. It is only free speech, defined in this manner, that makes democracy workable.
- The true power of free speech lies in its capacity to make those in power accountable to those who do not have power.
- It is a means to control those in power and is not really about freedom of individuals.
- The price we demand for making somebody govern on our behalf (the elected leaders) is to allow us to say what we want about them, not as individuals but as political leaders.

### **The power equation**

- Thus, true free speech covers only those acts of speech which speak against power, and keep those in power accountable.



- It thus safeguards the most cherished democratic principle. Free speech by itself is not the essence of democracy but is the means by which any democracy can be sustained. Anybody who doesn't like to hear criticism of government or government representatives is being undemocratic.
- We dilute the importance of free speech when we use it to derive personal benefit or cause harm or do so in situations which are not about power.
- In conclusion, speech, in the task of keeping check on power, has to be subsidised and made free by those in power.

## **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### **1. Back on track (India- Maldives Relations)**

#### **Larger Background to India-Maldives Relations:**

- India and Maldives enjoy close ties of friendship and cooperation and share a common destiny. Peace and stability in Maldives is of utmost importance to India and the region. Maldives is a nascent democracy and is in the process of strengthening its institutions and capacity building.
- India remains committed to assist the Government and people of Maldives in their endeavours to build a stable, democratic, peaceful and prosperous country. In this context, India is actively engaged with all stakeholders in the reconciliation process in the wake of recent developments, in order to ensure that they continue to take the democratic process forward.
- India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links steeped in antiquity and enjoy close, cordial and multi-dimensional relations.
- India was among the first to recognise Maldives after its independence in 1965 and to establish diplomatic relations with the country.

#### **Editorial Analysis:**

- Experts opine that India and the Maldives appeared to return to the old days of strategic bonhomie when External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj met her counterpart Abdulla Shahid in Male during a brief visit recently.
- It is the first full-fledged bilateral visit at the political level from India to the Maldives after the new government assumed office in the wake of the historic election in September, 2018.
- President Ibrahim Solih assumed charge after a multi-party, pro-democracy coalition led by his Maldivian Democratic Party was swept to power.
- Solih's inauguration, which was marked by the attendance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was assumed to be a potential inflection point in the trajectory of bilateral ties with India.
- The previous five years witnessed Male's disconcerting drift, under the aegis of the Abdulla Yameen government, into what many Maldivians felt was the stifling embrace of China.

#### **The Chinese Factor:**

- Chinese financing for infrastructure and construction projects poured in even as the functioning of the political Opposition and the judiciary was harshly curtailed.
- All of this flux appeared to have been washed away on September 23, 2018 when the Maldivian electorate voted resoundingly for the coalition that backed Mr. Solih for President.

#### **An Indian Perspective: The Way Forward**

- Experts say that it would be unwise for New Delhi to take the Indian Ocean nation (Maldives) for granted.

- There is indeed an opportunity for reset on numerous policies, and some of that has already happened.
- In December 2018, when Mr. Solih visited India, a \$1.4 billion financial assistance package for the Maldives was announced.
- While the proximity of the Indian general election may have precluded any major policy announcements from New Delhi, the two countries have agreed to exempt holders of diplomatic and official passports from visa requirements, inked an MoU on Indian grant-in-aid for “high-impact community development projects”, and other agreements on energy efficiency and renewable energy, areas critical to the agenda of Mr. Solih.
- At a broader level, the archipelago and the larger Indian Ocean region could expect more collaborative approaches on regional maritime security issues, including counterterrorism and trans-national crimes.
- However, Male is still grappling with the legacy of the Yameen administration’s headlong plunge into the orbit of Beijing.
- The massive debts the Maldives incurred, by some estimates to the tune of \$3 billion, linked to infrastructure investments need to be unwound.
- Second, the multiparty alliance must hold firm despite immense political pressures that arise from varying visions for governance.
- Some tensions already seem to be bubbling to the top: on February 25, 2019, Mohamed Nasheed, former President and important coalition-builder in the MDP, tweeted about the country’s Supreme Court “meddling in elections — again”.
- Lastly, experts believe that for genuine peace and bilateral harmony to take root in the region, building a shared vision for the future of the Maldives is the immediate task at hand.

## 2. What can India do to influence China on Masood Azhar?

### Note to the Students:

- The following editorial analysis reflects excerpts from a recently conducted interview, moderated by Suhasini Haidar. The experts being interviewed are Alka Acharya and Jabin Jacob.

### **Editorial Analysis:**

#### Context:

- Recently, China placed a hold on the listing request for Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)’s leader Masood Azhar at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- The Ministry of External Affairs said that it was “disappointed” by the outcome.

***India has taken a much calmer tone than what we have seen in public on China’s refusal to allow the listing at the UNSC of Masood Azhar. Do you think this will work?***

- Alka Acharya: I don’t see why not. Yelling and screaming was not helping the issue. I think the significant thing to understand is that the Chinese have not provided any indication as to whether they are going to change on this particular issue. Whereas, on other issues they have — for instance, blacklisting the organisation (JeM), or putting Pakistan on the Financial Action Task Force Grey List. So, there are also various shades to China’s stand and actions at the global level.
- ***Professor Jacob, would you agree? That China’s objections to listing Azhar are probably not ideological, and therefore, there is some room for flexibility? Or would you say that China is essentially giving a strong message by refusing to list him for the fourth time in a decade, and India should take that message.***

Jabin Jacob: Yes, definitely. India should take a message from that. It’s not ideological, but I would say

there is a larger issue here, which is of politics. Clearly this is a different China that we're dealing with. It's not the same China that we've seen over the last 10 years. I think the problem is that India is too subtle. If India does not take a consistent position, or a position that appears to evolve into something, the Chinese are not going to take you seriously. While we say that China is not supporting us on this aspect, we also have our annual counter-terrorism exercise with China. I think that sort of mixed messaging doesn't work.

- ***On the one hand, if you seem too conciliatory with China, then it may see that as a sign of weakness and therefore not change its position. Is this actually a larger challenge for India when it comes to China?***

Alka Acharya: I don't agree that because China has chosen to block Azhar's listing, it amounts to its contradictory stand on other issues with us.

China has tried to take a consistent position as to why it has to blacklist an individual, whereas it is taking a slightly different position with regard to the organisation (JeM).

The fact is that the India-China dialogue has expanded.

It has now brought terror on board, but we need to be discussing this more because I don't think we are on the same page as far as terror is concerned. It is a part of the strategic dialogue and that's a start.

We are together on many multilateral platforms, so we could start communicating our position to the Chinese much more clearly, but at the same time not permit this issue to derail what is a much larger process.

***In India, there is no stomach for any kind of dialogue with Pakistan. And yet with China, every time there is a pushback from China, this is pretty much in your face when China refuses to list Masood Azhar despite the kind of push India has made diplomatically after the Pulwama attack. How do you explain this dichotomy?***

Alka Acharya: In the last five years, the whole situation with Pakistan has become more rigid. So, if in the past we did see an attempt to balance no terror or no dialogue till the terror attack stopped, but at the same time you are opening up other channels. Increasingly, you are seeing that the Chinese are becoming more and more significant players in this region, so you are in a bit of a dilemma. Because you need to ensure that your relationship with China doesn't get derailed. There is a lot of suspicion about how the Chinese are preparing to support Pakistan. You can't shut that door because then you are really only dependent on the Americans. It's not just about China, India and Pakistan. It's about the Americans wanting to disengage; the Russians wanting to get into Afghanistan via Pakistan. Do you think the Americans are going to play our game with the Pakistanis for us? I'm not too sure.

***Why does China continue to stand firm on the Azhar issue in particular?***

Jabin Jacob: This is clearly tactical as far as the Chinese are concerned. The BRICS forum in Goa refused to allow any mention of terror in the joint declaration. But the next year, in China, they were willing to go along. So, it's up and down. And I suppose the Chinese are not completely at home in Pakistan, so they also need to put pressure on the Pakistanis and tell them to behave vis-a-vis Chinese influence.

The larger issue is about communication. What is the communication that India has with China on this particular issue? At the end of January, we had the 8th India-China Joint Working Group Meeting on Counter-Terrorism. And if you look at the MEA website... it doesn't really inform you about what is going on. The Chinese can get away with that. But in India the government needs to communicate to the strategic

community and to the public. You can't deal with the Chinese using Chinese methods and ignore how the system works at your end.

***Do you think the diplomatic capital that India is using when it comes to the Azhar issue is worth it?***

Jabin Jacob: There are two parts to this. The first is, of course, this is an overkill, because we don't have the capacity to follow up. The kind of effort that we have to put into this is only worthwhile if we can follow up with other global capitals, even the small players, through the year. But on the other hand, there is a certain value that the people in the Ministry dealing with China understand — that China is not comfortable being named and shamed and sticking out as the only objector in this.

***Don't you think that's the old China? I think the new China doesn't have a problem sticking out.***

Jabin Jacob: True, but we don't know if we have come to that realisation.

Alka Acharya: I would say it's the reverse. I think today China is far more wary of its international image and therefore the need not to stand out like a sore thumb, especially when there is a global consensus on certain issues. Now, does the Azhar issue actually dent that image, or does it really show China as a power which has double standards?

***How much of an impact did the U.S.'s open statements challenging China have on China's own decision? Or do you think China's mind was made up?***

Jabin Jacob :Yes, the Chinese do take the Americans seriously and that's again a question of capacity because the Americans can follow up. They can put others under pressure to follow what the Americans think is in their interest. In the case of terrorism or the Nuclear Suppliers Group, these are important for India perhaps, but they are not important to other states. And it is possible to keep the other states interested if we have the capacity to consistently put pressure. As long as that's not the case, the Chinese will not be moved.

***On the question of political wrangling... on the one hand, you have the government accusing the Congress party leader of meeting the Chinese Ambassador. You have criticism from the Opposition that, despite the Wuhan summit, the Prime Minister has been unable to get any concessions from China. How much is this political issue over China playing out in Beijing as well?***

Alka Acharya: There are three dimensions here. One, over a period of time the Chinese have seen that there is a fairly consistent position in India. Whichever government has been in power has more or less taken the same framework, which is one of engaging and moving the relationship forward. Therefore, I am sure many people in China do not take this internal wrangling very seriously. I think on the whole these charges are of necessity, purely political. So, you will have to say, 'Wuhan is in tatters'. I don't agree with that. Wuhan was about something else.

The second point is that we have not yet grasped that the China-Pakistan relationship is undergoing a major transformation, and we continue to take this anti-India perspective as the dominant one, which it is not. China is far too invested in Pakistan. Anti-India is lower down, it's not the top priority.

And the final point is that China-India relations are also not static. And the best way to beat this is to get the India-China game up.

Jabin Jacob: I agree that the China-Pakistan relationship is something that has transformed over time and I also agree with Alka that it's not the anti-India sentiment in China that really drives matters. I think where we have failed is in reassessing our relationship with Pakistan. The more you disengage from Pakistan, the



more of a free hand you give the Chinese. Trade is the only way we can fix things in many ways.

*Alka, you said Wuhan is not in tatters. Yet we see no movement from China on India's NSG membership and on Azhar. On the other hand, India has torn down some of the irritants vis-a-vis China, whether it is sidelining the Tibetan leadership or not speaking about the Chinese building infrastructure in Doklam. Why do you say the Wuhan summit still carries some weight?*

Alka Acharya: The answer to that would depend on your understanding of what Wuhan was all about. It was an informal meeting between the two leaders to address what had become a dangerous impasse in the relationship. Two sides were eyeball to eyeball for 72 days. This was a means to defuse that situation and evolve a modus operandi for ensuring that this relationship does not get derailed. More importantly, what is the framework within which this relationship has to develop? It was not issue-based. As to whether we have got what we want from China... I think we need to figure out where this relationship is going, particularly how we are managing the economic aspect. That ultimately is going to provide the ballast.

Jabin Jacob: Wuhan was tactical. My problem with Wuhan is that you are moving away from process-based interactions between governments. Instead we have an individual-based approach. This might work in China because President Xi Jinping is the all-powerful. But not here.

## F. Tidbits

### 1. Intain Fintech to launch blockchain product

- Intain Fintech, an AI and block chain-based software products firm, will be launching eMulya.
- eMulya is an intelligent block chain that facilitates efficient, secure and trustworthy asset securitisation transactions for Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in India by end-2019.
- “We tested out this platform successfully for a portfolio of two-wheeler loans in India before formally launching it in the U.S.,” said the CEO, Intain.

### What is a blockchain?

The blockchain is an incorruptible digital ledger of transactions that can be programmed to record virtually everything of value. Each list of record in a blockchain is called block. So a blockchain is a continuously growing list of records called blocks, which are linked and secured. It is a mechanism to bring everyone to the highest degree of accountability. The most critical area where Blockchain helps is to guarantee the validity of a transaction by recording it not only on the main register but a connected distributed system of registers, all of which are connected through a secure validation mechanism.

## G. Prelims Fact

### 1. World Forest Day

- The **International Day of Forests** was established on the 21st day of March, by resolution of the United Nations General Assembly in 2012.
- Each year, various events celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests, and trees outside forests, for the benefit of current and future generations
- Countries are encouraged to undertake efforts to organize local, national, and international activities involving forests and trees, such as tree planting campaigns, on International Day of Forests.
- Theme for World Forestry Day 2018 was “Forests and Sustainable Cities”.
- The theme of 2019 will be “Forests and Education”.



## 2. Navroz

- Iranian community celebrates Navroz (Iranian New Year) on March 21. March 21 is the first day of the Iranian calendar.
- Navroz is also the day of the Spring equinox and the rituals are performed based on the movements of the sun during the course of the day.
- Several ethno-linguistic communities around the world irrespective of their religious background observe it as the start of the New Year. In India, the Parsi community, who follow Zoroastrianism, celebrate Navroz.

## H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) is a Sub component of National Rural Livelihood Mission.
2. Any Rural poor who is willing to be entrepreneurial and self-reliant is eligible to be part of this programme.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: c**

### Explanation:

The Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program is a sub component of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) of the Ministry of Rural Development. SVEP aims to support entrepreneurs in rural areas to set up local enterprises. Any Rural poor who is willing to be entrepreneurial and self-reliant is eligible to be part of this programme. Highly vulnerable beneficiaries under MGNREGA, marginalized sections, women, SC and ST communities and rural artisans will be given specific preference in selection, as part of this programme.

**Q2. Consider the following statements:**

1. Village Adoption Programme is a programme under the Ministry of Rural Development.
2. It is a flagship programme of the National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: b**

**Explanation:**

Village Adoption Programme is a programme under the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. It promotes entrepreneurship in food processing and agri-business in rural areas thus empowering rural youth. It is a flagship programme of the National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management.

**Q3. Consider the following statements:**

1. Samagra Shiksha Scheme subsumes the three Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
2. The Scheme will be implemented as a Central Sector Scheme.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: a**

**Explanation:**

Samagra Shiksha Scheme is an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12. It has been prepared with the broader goal of improving school effectiveness measured in terms of equal opportunities for schooling and equitable learning outcomes. It subsumes the three Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE). The Scheme will be implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme through a single State Implementation Society (SIS) at the State/UT level.

**Q4. Consider the following statements about Pilibhit Tiger Reserve:**

1. It is located in Uttarakhand.
2. The Northern edge of the reserve lies along the India-Nepal border.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: b**

**Explanation:**

Pilibhit Tiger Reserve spreads across Pilibhit district, Lakhimpur Kheri District and Bahraich District of Uttar Pradesh.

## H. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. There is an urgent need to bring the political parties under the ambit of RTI. Critically Analyse. (15)

Marks)

2. Discuss the ethical issues involved in immigration as a global phenomenon in reference to Christchurch Massacre. Also comment on rights of aliens. (10 Marks)

