

26 Apr 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS1 Related

Category: HISTORY

1. Khasi 'kingdoms' to revisit 1947 agreements

Context

- A federation of 25 Himas or Khasi kingdoms have plans of revisiting the 1948 agreements that made present-day Meghalaya a part of India.

Details

- The revisiting in consultation with legal experts and academicians is aimed at **safeguarding tribal customs and traditions from Central laws in force** or could be enacted, such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.
- The idea is to hold series of meetings to come to a conclusion on how best they can insulate their customs and traditions from overriding central rules and policies
- Though the Constitution has provided self-rule to a considerable extent through tribal councils, there

has been an increasing demand for giving more teeth to the Khasi states.

Background

- The 25 Khasi states had signed the Instrument of Accession and Annexed Agreement with the Dominion of India between December 15, 1947, and March 19, 1948.
- The conditional treaty with these states was **signed by Governor General Chakravarty Rajagopalachari** on August 17, 1948.
- During the British rule, the Khasi domain was divided into the Khasi states and British territories.
 - At that time, the British government had **no territorial right on the Khasi states and they had to approach the chiefs of these states if they needed land** for any purpose.
 - After independence,
 - the **British territories** became part of the Indian dominion but the
 - **Khasi states** had to sign documents beginning with the Standstill Agreement that provided a few rights to the states
 - The Khasi states, though, did not sign the Instrument of Merger unlike most other states in India.

B. GS2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. WHO says one in 10 children did not get vaccinated in 2016

Context

- According to figures released by the World Health Organisation (WHO), despite immunisation being one of the most successful and cost-effective means to help children grow into healthy adults, worldwide 12.9 million infants — nearly 1 in 10 — did not receive any vaccination in 2016.
- Immunisation prevents illness, disability and death from **vaccine-preventable diseases** including cervical cancer, diphtheria, hepatitis B, measles, mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), pneumonia, polio, rotavirus diarrhoea, rubella and tetanus.

Some facts as reported by WHO

- Global vaccination coverage remains at 85%, with no significant changes during the past few years
- An additional 1.5 million deaths could be avoided if global immunisation coverage improves.
- Over the years, the positive trend is about increasing uptake of new and underused vaccines. In fact, according to WHO in 2017, the number of children immunised – 116.2 million – was the highest-ever reported.

Issue Area

- Despite these gains, all of the targets for disease elimination — including measles, rubella, and maternal and neonatal tetanus — **are behind schedule**, and over the last two years, the world has seen multiple outbreaks of measles, diphtheria and various other vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Most of the **children missing out are those living in the poorest, marginalised and conflict-affected communities**

C. GS3 Related

Category: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. Cell-Based Meat/ Clean Meat /Cultured Meat

Context

- The country's first project to research on cell-based meat, also called clean meat, would be taken up at the **Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB)** with the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** deciding to give Rs. 4.5 crore for the two-year work as the initial grant.

Details

- The **National Research Centre on Meat**, which has a unit at Chengicherla abattoir, would partner with the CCMB in the pioneering work to develop cultured meat,
- Cell-based meat is nutritionally equivalent to conventional animal meat, and tastes, smells, looks and feels exactly the same. Its only difference lies in the method of production
- Clean meat would be **produced through cellular agriculture** with cells sourced from animals and cultivated into meat.

Structure

- The **Atal Incubation Centre (AIC)** of the CCMB has been partnering with the **Humane Society International (HSI)** to develop and promote the clean meat sector.
- The AIC and HSI have also announced the launch of '**Centre for Predictive Human Model System**' (CPHMS), which would be dedicated for promoting the new approach of scientific research using non-animal models. The facility would **propagate non-animal methodologies in life sciences research** in India as it has been happening in the West.
- The fledgling centre would facilitate training courses in research, conduct workshops, offer fellowship programmes, develop a network of scientists to promote the paradigm shift in research and funding, and support Ph.D students in their research.

Significance

- It promises to revolutionize the food system by **providing protein without harming the environment**
- This new method of producing meat shows strong promise of revolutionising the food system in terms of tackling pressing global issues **such as food security, environmental sustainability and animal welfare.**

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. 'Bt brinjal being illegally grown in Haryana'

Context

- Farmer groups have alleged that Bt brinjal, a genetically modified variety, is being cultivated illegally in Haryana

Background

- In 2010 the government placed an indefinite ban on commercial release of Bt brinjal, developed by Mahyco, and called for more independent scientific studies **to establish its biosafety as India is a**

centre of diversity for brinjal, both domesticated as well as wild.

- The genetically modified brinjal is a suite of transgenic brinjals (also known as an eggplant or aubergine) created by inserting a crystal protein gene (Cry1Ac) from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* into the genome of various brinjal cultivars.
- The insertion of the gene, along with other genetic elements such as promoters, terminators and an antibiotic resistance marker gene into the brinjal plant is accomplished using *Agrobacterium*-mediated genetic transformation.
- The Bt brinjal has been developed to give resistance against lepidopteron insects, in particular the Brinjal **Fruit and Shoot Borer (Leucinodes orbonalis)(FSB)**.
 - Upon ingestion of the Bt toxin, the insect's digestive processes are disrupted, ultimately resulting in its death.
 - it will reduce the farmers' dependence on pesticides and enable higher yields
- Mahyco, an Indian seed company based in Jalna, Maharashtra, has developed the Bt brinjal.

Concerns

- This is clearly a **failure of the government agencies** concerned that illegal Bt brinjal is being cultivated in the country.
- This is not the first time this is happening. **Bt cotton was approved in India after large-scale illegal cultivation** was discovered in Gujarat.
- In late 2017, when illegal **GM soy cultivation was discovered in Gujarat and a complaint lodged with GEAC, the response was quite slow and dangerously lackadaisical.**

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. An illustrative case

Editorial Analysis:

- Experts opine that unlike Parliament, **the Supreme Court lacks the conventional legitimacy derived from securing membership to its judges through elections.**
- The court's command is derived from, and grounded in, a general acceptance of its status as an impartial referee of disputes and as an unbiased interpreter of the law.
- Predictably, its sense of esteem and its sense of moral authority, which together constitute its most important assets, are immanently fragile.
- **Any degradation of the court's acceptance amongst the public of its reputation as an equitable body will, therefore, impair its authority irredeemably.**

The Threat the Court faces today:

- Currently, the explicit threat that the Supreme Court faces is that the Chief Justice of India (CJI) faces allegations of sexual harassment. .

The story so far

- The complainant, who joined work in the Supreme Court in May 2014 as a Junior Court Assistant, and who worked in the court of the present CJI, Ranjan Gogoi, from October 2016, alleges not only that she is a survivor of sexual harassment, but also that she was unfairly dismissed from service.
- **What is more, on her dismissal, she claims that she and her family were foisted with a series of false criminal cases and were subjected to abuse at the hands of the police.**
- She sent her complaint, in the form of a sworn affidavit, to 22 judges of the Supreme Court on recently, and on the same day, four magazines, Scroll, The Wire, Caravan and The Leaflet, sent a questionnaire to the CJI.
- In response, the court's **Secretary General denied the allegations**, terming them “scurrilous”, and **claimed that it was “also very possible that there are mischievous forces behind all this, with an intention to malign the institution”.**
- Minutes after the story was published online, the CJI convened an extraordinary hearing by a Bench comprising himself and two other judges to hear what was termed “In Re: Matter Of Great Public Importance Touching Upon The Independence Of Judiciary”.
- **These proceedings were initiated suo motu, i.e. on the court's own motion**, without awaiting a formal prompting from a party.
- **Critics opine that this hearing disregarded every ordinary precept of due process; not only was no notice given to the complainant, calling upon her to appear, but her allegations were effectively dismissed outright as a product of a larger conspiracy.**

A Look at the order issued after the hearing:

- In a brief order that was issued at the end of the hearing (which, critics allege, bizarrely, wasn't signed by the CJI, despite his participation in the proceeding), **the court said it was leaving it to the “wisdom of the media to show restraint”, to decide what should or should not be published**, since “wild and scandalous allegations undermine and irreparably damage” the judiciary's independence.
- Since then, the CJI withdrew himself from the case, but a new Bench that he assembled has now ordered a probe by a former Supreme Court judge, Justice A.K. Patnaik, to examine whether these allegations spring out of a plot to overthrow the judiciary.

A Brief Look at the Past:

- When one looks back at January 2018, one realizes that this was a time when the four senior-most judges of the court, including the present CJI, called an unprecedented press conference to mark their disapproval of the then CJI, Dipak Misra's arbitrary choices as master of the roster.
- **Despite those public expressions of dissent, nothing, it appears, has really changed.**
- **Critics allege that the CJI continues to enjoy unquestioned authority over allocation of judicial work and over selection of Benches, even in cases where a conflict of interest is to be presumed.**

Hewart's dictum:

- That justice should not only be done but should manifestly and undoubtedly be seen to be done is an aphorism often attributed to Lord Chief Justice Hewart of the King's Bench.
- It is important to note that natural justice, has always stood on delicate ground. But as principles go, it is so axiomatic to the rule of law that courts around the world have repeatedly stressed on Hewart's dictum.
- That justice should be open has also been immortalised in **Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, which states that “**all persons shall be equal before the courts and tribunals,**” that everyone “**shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law**”.
- **Not only is India a party to this treaty, but its Constitution also guarantees to every person equality before the law.**

- Critics assert that much as the Supreme Court has relied on these codes to invigorate its own sense of power, as it has repeatedly shown in recent times, it's just as capable of renouncing its grand declarations when one of its own is in a difficult situation.

Back to basics

- Now, prompted perhaps by resolutions passed by various bar associations, a committee — comprising Justices S.A. Bobde (the senior most judge on the rest of the court), N.V. Ramana (who was replaced by Justice Indu Malhotra after he recused himself) and Indira Banerjee — with the apparent support of the full court, was formed to conduct an administrative probe into the charges made against the CJI.
- The committee's creation is, at the least, an acknowledgement of some kind that the complaint deserves an inquiry.
- **But doubts persist over the committee's legality, over whether it can at all scrutinise allegations made against the CJI, and over whether its composition lacks a moral base in that no external members have been included.**
- Besides, it's also difficult to countenance how the parallel proceeding, to be headed by Justice Pattnaik, can continue even before the administrative inquiry into the complaint has been completed.
- **These are no doubt extraordinary circumstances, but to advance the cause of justice, it's important that basic procedural norms are respected.**

Concluding Remarks:

- Given the absence of a proper, institutional mechanism, it's likely that any mode adopted to judge the charges made will prove indiscriminate.
- But that's precisely why the Supreme Court needs to step up, to collectively show us that it can establish an ethical precedent.
- The assertions made may or may not be veracious, and they may impugn only the CJI. But ultimately the court's institutional integrity is at stake here. It's therefore imperative that the court articulates and espouses a commitment to the rule of law.
- It needs to show that the principles of due process that it holds applicable to all of us are just as applicable to one of its own. That due process isn't merely a poetic homily, to be discharged on convenience, but that is integral to the court's foundations and to the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection.

2. Has the Supreme Court been discredited?

Note to Students:

- This editorial analysis takes into account the points raised in a discussion where speakers such as Karuna Nundy (who is an Indian lawyer, specialising in Constitutional, Media, Gender, Tech, Commercial & International Law) and Mihira Sood (who is a Supreme Court lawyer specialising in women's rights), examined the implications of the decisions taken by the apex court on the issue of the complaint of sexual harassment made against the Chief Justice of India (CJI), Ranjan Gogoi.

Editorial Analysis:

- When a complaint of sexual harassment against the Chief Justice of India (CJI), Ranjan Gogoi, became public, he responded by constituting a special Bench comprising himself and two other judges.
- This invited sharp responses from many in the legal fraternity.
- Soon after this, the Supreme Court instituted a panel headed by Justice S.A. Bobde to examine the

charges against the CJI.

In this discussion, Karuna Nundy (who is an Indian lawyer, specialising in Constitutional, Media, Gender, Tech, Commercial & International Law) and Mihira Sood (who is a Supreme Court lawyer specialising in women's rights) examined the implications of the decisions taken by the apex court.

Excerpts from the discussion:

- **What do you think of the Supreme Court's move to set up a three-judge panel, including Justice Indira Banerjee, to examine the sexual harassment complaint against the CJI?**

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments.

- One certainly has some reservations.
- For one, it is not in keeping with what the composition of a sexual harassment committee should be.
- **The committee should be headed by a woman.**
- **The present committee is slightly flawed in its composition.**
- **The complainant had requested a special committee of retired judges, and the reason for that is simply that they would not be beholden to the CJI in any way.**
- While one hopes that the committee will display some independence, it is difficult, because these are judges who are still under the administrative control of the CJI.
- It would be better if this committee were to go about setting up an external committee comprising a majority of women, chaired by a woman, retired Supreme Court judges as well as others who are committed to the cause of gender equality.
- The committee should inspire confidence that it is going to be independent and not beholden to the CJI in any manner. The bench that was recently constituted was highly irregular.
- **That Bench had no jurisdiction under the Supreme Court rules or under the Constitution to have conducted the hearing.**

Karuna Nundy, weighed in here with her arguments:

- I think there are two problems with the setting up of the panel.
- One is that the committee is under the administrative control of, and junior to, the CJI.
- Ideally, you should have someone senior to the CJI (retired judges, for instance) or an unimpeachable decision-maker who has no connection to the person whose actions are being examined.
- Then there is also another Bench examining the affidavit filed by a lawyer who claims that he was asked to frame the CJI.
- Essentially, the two Benches will be looking into the same issue.
- It is not that any of the judges are not trusted. That's not the point. The point is that the robustness of the mechanism has to be above any allegation of bias.

Recently, the Supreme Court registry said in a notice that the Bench was being set up to deal with a 'matter of great public importance touching upon the independence of judiciary'. What do you make of that remark?

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments.

- In terming it as such, the CJI is equating himself, an individual, with the institution, the judiciary, which is extremely worrying.
- What he should have done was acknowledge that these allegations had been made and submitted himself to an inquiry.

Karuna Nundy, weighed in here with her arguments:

- Last year (2018), Justice Gogoi and three other judges stood for the same principles that constitutionalists are asking them to stand up for now — that you cannot be a judge in your cause; that however high you may be you are not above the law; and that there must be predictability in the allocation of Benches.
- These principles must be followed, and have not been followed so far.
- Justice Gogoi has been a great judge in so many ways and I think there is an opportunity to admit that a mistake has been made. This is also a time for our judges to dissent.

What do you mean by dissent? Are you saying that the judges should have protested against the CJI's decision?

Karuna Nundy, weighed in here with her arguments:

- I am saying that this is exactly the principle that brought the four judges out to protest — the arbitrary allocation of Benches by former CJI Dipak Misra.
- The judges were saying you cannot choose your own Benches.
- This is now about the integrity of the institution. This is also about the reputation for fairness of the senior-most decision-maker of the court.

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments:

- I think he has done far more damage to his own reputation and to the integrity of the institution by his conduct recently. I don't think the allegations bring that much disrepute to the institution as to him.

Karuna Nundy, weighed in here with her arguments:

- If the judges had demonstrated that even if they were scurrilous allegations, the process has been fair, that nobody can say that every side has not been heard properly, it would have been okay.
- There appears to be verifiable evidence that definitely needs an answer.

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments:

- The allegations certainly bring the judiciary into disrepute. But the act of making the allegations cannot undermine the judiciary.

Should the CJI have stepped down instead of presiding over his own matter?

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments:

- The affidavit was sent to various judges of the Supreme Court.
- The in-charge of the court's internal committee should have taken it up and taken on the task of setting up a committee.
- In her affidavit, the complainant had requested that a special committee of retired judges should look into it.

Is there a formal procedure to deal with allegations of sexual harassment involving the CJI?

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments:

- There isn't. The permission of the CJI is required to proceed with any complaint.
- Barring the CJI, all other judges and employees of the Supreme Court as well as lawyers functioning in the court and any court under the Supreme Court are theoretically subject to proceedings under the Gender Sensitisation Internal Complaints Committee.
- The CJI's permission is required before anyone can proceed with any complaint.
- The CJI has to sign off his belief in the authenticity of the complaint. So, while it does cover other employees, it does not cover the CJI.

Karuna Nundy, weighed in here with her arguments:

- In the case of criminality or corruption or sexual harassment charges against the judges, the processes are deeply and woefully inadequate.
- The complaints go to the senior-most judges and some sort of closed door decision is made.
- The second thing that happens is there is talk of impeachment when the charges are serious. But nobody has been impeached so far.
- What the present problem brings us is the absence of predictable structures when serious allegations are made against judges.
- We have to begin with the premise that judges are human and fallible. There are three layers to deal with sexual harassment at other workplaces: workshops to transform the sexist entitlement and sexual attitudes of people; frame policies; and set up the Internal Complaints Committee.
- The Supreme Court does not have that structure. The day-to-day dealing with such issues is absent.

At the end of the hearing, an order was passed that seemed like a gag order on the media. Your thoughts?

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments:

- It was intended to be a gag order. I would say that you have already decided that the allegations were wild and scurrilous and were clever in saying that that you leave it to the wisdom of the media to exercise their wisdom, knowing well that large sections of the media would be too terrified to say anything.
- This is what is called a chilling effect.
- Also, in the order, the CJI did not record that he was present.
- On what basis did they say it was wild and scurrilous without a hearing?
- It boggles the mind that these are the same people who decide on matters of justice and they see no injustice in pre-deciding the matter.

Karuna Nundy, weighed in here with her arguments:

- The order on the media is against the spirit of the Mirajkar judgment, which says there must be a law even if you are seeking to gag the media.
- You cannot by a court order suo motu directly or indirectly gag the media.
- This isn't a direct gag but it has a chilling effect.

What was the purpose of the recently held special hearing?

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments:

- There are three women judges in the Supreme Court and their absence on the Bench says a lot.
- The two other judges who were hand-picked were not the senior-most.
- I find it difficult to believe that the judges were unaware of this. One can conclude that the purpose was to give the CJI a platform to proclaim his innocence.

Karuna Nundy, weighed in here with her arguments:

That is what is so striking about this hearing — it was to quash the temerity of anyone who makes such a public allegation and, of course, that comes from a place of entitlement.

We really miss the presence of more women on our Benches.

That's why the complainant has requested for a special inquiry committee external to the Supreme Court.

What this also brings out is that our Benches have to be more diverse.

It is also important to separate the patriarchy from the gender of the individual.

It is also true that men can be more feminist than women.

We also have women judges on the Bench who have been very conservative and have a different idea of justice.

Feminism founded on the principles of justice needs to find an outlet in the composition of the Benches of the Supreme Court.**The role of the Attorney General (AG) and Solicitor General (SG) have also come under scrutiny for their unwavering support to the CJI in the matter. What do you have to say about this?**

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments:

The manner in which they conducted themselves in this proceeding has been shameful. The Bar Council chair and Supreme Court Bar Association president, who condemned the allegations and termed them scurrilous, have no authority to speak for the rest of us.

Karuna Nundy, weighed in here with her arguments:

- Their conduct in this manner was not right at all.

Is sexual harassment in the highest judiciary one of the worst-kept secrets?

Mihira Sood, weighed in here with her arguments:

- I think it is a problem wherever there is a high concentration of power in the hands of very few people. In the legal profession, sexual harassment is rampant.
- It is extremely difficult for women to come forward.
- Most prefer to put such incidents behind them or leave the profession rather than seek justice for fear of repercussions.
- The recent proceedings as well as the allegations detailed in the affidavit, if they are true, justify that fear.

Karuna Nundy, weighed in here with her arguments:

- The question is, should such a thing happen, is there impunity? The answer is, yes. It is that impunity that needs to be addressed. But we are going through a churn. We have women who are much more aware, and men who are in positions of power and have a sense of entitlement. We have to

strengthen the system to check impunity and ensure that due process is followed.

3. Breaking new ground

What's in the news?

- A recent judgment of the Madras High Court, Madurai Bench, has extended enjoyment of civil rights, especially those pertaining to marriage, to transpersons.

Editorial Analysis:

- While this development is path-breaking for much of the country, **the judgment also opens doors to the larger LGBTQ community for availing civil rights including marriage, succession and inheritance.**

A Look at some legal precedents:

- In the judgment delivered in **Arunkumar and Sreeja v. Inspector General of Registration and Others (2019)**, the Madras High Court has held that a properly solemnised marriage between a male and transwoman is valid under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, and the Registrar of Marriages is bound to register the same.
- The judgment quotes **NALSA v. Union of India (2014)**, which held that transgender persons have the right to decide their “self-identified gender”.

Significance of the judgement issued by the Madurai Bench:

- The Madurai Bench judgment, however, breaks new ground when it comes to the interpretation of the statutory terms found in the Hindu Marriage Act, especially that of bride.
- It states that the expression “bride” occurring in Section 5 of the Hindu Marriage Act cannot have a static or immutable meaning.
- As noted in Justice G.P. Singh’s Principles of Statutory Interpretation, the court is free to apply the current meaning of a statute to present-day conditions.
- It is important to note that the nine-judge Bench in Justice (Retd.) K.S. Puttaswamy made a telling reference to the landmark judgment, *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), wherein the U.S. Supreme Court held that the “fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by both Due Process Clause and Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.”
- **The Madurai Bench judgment has revised the legal construction of gender and the conventional interpretation of terms such as “bride” and “bridegroom”.**
- **Now, when this is read along with the Supreme Court’s explicit reference to the American court’s guarantee of right to marry to homosexual couples shows that there cannot be a legal bar any more to extending civil rights such as marriage, succession or inheritance to LGBTQ couples who have decided to get married consensually, have married in accordance with the existing laws and are not in violation of any other laws.**

Concluding Remarks:

- At the preliminary hearings before the Supreme Court in Navtej Singh Johar, the Solicitor General, representing the Government of India, sought the curtailing of the scope of the case to that of the decriminalisation aspect or the constitutional validity of Section 377 of Indian Penal Code, 1860 alone.
- The Supreme Court, consequently, did not have an opportunity to examine the bundle of rights that were to naturally arise from the striking down of Section 377.
- Therefore, in this context, the present judgment is truly path-breaking for the LGBTQ community,

which is denied equal protection of laws with regard to civil rights.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Uncertain times

What's in the news?

- The oil market is in ferment once again with a great deal of uncertainty over supplies.

Editorial Analysis:

- Recently, the United States announced that it would not extend beyond May 1, 2019, the 180-day waiver it had granted to eight countries, including India, to purchase oil from Iran.
- This caused the price of Brent crude oil to witness a sudden jump to more than \$75, from the recent close of \$71.97, as traders expected the withdrawal of the waivers to adversely affect the supply of oil in the market.
- It is worth mentioning that the price of Brent crude, has been rising steadily in the last few months, and has increased by almost 50% since it hit a low of about \$50 in December, 2018, as a result of the decision of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to restrict their output to boost prices.

Worrying Signs for India:

- **It is important to note that India imports more than 10% of its crude oil from Iran.** It is due to this that the government faces the immediate challenge of having to find alternative suppliers to meet its huge energy needs.
- **Even more worrying is the likely negative impact that higher oil prices would have on India's current account deficit, fiscal deficit and inflation in the wider economy.**
- Experts opine that the current account deficit, which narrowed to 2.5% of GDP in the December 2018 quarter thanks to lower oil prices, will likely worsen going forward.
- The fiscal deficit, which has been widening in advance of the elections, is also likely to get increasingly out of control. It is also important to note that **while inflation is relatively benign at the moment, any further acceleration in price gains will tie the hands of the Reserve Bank of India.**
- It may, however, be hard to say for sure that the recent jump in the price of oil, and the jump over the last few months, marks a secular rise in the price of the commodity.
- **The entry of U.S. shale producers into the oil market has put a lid on the price of oil as freely competing shale suppliers have been happy to increase their output whenever oil prices rise significantly.**
- Recently as well, the oil market has been torn between the news of the end to the waivers granted to oil imports from Iran and the competing news of the increased supply of oil pouring into the market from the U.S.

Concluding Remarks:

- Higher oil prices make it lucrative each time for members of OPEC to cheat on their commitments to restrict supply.
- It is important to note that 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.

F. Tidbits

1. SC appoints ex-judge Patnaik to probe 'larger conspiracy' against CJI

Context

- The Supreme Court expressed concern over the institution being “systematically attacked” and judges being “maligned” and “blackmailed” **ahead of big cases involving “influential” people**, and asked former SC judge AK Patnaik to **examine allegations of a “larger conspiracy” by vested interests** behind a sexual harassment charge against Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi.

Details

- Justice Patnaik has been tasked to **unearth whether the CJI is the target of a larger intrigue hatched by a powerful lobby of fixers**, disgruntled apex court employees and corporate figures to compromise the highest judiciary itself.
- The enquiry would primarily focus on **material and affidavits provided by lawyer Utsav Singh Bains** that claimed some former staffers of the court, influential peddlers and corporate entities have ganged up against Chief Justice Gogoi to frame him in a false case.
- A Special Bench led by Justice Arun Mishra **ordered the chiefs of the CBI, the Intelligence Bureau and the Delhi Police to assist Justice Patnaik**, who has to complete his investigation and file a report in a sealed cover before the Bench.

2. Justice Ramana quits Bobde probe panel

Context

- Justice NV Ramana, part of 3-member in-house inquiry panel set up to examine the allegations of sexual harassment against Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, recused himself from it

Details

- The development comes a day after the former apex court woman employee, who levelled the allegations against the CJI, wrote a letter to the panel expressing reservation over the inclusion of Justice Ramana.
- His letter said "Let my recusal be a clear message to the nation that there should be no fears about probity in our institution, and that we will not refrain from going to any extent to protect the trust reposed in us. That is, after all, our final source of moral strength,"
- After Justice Ramana's withdrawal from the panel, **Justice Indu Malhotra was selected as his replacement.**

G. Prelims Facts

1. Khelchawa Festival

- Tiwa tribals celebrates Khelchawa festival in Assam.
- The festival is held at the close of the harvest season.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Which of the following is *not* part of Antarctic region?

1. Scotia Sea
2. Beaufort Sea
3. Weddell Sea
4. Kara Sea

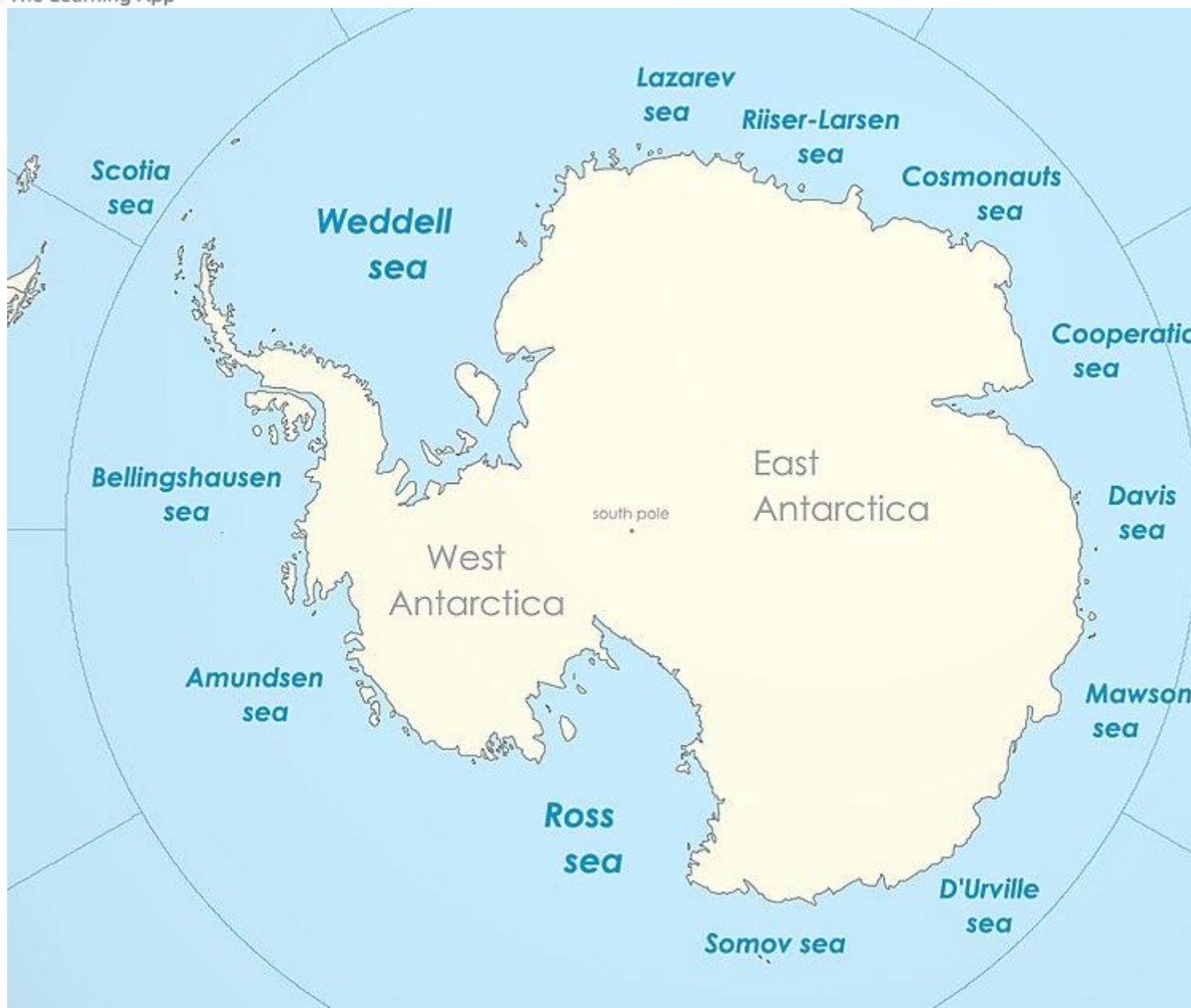
Options:

- a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- b) 2 and 4 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 2 only

Ans: b

Explanation:





Q2. Which country recently had imposed 'Garbage Emergency'?

- a) United Kingdom
- b) Australia
- c) Indonesia
- d) South Korea

Ans: c

Explanation:

- Bali declares rubbish emergency as rising tide of plastic buries beaches
- A 3.6-mile stretch of beach on the island's western coast was declared an emergency zone after authorities realised that the volume of plastic being washed up was endangering the tourist trade.
- Indonesia is the second biggest maritime plastic polluter in the world after China. The river of Citarum in West Java has been described as the most polluted river in the world with detritus dumped in it by nearby factories.

Q3. Which of the following pairs are correctly matched?

1. Seventh schedule – Union, state and concurrent lists
2. Third schedule – Contains list of recognized Languages
3. Second schedule – Oaths and affirmations
4. Tenth schedule – Anti-defection provisions for members of Parliament and state legislatures.

Options:

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 4 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3 only
- d) 1 and 4 only

Ans: d

Explanation:

- Second Schedule- Lists the salaries of public officials, judges, and the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- Third Schedule - Forms of oaths – Lists the oaths of office for elected officials and judges.

Q4. Consider the following about CJI

1. He is the Master of the Roster.
2. CJI follows written procedure to allocate cases.

Which of above statements are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both
- d) None

Ans: a

Explanation: Self-explanatory

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. India is in urgent need to formulate a 'Counter Proxy War Doctrine' that is multi-pronged and all-encompassing against Pakistan. Explain.
2. If independence of the judiciary means unquestioned power without accountability, then that power needs to be counterbalanced by other state organs or institutions apart from the judges themselves. How can we ensure transparency and accountability of Sitting Judges in the apex court?

