

10 May 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. SC frowns on foreigners' tribunals plan

Context:

The Supreme Court questioned a proposal by the Assam government to quickly throw open 1,000 foreigners' tribunals all over the State to try suspected illegal immigrants.

Background:

- Burdened by decades of migration from Bangladesh — formerly East Bengal and then East Pakistan — Assam already has an NRC, which was published in 1951 on the basis of that year's Census.

- The only state with such a document, Assam is currently updating it to identify its citizens.

Read more about [National Register of Citizens](#) for a complete background.

Issue:

- The Supreme Court questioned a proposal by the Assam government to quickly throw open 1,000 foreigners' tribunals all over the North Eastern State to try suspected illegal immigrants.
- It was observed that it would be difficult to get 1,000 judicial officers to preside over 1,000 tribunals.
- The proposal at a time when the deadline for publishing the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) is looming large.
- The CJI hinted at the possible flood of petitions which would hit the foreigners' tribunals once the final NRC was published on July 31.
- These petitions would be from people who had not been able to prove their Indian citizenship.

Details:

- The court, which is also examining the plight of 900-odd illegal immigrants languishing in Assam's detention centres for years, said it was in favour of releasing them, provided that a fool proof mechanism was evolved to keep an eye on them.
- The court agreed with amicus curiae Prashant Bhushan's suggestion that detenus should be released after six months or a year.

2. Woman alleges 'triple talaq' on WhatsApp

Context:

A 23-year-old woman in Thane district of Maharashtra has alleged that her husband divorced her by sending a 'triple talaq' message on her mobile phone.

Background:

- The Supreme Court in August 2017 ruled that the practice of divorce through triple talaq among Muslims was "void", "illegal" and "unconstitutional".

Details:

- The NDA Government formulated a bill called The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 and introduced it in the Parliament which was passed in December 2017 by the Lok Sabha.
- The bill makes instant triple talaq (talaq-e-biddah) in any form — spoken, in writing or by electronic means such as email, SMS and WhatsApp illegal and void, with up to three years in jail for the husband.
- MPs from RJD, AIMIM, BJD, AIADMK and IUML opposed the bill, calling it arbitrary in nature and a faulty proposal, while Congress supported the Bill tabled in the Lok Sabha by law minister.
- The bill faced stiff resistance in the Rajya Sabha.
- Several Opposition lawmakers called for it to be sent to a select committee for close scrutiny.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Barn owls to play Tom, fight Jerry in Lakshadweep

Context:

Three pairs of barn owls have been taken from Kerala to Kavaratti under a rodent management programme.

Issue:

Coconut is an important money-spinner for the islands, but the pesky rodents account for 30 to 40% of the yield loss.

Details:

- With a thriving rat population playing havoc with its coconut yield, the Union Territory of Lakshadweep is turning to barn owls for help.
- It has recruited three pairs of barn owls from Kerala to fight what has so far been a losing battle against the rodents.
- After a lengthy bureaucratic process that began in 2017, the winged hunters have now reached Kavaratti by ship.
- The biocontrol measure is spearheaded by the Lakshadweep Administration, with the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) at Kavaratti providing the technical knowhow.
- However, employing owls to hunt down rats is not exactly a new idea for the islanders.
- Similar attempts were reportedly made in the 1960s as well.

Why barn owls?

- The program has chosen Barn Owls over other accomplished rat hunters like cats or rat snakes for a reason that the rats in the Lakshadweep Islands practically live on treetops.
- Besides, the nocturnal barn owls are natural rat hunters, armed with a powerful auditory mechanism.
- There is also an important environmental angle to Lakshadweep's decision to choose biocontrol. The islands being a designated organic zone, use of chemicals for pest control is a strict no-no.
- If successful, the barn owl campaign will be extended to other islands in Lakshadweep as well.

2. A plan to survive global warming

Context:

According to experts who insist climate change, solution to food shortage, overpopulation lies underground.

Issue:

- We're losing a lot of arable land at an alarming rate each year (to soil degradation, urbanisation and intensive farming), where it should be increased to feed the growing world population.

Details:

- From Boston to Oslo, Rio de Janeiro, Seattle and Sydney, structures such as multi-lane highways are being moved underground, with the disused spaces converted into parks.
- Metropolises like Singapore and Hong Kong have already begun changing legislation to allow for everything from universities to libraries, shopping centres, cinemas and sports facilities to move underground.
- How well plants can grow without the sun's rays is the focus of current studies looking into the

optimal frequency of artificial light for photosynthesis.

Way forward:

- It is said that the efforts to meet seven of the United Nations' 17 sustainable development goals — from cleaning up pollution-clogged metropolises to ending world hunger — could be given a big boost by re-purposing spaces below street level.
- Underground spaces could easily be used for growing crops.
- Scientific developments in areas like aquaponics — where vegetables and fish are farmed together — could help relieve the pressure on the food supply chain, and dramatically cut transport costs if such new farms were situated under cities.
- Micro greens — tiny seedlings of plants such as fennel, radish or coriander usually harvested when they are full size — are already being grown underground.
- Adding products like soy or lupin, can be used as the basis for creating more protein-rich products that can be used as a substitute for meat reducing reliance on one of the biggest climate destroyers: the meat industry.
- Going underground can also help protect populations from the severe weather events climate change is expected to spark.
- Cities, where the population growth is very strong, and which are struggling with resources, must look at innovative ways to expand.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. By established law and procedure (CJI- Allegation of Sexual Harassment)

Note to Students:

This is an issue which has been covered in many articles and reports featured in the newspaper for some time now. Students are advised to go through this issue in detail from the previous editions of the Comprehensive News Analysis (CNA), especially the one covered on 9th May, 2019.

Editorial Analysis:

- Experts opine that a well-publicised case of a complaint by a former employee of the Supreme Court of India against the Chief Justice of India (CJI) has raised questions about legal provisions, procedural propriety and different facets of what could be categorised as principles of natural justice.
- It is important to note that as a constitutional institution, the Supreme Court had to respond to the same.

The Procedure Followed:

- The procedure that was being followed cannot be criticised as being either illegal or otherwise arbitrary.
- A procedure had to be devised as the circumstances were unique, without any precedent.
- The only guidance available was a '**Report of the committee on in-house procedure** (in brief

“procedure”), drawn up by a meeting of the full court of the Supreme Court on December 15, 1999.

- The procedure adopted is a public document available on the court website.

What does the Procedure deal with?

- It deals with situations involving a High Court judge, a Chief Justice of a High Court and a judge of the Supreme Court separately.
- The procedure specifically states that even in the case of an inquiry into a complaint received against a judge of the Supreme Court, the committee shall hold an inquiry on the same pattern as the committee constituted to examine a complaint against a judge of the High Court.
- It is important to note that the procedure does not expressly deal with the case of the CJI but it definitely would be applicable to the case of the CJI as well because the CJI is also a judge of the Supreme Court.
- Thus, the procedure does not contemplate the participation of a legal practitioner because it would not be a formal judicial inquiry involving the examination and cross-examination of witnesses by lawyers.
- It has to be remembered that the committee was bound by the rules under which it has come into being, and though as per the report it is entitled to devise its own procedure (where certain parameters have been laid down in the in-house procedure), the same cannot be deviated from.

Any substance in doubting the process?

- The complainant did appear before the committee three times, as newspaper reports would show. It seems she did ask for permission to engage a lawyer, but it was denied.
- It also seems that she decided to stay away. It is her choice.
- But it is difficult to countenance an opinion that the complainant felt intimidated by three Supreme Court judges being present, to hear and consider her version.
- The members of the committee are Supreme Court judges, comprising the seniormost judge of the Supreme Court and two women judges. Is not the fact that two of the members of the committee are women, one which would serve to make the complainant give her version in a more relaxed atmosphere?
- Is it right on our part to be sceptical about the propriety and correctness of the procedure followed by three Supreme Court judges, persons with unblemished reputations, in their character, conduct and integrity?
- A trust deficit would be counterproductive in these circumstances.

The Legal precedent:

- A claim for a copy of the inquiry report will have to be turned down going by the law laid down by the Supreme Court in **Indira Jaising v. Supreme Court of India & Anr [(2003) 5 SCC 494]**.
- The report in the said case was made to the CJI and the report was confidential and discreet, only for the purpose of his information and not for disclosure to any other person.
- Because the inquiry in the present case was into the allegations made against the CJI, the report has advisedly been given to the next seniormost judge (next in seniority to Justice S.A. Bobde and Justice N.V. Ramana).
- Experts opine that the procedure laid down in the in-house procedure has been adhered to in the present case.
- The law in Indira Jaising has also been adhered to. The complainant does have remedies in law.
- Some experts take the opinion that the principles of natural justice which are alleged to have been violated in the present case, by the refusal on part of the committee to afford the complainant a right of legal representation and the decision not to publish the report of the committee, do not and cannot have a straightjacketed approach.
- What has been done by the committee is in accordance with the procedure that is laid down. In doing

so, it cannot be said that there is a violation of natural justice for the simple reason that what is involved is not a judicial inquiry but a fact-finding one.

- A right of legal representation is not inherent in such an inquiry.

The Judiciary: A Cherished Institution

- The higher judiciary of this country is an institution to be cherished and its reputation is a matter dear to every citizen of this country.
- Some of us are more vocal than the rest, but all of us are stakeholders.
- The Supreme Court and the High Courts are constitutional institutions and the men and women who occupy positions in the higher judiciary are required to be persons of impeccable integrity.
- However, men and women are not infallible, and why should judges alone be an exception thereto?
- The founding fathers of the Constitution were wise persons and constitutional protection is afforded to the judges to see that they are able to discharge their duties for the benefit of the citizens of the country, without fear or favour, but this is not to say that there can be no complaint against a judge of the Supreme Court or the CJI.
- When such a complaint is made, it has to be inquired into in accordance with the procedure that is laid down by the full court of the Supreme Court itself, and the said in-house procedure has been laid down keeping in mind the constitutional ethos.

Concluding Remarks:

- The said in-house procedure has all the attributes of law.
- It is a law governing such situations.
- Where the law is adhered to, claims for deviation therefrom or complaints of adherence to it cannot be countenanced.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Loud and clear (India- U.S. Trade Standoff)

What's in the news?

- Recently, U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross made a scathing speech in New Delhi.
- Ross lashed out at what he called India's unfair trade practices and **"overly restrictive market access barriers"**.

Editorial Analysis:

- Experts opine that after this remark by U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, it is no longer possible for the government to brush under the carpet its differences with Washington.
- Ross made these comments speaking to Indian and U.S. businesspersons.
- As a matter of fact, his comments followed a series of measures by the U.S. that have affected India.

Recent Measures that the U.S. has taken:

1. Refusal to revoke or waive tariff increases made last year (2018) on steel and aluminium,
 2. An ultimatum that India "zero out" oil imports from Iran by May 2, 2019 even without securing comparable alternatives, and
 3. the decision to withdraw India's GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) trade status.
- It is important to note that Mr. Ross repeated President Donald Trump's accusation that India is a

“tariff king”, and threatened India with “consequences” if it responded to U.S. tariffs with counter-tariffs, something New Delhi had threatened but not yet implemented in the hope of hammering out a comprehensive trade package.

- Despite rounds of talks, however, a package has remained elusive, and it is time for the government to articulate the problem on its hands.

A Prescription for the New Government in India:

- In the face of growing U.S. aggression on the issue, the government that takes office after the elections in India will have to urgently consider its options ahead.
- Clearly, the strategy of the past year (2018), to ignore the differences in the hope that the problems would be resolved or that the U.S.’s trade war with China would occupy the Trump administration more, has not worked.
- New Delhi and Washington need to make a more determined attempt to sort out issues, starting from scratch if required, with tariffs.
- Further, while the 50-60% duties on motorcycles and cars and 150% duties on American liquor that India imposes need a second look, the U.S. must see that average tariffs imposed by India (13.8%) are not much higher than those levied by economies such as South Korea and Brazil.
- In addition, the government will need to revisit some of its decisions like data localisation requirements and new e-commerce regulations, which were declared suddenly, while **the U.S. must show some flexibility on India’s price caps on coronary stents and other medical devices.**
- The U.S. must understand the cultural differences over the labelling of non-vegetarian dairy products.

Concluding Remarks:

- It is unlikely that the Trump administration will temper its “my way or the highway” approach to Iranian oil sales, and New Delhi will have to work closely with other countries to build alternative financial structures to avoid U.S. sanctions.
- Where a compromise is not possible, the government should be ready to push back on unreasonable demands.
- Perhaps the most worrying signal from Mr. Ross’s outburst was that Washington may not be willing to meet India halfway on trade issues. New Delhi must prepare accordingly.

2. Endless war (Situation in Afghanistan)

What’s in the news?

- Recently, Afghanistan’s Loya Jirga, which is a grand assembly of senior politicians and tribal and religious leaders, made a call for a ceasefire between government troops and the Taliban. Experts opine that this development underscores the mood in Kabul.
- It underscores the point that Afghanistan’s leaders, from its rulers to tribal chieftains, want to resolve the 17-year-long conflict.

Editorial Analysis:

- Over a four-day meeting that ended on May 2, 2019, the Jirga asked the government to set up a negotiating team with members from the assembly for talks with the insurgents.
- The Loya Jirga also backed women’s rights, a critical issue being debated by the political class amid the Taliban’s rising clout.

Reaction to the Proposal:

- President Ashraf Ghani has said his government would honour the assembly's proposals, but wants the ceasefire to be mutual.
- The Taliban, for its part, immediately shot down the proposal, vowing to continue attacks through the Ramzan month.
- It is important to note that without the Taliban's reciprocity, no ceasefire will hold.
- The group controls half of Afghanistan and has shown its capacity to strike anywhere, including in the most fortified of locations.
- It has also been engaged in direct talks with the U.S. for months.
- However, the peace talks haven't prevented the Taliban from carrying out its summer offensive against the government.
- It is important to note that by rejecting the Loya Jirga proposal, the Taliban has once again made it clear that it is not ready yet to engage with the government in Kabul.

Impact of the position taken by the Taliban:

- The Taliban's intransigence has darkened the prospects for peace.
- The talks between Taliban representatives and Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. special representative, are primarily focussed on withdrawing foreign troops from Afghanistan.
- The U.S. seeks, in return, an assurance that Afghanistan will not provide a safe haven to transnational terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.
- However, for an eventual settlement of the Afghan crisis, the government and the Taliban need to talk. The war has long been in a stalemate.
- But the government and the Taliban see different ways out.

Differing views of the Government and the Taliban:

- The government is willing to engage the insurgents. As a matter of fact, this move has now been endorsed by the Loya Jirga as well.
- However, the Taliban, like any other successful insurgent group, wants to prolong the conflict, hoping that it can weaken the government's morale and reduce its military strength.
- Experts opine that the Taliban will change tack only if it is forced to do so militarily or through pressure. However, the government lacks the resources to accomplish either.
- It cannot defeat the Taliban militarily, as the 17 years of the war suggest.
- It cannot forge peace on the Taliban's terms as it would mean endangering whatever few freedoms the Afghans enjoy right now.

Concluding Remarks:

- Experts opine that this resource deficit can be bridged only with the help of the international community.
- The U.S., which is in talks with the Taliban, should not overlook the interests of Kabul.
- It must put pressure on the Taliban to cease hostilities and engage with Mr. Ghani's government.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Are farm loan waivers a political gimmick?

Note to the Students:

- The below analysis takes into account some of the salient points as brought out by S. Mahendra Dev and M. Govinda Rao, who talk about the inability of governments to think of long-term solutions to tackle farm distress.

- This issue is important from the civil services perspective as addressing rural distress is an important theme and has also been a subject of electoral debate during this election season.

Editorial Analysis:

How grave is the situation for small and marginal farmers?

- Farm distress is real because there have been low agricultural prices and low farm incomes.
- The farm sector growth rate is much lower than in earlier periods.
- As a result, farm prices are low despite production rising.
- The demand is also low.
- So, whether the increase in farm production is enough for incomes is not clear.
- For small and marginal farmers, the additional problem is that the size of land holdings is declining.
- Earlier, the average size was two hectares, now it has come down to nearly one hectare.
- Marginal farmers have less than half a hectare.
- With these sizes, income is difficult to sustain.
- The recent stress is also because prices are much lower than the MSP [minimum support price] in the market, while long-term problems such as low capital formation in agriculture persist.
- Public investment in the sector as a percentage of GDP is also stagnant.
- So, these factors, along with two years of drought, have led to this.
- Another thing is that the non-farm sector creates jobs.
- As per NABARD [National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development] data, 23% of rural income is from agriculture, so the rest is from non-farm activity.
- The rate of growth in agricultural wages has stagnated and is lower than in earlier years when MGNREGA and the construction sector helped boost wages.
- The rural economy overall, agricultural as well as non-farm, is facing a demand problem and low incomes, which has caused farm distress.

Some factors in farming households contributing to the stress:

- The government had focused on managing inflation in the early years of its tenure and the inability to generate jobs could have created non-farm avenues for the youth in farming households. This has contributed to the stress.
- The agriculture focus is short term, [which is why we have] loan waivers, but the focus on how to generate incomes and jobs has been lacking.
- The construction sector was earlier responsible for higher wages and demand, but now that sector is also stagnating.

Farm loan waiver scheme: A workable strategy?

- Eleven years ago, the UPA announced a massive farm loan waiver scheme. But the impact of this scheme on farm income was limited.
- In the present day, institutional credit to farmers is just 64%, so the rest is from non-institutional sources.
- The large farmers corner the institutional credit, and small and marginal farmers get non-institutional credit at interest rates of 25-30%.
- Moreover, there is a moral hazard problem as banks get affected — farmers say they don't have to repay the loans as there will be a waiver some time.
- There are opportunity costs for this loan waiver spending.
- Several States have started them, including Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.
- This will also have fiscal implications.
- However, some people say banks have written off ₹5 lakh crore of corporate sector debt, so why not

farmers? But both the write-offs are bad.

PM-KISAN scheme:

- The Centre has announced the PM-KISAN scheme under which ₹6,000 per year will be given to 12 crore small and marginal farmers holding cultivable land up to two hectares.
- This is similar to the loan waiver in terms of quality spending but only slightly better than loan waivers, as smaller farmers could also get this amount.
- Telangana and Odisha have also started such schemes.
- The amount may not be very high for farmers, but its implementation may be relatively easier as it's a direct cash transfer.
- But it's also similar to farm loan waivers and is just a palliative.

Some steps promised by the Congress Party:

- The Congress had announced farm loan waivers in States like Madhya Pradesh. It has also promised a new law to waive farm loans, a separate farmer budget, and a minimum income support scheme.
- There are certain sections of experts who support cash transfers to the poor.
- It is important to note that farmers and agricultural labourers face several risks, so some social protection measures are important for an economy which has 90% of the workforce in the unorganised sector.
- But on the other hand, if you want to remove distress, these are not the solutions.
- In the NYAY [Nyuntam Aay Yojana] scheme announced by the Congress, it's not clear where the money will come from.

A Critical View on Farm-Load Waivers:

- Critics opine that this is not a solution.
- First, it doesn't really help the needy farmers who borrow from moneylenders.
- Second, it creates a bad credit culture.
- As we go along, commercial banks will become hesitant to give loans to farmers because from time to time, this particular problem comes up.
- This is not a good use of taxpayers' money.
- You need to find a solution to the basic problems of farmers.
- Their distress is real, and on both the supply and demand sides.
- An important question arises: do you need to reorient the entire system, from being consumer-oriented to producer-oriented?
- Whenever you have a problem, you want to protect the consumer with low prices for farm products. When prices rise, you want to import and ban exports. Your support price policy helps only a few crops for which you undertake procurement.
- That actually distorts the cropping pattern, so even if paddy and sugarcane are water-intensive crops, farmers prefer them as there is some stabilisation in prices.
- With regards to the money that the Government is using on farm loan waivers and other subsidies, if only it could be used on infrastructure, developing markets and processing and transportation networks, it would be a huge thing.
- Removing the oligopoly of agricultural markets is important.

Some Needed Reforms in the Farming Process:

- The government wants to double farm incomes by 2022.
- In an effort to achieve this, freeing farm markets from excessive regulation along with some safeguards would be a better alternative to multiple state interventions at every step of the farming process.

- It is important to note that even if you increase procurement prices, it will be useful only for those crops that the government procures.
- Many States don't procure most items.
- Agricultural markets are in very bad shape and marketing reforms are very important as is the removal of middlemen.
- Many interventions are needed on both the demand and supply side.
- Further, market reforms are the biggest change needed.
- MSP is not a solution, which focuses on cereals like rice and wheat.
- Very few reforms have taken place in market infrastructure, value chains, logistics, processing and warehousing to boost farmer incomes.
- We also need a consistent import and export policy, which is lacking, so that farmers can sell their excess produce.
- For perishables, a different model is needed.
- Returns are much higher if the same amount of money spent on loan waivers and income support schemes is deployed on things like water and technology, research and extension services.

A Rebooting of Structures:

- Political parties largely don't have a long-term view.
- Immediate solutions that lend themselves to sloganeering are the big issue.
- Somebody has to come and say, look, my agenda is not to double farm incomes, but these are the reforms I will implement for a better future for farmers.
- Another issue is the consolidation of holdings.
- Small farms have become unviable.
- Farm labourers are not available because of MGNREGA.
- Many of them have migrated to urban areas in search of work.
- We need to legally facilitate the consolidation of holdings.
- Information asymmetry is a big problem too. When the farmer is going to the market with his bullock cart full of produce, he doesn't know what prices he is going to get for his produce.
- If prices are low, he can't just return as he has to pay rent for the cart and other things, so there is a distress sale as many crops are perishables.
- We have never thought of this in a comprehensive manner, and unless there is a package of holistic measures, all this talk of doubling farm incomes is meaningless.

Concluding Remarks:

- Giving a minimum basic income deserves to be looked at, but you can do that fiscally only when you get rid of all other subsidies and transfers.
- The basic issue is the sustainability of a policy measure such as minimum income.
- The other important thing is farm insurance, which needs to be expanded much more so that farmers are protected from the vagaries of nature.
- Compared to earlier schemes, the recent farm insurance programme is better, but still many farmers have not benefited because of implementation problems.
- It's a long way to go. We don't have crop cutting experiments, State governments are not working on it properly when disasters take place.
- Between subsidies and investments, there is a trade-off — when subsidies increase, investment declines.
- On old-age pension, there was a scheme that gave ₹200 a month earlier.
- State governments have offered ₹2,000 in some places. Farmers also come under that scheme.
- Basic minimum income can be considered if you remove non-merit subsidies and move fertilizer subsidy to cash transfers as you can save more and improve soil fertility too.

F. Tidbits

1. New skill development domains for rural youth

- The Rajasthan-ILD Skills University has opened new domains for skill development of rural youths by signing a memorandum of understanding with the Rajasthan Electronics and Instruments Limited (REIL).
- The training for three to six months' duration will connect young men and women in the villages with guaranteed employment.
- The new areas of skills training identified in the MoU were dairy technology, solar energy, security equipment maintenance and electric vehicle charging station.

2. California to ban pesticide that affects babies' brains

- California, the most productive agricultural State in the U.S., is set to ban a controversial pesticide widely used to control a range of insects but blamed for harming brain development in babies.
- The move, cheered by environmentalists, would outlaw chlorpyrifos after scientists deemed it a toxic air contaminant.

3. Navy joins exercises in South China Sea

- Navy ships INS Kolkata and Shakti carried out Group Sail with the naval ships of Japan, the Philippines and the U.S. in the South China Sea (SCS) from May 3-9.
- The ships undertook various exercises en route which included formation manoeuvring, under way replenishment runs, cross-deck flying and exchange of sea riders.
- Six ships, including a frigate and helicopter carrier JMSDF Izumo from Japan, a Philippines frigate and an Arleigh Burke class destroyer from the U.S. Navy took part in the exercise.
- The group sail exercise showcased India's commitment to operating with like-minded nations to ensure safe maritime environment through enhanced interoperability.

INS Kolkata:

- The INS Kolkata is an indigenously built stealth guided missile destroyer.
- As part of her pre-commissioning weapon trials at sea, INS Kolkata test-fired a BrahMos missile off Karwar's coast in 2014.
- In 2015, BrahMos missile was test fired from INS Kolkata during the Tropex exercise in the Arabian Sea.
- In December 2015 the Indian Navy successfully test-fired the Barak 8 missile from INS Kolkata.
- Two missiles were fired at high speed targets, during naval exercises being undertaken in the Arabian Sea.

INS Shakti:

- INS Shakti is one of the largest fleet replenishment tankers, displacing over 27,000 tonnes and capable of carrying 15,000 tonnes of liquid cargo.
- NS Shakti(A57) is a Deepak-class fleet tanker in service
- She was built by an Italian ship building company.
- She is the second and final ship of her class. Shakti, along with her predecessor Deepak, is one of the largest ships of the Indian Navy.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Ilkal Saree has been accorded Geographical Indication (GI) Tag.
2. Darjeeling Tea was the first Indian product to get the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

Darjeeling Tea was the first Indian product to get the geographical indication tag. It got the recognition in the year 2004. Ilkal saree takes its name from the town of Ilkal in the Bagalkot district of Karnataka state, India. It has been accorded GI Tag.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Wanchuwa is an important festival of the Tiwa tribal community.
2. The festival is celebrated in Odisha.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

Wanchuwa festival is celebrated in the Karbi Anglong District of Assam state. Wanchuwa is one of the most important festivals of the Tiwa tribal community living in the hills as it is related with agriculture which is the mainstay of their economy. Tiwas pray for a bountiful harvest during this festival and to protect their crops from pest and other natural calamities. Tiwa is a major tribe of Assam state who practice Jhum or shifting cultivation for their living in the hills.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Tropical cyclones rotate in a counter clockwise direction in the Northern Hemisphere and in a clockwise direction in the Southern Hemisphere.
2. The most dangerous and destructive part of a tropical cyclone is the eye.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Explanation:

The wind field of a tropical cyclone may be divided into three regions. First is a ring-shaped outer region. In this region the winds increase uniformly in speed toward the centre. Wind speeds attain their maximum value at the second region, the eyewall, which is typically 15 to 30 km (10 to 20 miles) from the centre of the storm. The eyewall in turn surrounds the interior region, called the eye, where wind speeds decrease rapidly and the air is often calm. The most dangerous and destructive part of a tropical cyclone is the eyewall. Here winds are strongest, rainfall is heaviest, and deep convective clouds rise from close to Earth's surface to a height of 15,000 metres (49,000 feet).

Q4. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) comes under the administrative control of:

- a. Ministry of Defence
- b. Ministry of Home Affairs
- c. Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
- d. None of the above

Answer: c

Explanation:

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is the premier investigating agency of India. Operating under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions - Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Century old system of prisons in India calls for urgent reforms. Discuss the need for prison reforms in India. (15 Marks, 250 Words).
2. Women in India need equal access to opportunities to gain a measure of economic independence, without which it is hard to imagine independence on other fronts. Elucidate (15 Marks, 250 Words)

