

# 17 May 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS1 Related

### Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

#### 1. Teen pregnancies linked to poor nutrition in babies

##### Context:

According to a study that analysed data from India and appeared in The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, teen pregnancies contribute to under-nutrition in babies.

##### Details:

- The paper examined data for 60,096 women from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) to study the extent to which teenage pregnancy contributes to under-nutrition among children.
- According to the study, children born to adolescent mothers (10-19 years) were 5 percentage points more likely to be stunted (shorter for their age) than those born to young adults (20-24 years) and 11

percentage points more stunted than children born to adult mothers.

- Children born to adolescent mothers also had 10 percentage points higher prevalence of low weight as compared to those born to adult mothers.
- The study said that lower education levels among adolescent mothers had the strongest impact on stunting levels, followed by socioeconomic status.

#### **Way forward:**

- The paper recommends policies and programmes to delay marriage, especially in districts where there is a higher prevalence of child marriage.
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 should be implemented in letter and spirit.
- The research also highlights that while adolescent pregnancy is more likely to occur in high poverty contexts, it could trap mothers in an unending cycle of poverty as “women who bear children early are more likely to discontinue education and, thus, have lower earning potential.
- Improvement in socio economic status would also in turn contribute to higher education levels.

## **B. GS2 Related**

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

#### **1. Meghalaya govt. clears setting up of farmers’ panel**

##### **Context:**

The Meghalaya government has approved setting up of a commission to look into the problems faced by farmers.

##### **Details:**

- The State Cabinet approved the proposal made by the Agriculture Department to set up a Farmers’ Commission, in line with the resolution passed at the ‘farmers’ parliament’.
- The ‘farmers’ parliament’, the first of its kind in the country, was organised in Meghalaya and attended by scientists, bureaucrats, apart from farmers, to discuss issues related to the agriculture situation in the State.
- Chief Minister had then announced setting up a commission to address the concerns of the farming community.
- It is also said that the government was planning to observe 2020 as the year of farmers.

### **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

#### **1. U.S. President announces new points-based green card system**

##### **Context:**

U.S. President Donald Trump announced a proposal that will include significant changes to the way green cards are allocated.

##### **Details:**

- The plan outlined dramatically reduces the number of family-based green cards and moves towards a points-based (“merit-based”) system that will reward, among other factors, education, skills and English language proficiency.

- It will increase the number of green cards that are given through the skills route versus the family-based route.
- The plan is sought to boost border security and tighten asylum procedures.
- Currently about 12% of those receiving green cards entered the U.S. based on skill-based visas (such as the H1B), while some 66% are family-based green cards.
- The new proposal will increase skills-based green cards to 57%.
- Points will be awarded to applicants based on their education, work experience, age (more points for younger workers), English language ability etc.
- New immigrants will have to show that they can financially support themselves and will need to pass a civics exam.
- Mr Trump also announced that there would be a new “Build America” visa – details of which were not provided.
- People given Green Cards on humanitarian and diversity grounds will now only constitute 10% of all Green Card recipients. Currently, the diversity lottery offers 50,000 green cards to under-represented groups each year.
- The second part of the White House proposal seeks to reduce illegal migration to the U.S. by building “physical barriers” in sections of the southern border with Mexico.

### How will it impact India?

- The proposals, if they eventually turn into law, are likely to have a significant impact on Indians who interact with the U.S. immigration system.
- A large majority (over 70%) of H1B visas, for skilled workers, went to Indians in fiscal year 2018. Many of these are eventually converted to green cards.
- Such a move is likely to benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian professionals on H-1B visa whose current Green Card wait, on an average, is more than a decade.
- However, it is far from clear that a shift towards a points-based system will make the prospects of Indian skilled migrants wanting to settle in the U.S. easier, as bringing family members over, especially elderly parents, may get more complicated. Mr Trump said that spouses and children will be prioritized under the new system.

## 2. India gives 2 attack copters to Afghanistan

### Context:

India handed over two Mi-24 attack helicopters to Afghanistan.

### Details:

- These helicopters are a replacement for the four attack helicopters gifted by India to Afghanistan in 2015.
- The move comes at a crucial time for Afghanistan as the US is looking to exit the country after a 17-year stay
- The Mi-24 helicopters will boost the capability of the Afghan Air Force (AAF) and enhance the effectiveness of the Afghan National Defence and Security Force in combating the scourge of terrorism.
- The helicopters were handed over with the aim of strengthening the Afghan air force as it battles a deadly Taliban insurgency.
- Under a tripartite agreement, India has agreed to purchase the attack helicopters from Belarus and supply them to Afghanistan.
- Earlier, India had gifted four Mi-24 attack helicopters drawn from the inventory of the Indian Air Force and three Cheetal utility helicopters manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- New Delhi has pledged and donated more than \$3 billion in aid and reconstruction efforts to

Afghanistan, it has been reluctant to send soldiers to reinforce a US-led multinational force.

- India's reluctance stems from the fact that its embassy in Kabul and its consulates in other parts of Afghanistan have been targeted by terrorist groups such as the Haqqani network that are seen as linked to Pakistan-backed Taliban insurgents who are aiming to dislodge President Ashraf Ghani.

#### **Mi-24 Helicopters:**

- The Mi-24 is a large helicopter gunship, can be used for assault and transport missions given that it can ferry up to eight people.
- The attack helicopters, designed to take on fortified enemy positions and flying in troops to locations prone to heavy ground fire.
- It will join the Afghanistan Air Force that already operates three of the Indian built Cheetal light helicopters.

## **C. GS3 Related**

### **Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

#### **1. Scorching heat forces animals out of Seshachalam biosphere**

##### **Context:**

With the summer heat touching 45 degree Celsius, the wild animals in the Seshachalam biosphere, which is spread over Chittoor and Kadapa districts in Andhra Pradesh, are facing a torrid time.

##### **Details:**

- With water sources and food depleting, even shy and critically endangered species are foraging into human habitations.
- The intensity of heat this year is said to be the highest in the biosphere. As a result, even shy and critically endangered species such as the pangolin and the slender loris are venturing out of their habitat.
- Forest officials also have found the slender loris - a nocturnal animal and a rare species to be found close to humans, loitering in a dried up water body in broad daylight.
- The pangolin is another species that has fallen on hard times in the biosphere, hit by paucity of food and water sources. The oppressive heat has not only led to vanishing of water in the ditches, ponds and streams but also suppressed the moisture content in the soil.
- The anteater is finding it difficult to gather food, mostly worms, insects, flies, bees and ants.

##### **Slender Loris:**

- Slender lorises (Loris) are a genus of loris native to India and Sri Lanka.
- The slender loris spends most of its life in trees (arboreal), traveling along the top of branches with slow and precise movements.
- It is found in tropical rainforests, scrub forest, semi deciduous forest and swamps.
- It is a nocturnal animal.
- The species is considered "critically endangered" in forest parlance, and is poached for its eyeballs and others body parts, which are believed to have healing power for multiple human health debilities.
- They are also illegally smuggled to supply a growing exotic pet trade.
- Destruction of tropical rain forest habitat is also contributing to declines in population.
- IUCN has listed them as Endangered, whereas they are listed under the Schedule I of the Wildlife

(Protection) Act of India, 1972, according them the highest level of legal protection.

#### **Pangolin:**

- Pangolins or scaly anteaters are mammals.
- Pangolins have large, protective keratin scales covering their skin; they are the only known mammals with this feature.
- They live in hollow trees or burrows, depending on the species.
- Pangolins are nocturnal, and their diet consists of mainly ants and termites, which they capture using their long tongues.
- They tend to be solitary animals, meeting only to mate and produce a litter of one to three offspring, which are raised for about two years.
- Pangolins are threatened by poaching (for their meat and scales) and heavy deforestation of their natural habitats, and are the most trafficked mammals in the world.
- Indian Pangolin is classified as Endangered by IUCN.

## **2. Proposal to halt waste dumping defeated**

#### **Context:**

A proposal by India to prevent developed countries from dumping their electronic and plastic waste onto developing countries was defeated at the recently concluded meeting of the Basel Convention in Geneva.

#### **Details:**

- The 14th meeting of the Basel Convention, which lays down guidelines on the movement of hazardous waste, concluded in Geneva after two weeks of negotiations involving 187 countries.
- A key outcome of the meeting was an amendment to the Convention that includes plastic waste in a legally-binding framework which would, according to a statement by the United Nations, "... make global trade in plastic waste more transparent and better regulated, whilst also ensuring that its management is safer for human health and the environment."

#### **Issue:**

- India's laws currently don't allow electronic and plastic waste to be imported into the country.
- Plastic and electronic waste recyclers in Special Economic Zones were permitted to import waste for recycling. However, they will not be allowed to do so after August 31 this year.
- Despite these restrictions, countries continued to ship different kinds of plastics and e-waste to Indian ports.
- The Indian officials say the text of the agreement, in the current form, still allows countries to export various categories of plastic waste.
- India and Nigeria were the only countries that had strongly opposed the guidelines, pushed by the European Union, to dilute safeguards against the trans-boundary movement of e-waste.

## **Category: ECONOMY**

### **1. Crop insurance fail: only Rs. 8 cr. spent for NE**

#### **Issue:**

- Out of Rs. 1,400 crore earmarked annually for the north-eastern States under the Centre's flagship Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, only Rs. 8 crore or just over half a per cent was actually spent



last year, according to senior Agriculture Ministry officials.

- Four north-eastern States of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram — are not covered under the scheme at all.

### **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana:**

- The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) is an insurance service for farmers for their yields.
- It was formulated in line with One Nation–One Scheme theme by replacing earlier two schemes Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS) by incorporating their best features and removing their inherent drawbacks (shortcomings).
- It aims to reduce the premium burden on farmers and ensure early settlement of crop assurance claim for the full insured sum.

### **Details:**

- Some large States like Bihar and West Bengal have withdrawn from PMFBY to set up their own State-level schemes and Punjab has never participated in the scheme, while UTs like Delhi and Chandigarh are largely urban spaces.
- However, States in the Northeast, as well as the Union Territory of Daman and Diu, face challenges such as the lack of interest by insurance companies and the lack of State budgetary resources to pay their share of the premium, say officials.
- The Centre is now making it compulsory for insurance companies to bid for these States as well.
- Although the north-eastern States have only 2.5% of the country's cultivable area, 10% of the budget for PMFBY and RWBCIS [Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme] is earmarked for them. But all the funds are lapsed.
- While Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland have never been covered under the scheme, which was launched with much fanfare in 2016, the scheme was implemented in Mizoram and Manipur only in the initial season.
- The Centre also argues that several State governments are not sufficiently interested in promoting the scheme.

### **Why have the insurance companies been reluctant?**

- Insurance companies have been reluctant to bid for these States, as the administrative costs are high.
- There are no proper land records. Historic yield data is not available for these States, particularly at the gram panchayat and block level.
- They believe that it is difficult to conduct CCEs [crop-cutting experiments] needed for many of the horticulture crops.
- Insurance companies are also not interested because the coverage is so limited. There are low number of loanee farmers in the Northeast, except in Assam.
- Lack of forecasting infrastructure has also hampered the penetration of the weather-based insurance scheme in these states.

Read more about [Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana](#)

## **D. GS4 Related**

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Why an industrial policy is crucial

##### Editorial Analysis:

- The contribution of manufacturing to GDP in 2017 was only about 16%, a stagnation since the economic reforms began in 1991.
- It is important to contrast this with some major Asian economies.
- For example, Malaysia roughly tripled its share of manufacturing in GDP to 24%, while Thailand's share increased from 13% to 33% (1960-2014).
- It is important to note that in India, manufacturing has never been the leading sector in the economy other than during the Second and Third Plan periods.

##### Central to the idea of growth:

- No major country has managed to reduce poverty or sustain growth without manufacturing driving economic growth.
- This is because productivity levels in industry (and manufacturing) are much higher than in either agriculture or services.
- It is also important to note that manufacturing is an engine of economic growth because it offers economies of scale, embodies technological progress and generates forward and backward linkages that create positive spillover effects in the economy.

##### a. Perspective from the West:

- In the U.S. and Europe, after the 2008 crisis, the erstwhile proponents of neo-liberal policies started strategic government efforts to revive their industrial sectors, defying in principle their own prescriptions for free markets and trade.
- The European Union has identified sector-specific initiatives to promote motor vehicles, transport equipment industries, energy supply industries, chemicals and agro-food industries.
- Further, the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development or UNCTAD** finds that over 100 countries have, within the last decade, articulated industrial policies.

##### b. The absence of a manufacturing:

- **India still has no manufacturing policy.** It is important to note that focussing (as “Make in India” does) on increasing foreign direct investment and ease of doing business, important though they may be, does not constitute an industrial policy.
  - Even neo-classical economists accept government intervention in the case of market failures.
  - Mainstream economists point to specific instances of market failure that require a government-driven industrial policy.
- These include the following:

1. deficiencies in capital markets, usually as a result of information asymmetries;
2. lack of adequate investments inhibiting exploitation of scale economies;
3. imperfect information with respect to firm-level investments in learning and training; and
4. lack of information and coordination between technologically interdependent investments.

Experts opine that the reasons listed above are good why an economy-wide planning mechanism is needed

in India. However, the Indian state should steer clear of the “command and control” approach that harks back to pre-1991 days.

Some key reasons for a policy:

- An important question arises: Why have an industrial policy in India now?

The reasons are listed as below:

a. Firstly, there is the need to coordinate complementary investments when there are significant economies of scale and capital market imperfections (for example, as envisaged in a Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor).

b. Secondly, industrial policies are needed to address learning externalities such as subsidies for industrial training (on which we have done poorly).

As a matter of fact, industrial policy was reinforced by state investments in human capital, particularly general academic as well as vocational education/training aligned with the industrial policy, in most East Asian countries.

However, a lack of human capital has been a major constraint upon India historically being able to attract foreign investment (which Southeast Asian economies succeeded in attracting).

c. Thirdly, **the state can play the role of organiser of domestic firms into cartels in their negotiations with foreign firms or governments** — this is a role particularly relevant in the 21st century after the big business revolution of the 1990s (with mega-mergers and acquisitions among transnational corporations).

As a matter of fact, one objective of China’s industrial policies since the 1990s has been to support the growth of such firms (examples being Lenovo computers, Haier home appliances, and mega-firms making mobile phones).

d. Fourthly, the role of industrial policy is not only to prevent coordination failures (i.e. ensure complementary investments) but also avoid competing investments in a capital-scarce environment.

It is important to note that excess capacity leads to price wars, adversely affecting profits of firms — either leading to bankruptcy of firms or slowing down investment, both happening often in India (witness the aviation sector).

Even worse, price wars in the telecom sector in India have slowed profits (even caused losses), which hampers investment in mobile/Internet coverage of rural India where access to mobile phones and broadband Internet, needs rapid expansion.

The East Asian state managed this role of industrial policy successfully.

e. Fifthly, an industrial policy can ensure that the industrial capacity installed is as close to the minimum efficient scale as possible.

- Choosing too small a scale of capacity can mean a 30-50% reduction in production capacity. Experts point out that **the missing middle among Indian enterprises is nothing short of a failure of industrial strategy.**
- Contributing to the missing middle phenomenon was the reservation of products exclusively for production in the small-scale and cottage industries (SSI) sector (with large firms excluded) from **India’s 1956 Industrial Policy Resolution**



- By the end of the 1980s, 836 product groups were in the “reserved” category produced only by SSIs (which encouraged informal enterprises).
- Astonishingly, in 2005, there were still 500 products in this category, 15 years after the economic reforms were launched.
- Thereafter the reservation of products of small firms was cut sharply to 16 products.
- By then, small scale and informality had gotten entrenched in Indian manufacturing. Incentivisation to remain small in scale cost India dearly.

f. Sixthly, when structural change is needed, industrial policy can facilitate that process.

- In a fast-changing market, losing firms will block structural changes that are socially beneficial but make their own assets worthless.
- It is important to note that East Asian governments prevented such firms from undermining structural change, with moves such as orderly capacity-scrapping between competing firms and retraining programmes to limit such resistance.
- Finally, manufacturing will create jobs; its share in total employment fell from 12.8% to 11.5% over 2012 to 2016.
- Unfortunately, the potential role of industrial policy has been consistently downplayed in developing countries outside of East Asia ever since the early 1980s after the growing dominance of the orthodox paradigm with well-known consequences in much of India, Latin America and also sub-Saharan Africa.

#### A Look at the Asian story:

- **The East Asian miracle was very much founded upon export-oriented manufacturing**, employ surplus labour released by agriculture, thus raising wages and reducing poverty rapidly.
- This outcome came from a conscious, deliberately planned strategy (with Five Year Plans).
- The growing participation of East Asian countries in global value chains (GVCs), graduating beyond simple, manufactured consumer goods to more technology- and skill-intensive manufactures for export, was a natural corollary to the industrial policy.
- India has been practically left out of GVCs. Increasing export of manufactures will need to be another rationale for an industrial policy, even though India has to focus more on “make for India”. From 2014 to 2018 there has been an absolute fall in dollar terms in merchandise exports.
- In this quest for increased exports, **economies of scale are critical**.
- Such economies were not possible with the policy-induced growth of micro-enterprises and informal units (the unorganised sector accounts for 45% of India’s exports).

#### Concluding Remarks: Lessons from IT taking root

- If evidence is still needed that the state’s role will be critical to manufacturing growth in India, the state’s role in the success story of India’s IT industry must be put on record.
- The government invested in creating high-speed Internet connectivity for IT software parks enabling integration of the Indian IT industry into the U.S. market.
- Second, the government allowed the IT industry to import duty-free both hardware and software. (In retrospect, experts opine that this should never have continued after a few years since it undermined the growth of the electronics hardware manufacturing in India.)
- Third, the IT industry was able to function under the Shops and Establishment Act; hence not subject to the 45 laws relating to labour and the onerous regulatory burden these impose.
- Finally, the IT sector has the benefit of low-cost, high-value human capital created by public investments earlier in technical education.
- Without these, the IT success story would not have occurred.
- These offer insights to the potential for industrial policy when a new government takes over soon.

## Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. Slippery slope (India- Iran Relations)

#### What's in the news?

- Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif was in New Delhi recently, as part of a regional outreach that includes Russia, China, Turkmenistan and Iraq amid rising tensions in West Asia.

#### Editorial Analysis:

#### Certain Actions that the U.S. has taken:

- The U.S. has followed withdrawal of its sanctions-waiver for Iranian oil with a series of actions that it claims are in response to the perceived threat from Iran.

For example:

1. The U.S. has recalled all non-emergency diplomatic staff based in neighbouring Iraq;
2. sent an aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, missile defence hardware and B-52 bombers to the Gulf;
3. imposed fresh sanctions on various Iranian entities; and
4. slapped a terror designation for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

#### Developments that further heighten tensions:

- Iran has matched some of the rhetoric with threats that it would close off the Strait of Hormuz to trade and treat the U.S. carrier as a legitimate “target” if it came anywhere close to Iranian waters.
- Making matters worse, **it is clear that the U.S. aims to pin on the Iranian government and military forces blame for attacks on two Saudi Arabian oil tankers that were carried out recently.**
- Further, U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton’s remark that **“any attack on United States interests or those of [its] allies will be met with unrelenting force”** gives the impression that the ground is being prepared by the U.S., aided by Saudi Arabia and Israel, for an escalation.

#### What India must do?

- Given the signs of a gathering storm, experts opine that **India must consider not only its own interests in terms of its ties with Iran and with the U.S. and its allies, but also its position as a regional power.**
- The External Affairs Ministry comment that the government would take a decision on Iranian oil imports after the elections appeared to be an attempt to buy time.
- The truth is that Indian oil importers have already stopped placing orders for Iranian oil in compliance with the U.S. diktat on “zeroing out” imports.
- It is important to note that **India had been importing about 10% of its oil requirements from Iran**, and the losses in terms of finding alternative suppliers in the face of rising oil prices are piling up.
- News reports also indicate that despite a U.S. waiver on the Chabahar port, **banks in India and Afghanistan that planned to finance trade through the port are now being restricted by U.S. sanctions.**

### Concluding Remarks:

- Experts opine that instead of being a mute spectator to the crisis that is building for India's energy bill as well as for regional stability, New Delhi must take the challenge head-on.
- One immediate priority is to work more closely with European countries in ensuring that Iran does not feel compelled to walk out of the nuclear deal, and to jointly build a sanctions-immune financial infrastructure to facilitate Iranian trade.
- It is necessary that the countries affected in the region meet urgently, as well as unitedly express concerns over a possible U.S.-Iran clash.

## Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### 1. Is coalition government worse than single-party rule?

#### Note to the Students:

- Suhas Palshikar (an Indian academic and social and political scientist) and Mr. Irfan Nooruddin discuss the successes of coalition governments, their contribution to economic growth, and why post-poll coalitions are popular in India.
- In this analysis, we present the excerpts of their discussion.

#### Editorial Analysis:

#### Labelling the opposition as “khichdi”:

- This government is also a coalition government. As Professor E. Sridharan has argued, this is a “surplus coalition” government featuring a party that already has the strength to form a government but has taken on board other coalition partners.
- This labelling of the Opposition as “khichdi” is not new.
- The real question is, what is the experience of coalitions?
- At the Centre, you have had a number of coalitions since the 1990s.
- We have had three Congress-led governments which were able to complete their full terms.
- Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was able to complete his full term as the head of a BJP-led coalition. The criticism that coalition governments are inherently or necessarily unstable is not borne out by facts.

#### Does a “surplus coalition” mean a successful coalition?

- It is important to note that the BJP has had minimal ideological differences/ principle differences with its coalition partners unlike, say, in the UPA which was supported by the Left Front from outside in 2004.
- Further, in comparative politics literature, we tend to distinguish between ‘ideological coalitions’ and ‘governance coalitions’.
- Perhaps, characterising the current NDA as an ideological coalition is not quite right.
- It is not quite clear what those ideological principles are that hold this coalition together. But what is true is that the BJP's strength and the nature of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership have left very little room for the coalition partners to place their differences. If they disagree, they are no longer needed to be part of the coalition.
- That is the power of a surplus coalition. It is not necessarily ideological coherence, but the power of the surplus coalition that defines this regime.
- Moreover, while it is true that the criticisms about coalitions not lasting their terms is not borne out by evidence, coalitions of convenience tend not to have coherent policy agendas and tend to be

divided from within.

- Whether they can frame policies and whether they can manage to put up a working Cabinet are two separate but important issues that matter to a working coalition.
- It is also important to note that coalition governments can get a lot of things done, and when they do that, they stick together too.
- However, at the same time, coalitions of convenience tend to more likely be corrupt and spend more money than those that are ideological because everyone has got a hand in the pot.
- While there is indeed a distinction between coalitions of convenience and those based on ideological cohesion, **it is also true that coalitions bring in a certain degree of diversity and plurality of views.**

### Are Coalition governments more democratic?

- Coalition governments are not necessarily truly democratic, but they can at least be plural in the views that they represent.
- That possibility also arises when the parties are not adequately representative of the larger public, but only of smaller sections, regions, communities.
- In that situation, you need a coalition that allows for better representation. And historically, in India, coalitions only emerged when the Congress's ability to be representative of the larger spectrum faded.
- But also, one must remember that the BJP's coalition (right from Vajpayee's time) was not necessarily one of ideology. For example, Pramod Mahajan and Vajpayee, during NDA-1, carefully set aside controversial issues. They made public statements that issues such as Ram Mandir, Article 370, and Uniform Civil Code were indeed the BJP's core ones, but since its potential partners did not agree with these, it would keep them aside while forming the coalition. **In India, therefore, there has been a tradition of limited ideological coalitions.**

### Could a truly plural coalition have had an impact on demonetization?

- Coalitions are associated with periods of greater economic growth, less economic volatility and more foreign investment.
- There is more credibility to the government's policies, because it has a harder time making radical changes.
- Something like demonetisation would have been hard to conceive in a coalition government of somewhat equal partners or if the largest member of the coalition was truly dependent on the coalition partners in order to fuel its majority.
- With that being said, given the nature of India's States, coalitions have been about regional pluralism.
- It is not only that the BJP won the majority of the seats in 2014 with only 31% of the vote share. Those votes were deeply concentrated in some areas of the country.
- To form a nationally representative government, it was required to bring in regional parties in the east and in the south into this coalition.
- This is not necessarily democratic but more representative of the country.
- It is true that the previous governments were able to carry out economic reforms, but some would say this was because their backs were to the wall — **one would recall that the 1991 reforms were enacted under duress as there was a balance of payments crisis. So, it could be true that coalition governments are unable to make reforms of choice.**
- In sum, one could say that coalitions are able to act when they have to, but they make fewer big changes. For some that is frustrating and for some that is safety.

### Coalition Governments featuring regional parties representing sectional interests:

- Evidence from Western Europe shows that coalition governments tend [towards] greater fiscal

spending.

- Some would say that is due to redistribution, while some would argue that this is due to lack of fiscal discipline — smaller parties could extract more than their fair share as they could threaten to walk out.
- In the Indian context, some experts believe that two-party competition or tighter competition would result in greater public goods spending, while in a fragmented party system, there would be greater distribution of ‘club goods’ which would involve spending for specific communities represented by smaller parties in some States. This is at the State level. So, yes, you would get redistribution, but not necessarily in the way you would ideally want it to be.

### **Reluctance to form pre-election coalitions:**

- The simple reason is that in India, there is one national-level player and several regional parties. In both cases, the national party seeks to expand its geographical reach across and within States. In such situations, these parties seek to keep their cards closer to their chest and play them after the elections based on the outcome.
- If there was a situation where there were only State parties and no all-India party, this would have enabled pre-election coalitions.
- Besides this, there is also an absence of ideological coherence (at least in the last 25 years or so) that would bring parties together for a pre-election coalition.

### **Would a prospective coalition that could come to power, go for a pre-election coalition on the basis of a common minimum programme?**

- Neither a BJP-led coalition nor a Congress-led coalition would do that.
- If it is a BJP-led coalition, the BJP will be in a pre-eminent position and wouldn't require any ideological coherence and would want to keep its ideology. It would still want to keep its partners intact for the time being — the Shiv Sena, the JD(U), and so on.
- In a non-BJP coalition, there would not be any ideological coherence because they wouldn't have probably given enough thought to what kind of governance programme they would have if they come to power. Their single unifying agenda would be to remove the present incumbent from power.

## **2. Article 324 and role of Election Commission**

### **Note to the Students:**

- This article has been taken from the Indian Express, published on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 2019.

### **Editorial Analysis:**

- With respect to the recent incidents of violence in Kolkata, the Election Commission has invoked its powers under Art 324 to curtail campaigning in West Bengal.
- An important question arises: What powers does the Constitution give ECI; how has SC interpreted Art 324?

### **A Narration of Events:**

- The Election Commission of India passed an unprecedented order on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 2019, ending the campaign in West Bengal at 10 pm the following day instead of 5 pm on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 as was notified earlier, and is the norm.
- **It also removed the state's Home Secretary, and a senior police officer.**



### What prompted the decision?

- The decisions were taken under Article 324 of the Constitution, in response to street violence in Kolkata between cadres of the BJP and Trinamool Congress.
- Recently, on April 15, 2019, the ECI had told the Supreme Court that its powers to discipline politicians who sought votes in the name of caste or religion were “very limited” — only to turn around and crack the whip on Yogi Adityanath, Maneka Gandhi, Mayawati, and Azam Khan after being scolded by the court, which also said it would examine the ambit of the Commission’s powers.

### ECI’s freedom, responsibility:

- There are just five Articles in Part XV (Elections) of the Constitution. The Constituent Assembly was concerned mainly with ensuring the independence of the Election Commission. Babasaheb Ambedkar introduced this Article on June 15, 1949, saying “the whole election machinery should be in the hands of a Central Election Commission, which alone would be entitled to issue directives to returning officers, polling officers and others”.
- **Article 324 vests “in an Election Commission” the “superintendence, direction and control of elections”.**
- Parliament enacted The Representation of the People Act, 1950 and The Representation of the People Act, 1951 to define and enlarge the powers of the Commission.
- The Supreme Court in **Mohinder Singh Gill & Anr vs The Chief Election Commissioner, New Delhi and Ors (1977)** held that Article 324 “operates in areas left unoccupied by legislation and the words ‘superintendence, direction and control’ as well as ‘conduct of all elections’ are the broadest terms”. The Constitution has not defined these terms.
- Article 324, the court said, “is a plenary provision vesting the whole responsibility for national and State elections” in the ECI “and, therefore, the necessary powers to discharge that function”.
- **Importantly, the framers of the Constitution, the court said, had left “scope for exercise of residuary power by the Commission, in its own right, as a creature of the Constitution, in the infinite variety of situations that may emerge from time to time...”**
- Importantly, however, the court, while observing that “legislators are not prophets but pragmatists”, and that the “comprehensive provision in Art. 324 (is) to take care of surprise situations”, underlined that “that power itself has to be exercised, not mindlessly nor mala fide, nor arbitrarily nor with partiality but in keeping with the guidelines of the rule of law and not stultifying the Presidential notification nor existing legislation.”
- **The court observed: “No one is an imperium in imperio in our constitutional order. It is reasonable to hold that the Commissioner cannot defy the law armed by Art. 324. Likewise, his functions are subject to the norms of fairness and he cannot act arbitrarily. Unchecked power is alien to our system.”**

### ECI’s role in West Bengal:

- The Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 1988 (Act 1 of 1989) introduced Section 28A in the RP Act of 1951, which said that all officers deployed for the conduct of an election “shall be deemed to be on deputation to the Election Commission” from the notification of the election to the declaration of the results, and “such officers shall, during that period, be subject to the control, superintendence and discipline of the Election Commission”.
- It is important to note that the situation in West Bengal — of some violence and vandalism, which was neither new nor alarming and critical — is covered by existing laws, and there was no need to invoke the residuary power granted to the ECI by Article 324.
- The ECI took action against officers for failing in their duties — nothing more was required, except the ordering of a probe. It does seem that the ECI did not take adequate precautions in West Bengal in spite of violence in the first six phases.
- In **N P Ponnuswami (1952)**, the Supreme Court held that even courts do not have the power to

interfere with the electoral process, a view that it reiterated in Special Reference No. 1 (2002). Recently, the court rejected a plea seeking a direction to the ECI to advance the timing of voting to 5.30 am for the last phase of the election in view of the heat and the fasting of Muslims during the month of Ramzan, saying **“We cannot get into poll times. It is the Election Commission’s call.”**

### Concluding Remarks:

- The ECI’s credibility has suffered during these elections.
- Critics allege that it had no convincing logic for a seven-phase election in West Bengal or a three-phase vote in a single constituency in Jammu and Kashmir, and gave no reason for not holding simultaneous Assembly elections in J&K and by-elections in Tamil Nadu.
- In taking action on complaints of violations of the Model Code of Conduct, it has been selective.
- The reduction of the campaign time in West Bengal by 19 hours — to 10 pm on Thursday — seems clearly arbitrary.
- Moreover, **the ECI has punished candidates of the Congress, Left, and Independents — both in the constituency where the violence took place and elsewhere — for no fault of theirs.**
- In conclusion, as the Supreme Court has underlined, absolute power is the antithesis of constitutionalism. **Article 324 protects the ECI, but does not allow it to become a law unto itself.**

## Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### 1. Encourage citizen science

#### Editorial Analysis:

- Although science advances by making discoveries and developing new ideas, our scientific institutions are yet to implement new ways of developing and transmitting knowledge.

#### New models making way for the old:

- The idea that there is only one scientific method of obtaining scientific results — a method in which most scientists in academic settings are trained — is not adequate for the new information age of Big Data, crowd-sourcing and synthetic biology.
- The hypothesis testing approach made sense in an era of information scarcity.
- New models are now needed to supplement the traditional scientific method.

#### The emergence of citizen scientists:

- Our institutions of science need to adapt to the reality that informally trained individuals are just as able to contribute to our knowledge of the world as those with formal academic training.
- These **“citizen scientists”** face many barriers that institutionally funded individuals take for granted.
- Technology has made it possible to conduct even big science by operating on a small scale.
- The promise of citizen science is that if you can make a task small and simple enough for someone to do it in his or her leisure time, you can aggregate a lot of talent.

#### Some noteworthy examples:

- There are several instances where research problems have been repackaged into online multi-player games.
- Ordinary citizens can help transform a modest PhD project into a path-breaking global science initiative.
- Galaxy Zoo, the pioneering online citizen science project, became successful because the academic

scientists involved in the project overcame their inclination to keep their discoveries private until they were ready to publish.

- Earthwatch Institute India is a leader in implementing the citizen science concept. Their volunteers have taken part in biodiversity enumeration, collection of data on pollinators and studies related to lake conservation in Bengaluru.
- However, there is scope for much more in terms of scale and complexity.
- The U.S.-based Citizen Science Alliance is nurturing new citizen science projects in disciplines ranging from data engineering to oceanography.
- The University of Oxford, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Minnesota, amongst others, are part of this alliance.

### The Way Forward:

- It is time that our scientific institutions took the lead in collaborative learning and knowledge production as part of a larger reform process, not just with others within their own scientific community and discipline but also with the larger external community.
- Scientific institutions need to engage with the external community recognising that knowledge exists both in the institution and the community and not just as a one-way act of philanthropy.
- Further, collaborative learning needs to be adopted as the core model of pedagogy.
- If scientific research is conducted solely by individuals trained to be successful in academia, we are potentially biasing and limiting scientific questions and interpretation of results.
- Creative experimentation and asking unfamiliar questions are as important as funding and infrastructure.

## F. Tidbits

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Prelims Facts

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

**Q1. Which Indian state has launched the Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) project?**

- a. Assam
- b. Odisha
- c. West Bengal
- d. Tripura

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

Tripura has launched the Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) project which is undertaken with the assistance of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency).

**Q2. Consider the following statements:**

1. The National Policy on Biofuels 2018 classifies bioethanol and biodiesel as First Generation

biofuels.

2. The Policy restricts using Sugarcane Juice for ethanol production.

**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:**

The Policy categorises biofuels as "Basic Biofuels" viz. First Generation (1G) bioethanol & biodiesel and "Advanced Biofuels" - Second Generation (2G) ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels, Third Generation (3G) biofuels, bio-CNG etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category. The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of Sugarcane Juice, Sugar containing materials like Sugar Beet, Sweet Sorghum, Starch containing materials like Corn, Cassava, Damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, Rotten Potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.

**Q3. Which of the following is/are the pollutants NOT monitored by SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting)?**

1. Ozone
  2. Carbon Monoxide
  3. CFCs
- a. 1 and 2 only
  - b. 3 only
  - c. 1 and 3 only
  - d. 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

The pollutants monitored are: PM1, PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, CO, NO<sub>x</sub> (NO, NO<sub>2</sub>), SO<sub>2</sub>, BC, Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), Nonmethane hydrocarbons (NMHC), VOC's, Benzene, Mercury.

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. Balukhand-Konark Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in West Bengal.
2. It is home to Black Buck and Olive Ridley Sea Turtles.

**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: b**

**Explanation:**

Balukhand-Konark Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in Orissa.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Explain the circumstances in which Financial Emergency can be proclaimed by the President of India. Also discuss the consequences that follow when such a declaration remains in force. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. Explain the significance of TMA Pai vs the State of Karnataka judgement in the Indian Constitution? (15 Marks, 250 Words)