

23 May 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Under Rent Act, the tenant has a protected status: SC

Context:

The Supreme Court has held that the protection offered to a statutory tenant by rent control law can only be overcome by following the procedure laid out in the statute. Owner cannot demand re-possession of property

without following statutory procedure.

Background:

- The verdict came in a case dealing with the provisions of the East Punjab Urban Rent Restriction Act, 1949, which are available to the tenant.
- Under the Act, the tenant has a protected status.
- That status cannot be disrupted or brought to an end except on grounds specified in the enactment, the apex court held.

Details:

- The status of tenant does not stand ruled out by the death of the person who created the tenancy.
- The only remedy available to the owner is to pursue eviction proceedings under the rent laws.
- Only upon the satisfaction of the competent authority that sufficient grounds exist for eviction of the tenant can an order be passed directing the tenant to vacate.
- “Restrictions on recovery of possession of the premises let out to the tenants have been imposed for the benefit of the tenants as a matter of legislative policy,” the Court said.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Kochi offers help to ‘solarize’ airports in ISA countries

Context:

Heads of 50 airports from countries in the International Solar Alliance (ISA) will meet in Kochi to chalk out a plan of action to go green by emulating Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL)’s use of solar energy.

Details:

- Ambassadors and high commissioners from ISA countries visited the CIAL solar farm.
- ISA director-general said that efforts would be made to totally solarize airports across ISA countries in two to two-and-a-half years.
- He said that 75 countries had signed the framework agreement to join the ISA, which aimed to move countries away from dependence on fossil fuels to solar energy.
- Fifty-two countries had ratified the agreement and it was expected that there would be 100 members in the ISA by October this year.
- The Cochin airport is able to cut about four lakh tonnes of carbon emission annually through its solar energy generation of about 40 MW.

International Solar Alliance:

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an alliance of more than 122 countries initiated by India, most of them being sunshine countries, which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.
- The primary objective of the alliance is to work for efficient exploitation of solar energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Water experts warn of 'desertification' of Marathwada

Context:

Economists and water academics have specifically warned of the desertification of the parched Marathwada region in the near future, adding that the water crisis in Maharashtra is a policy-induced failure.

Details:

- “It is the ecological illiteracy of policy-makers and the selfishness of the power elite in inducing farmers across Marathwada to adopt a crop pattern that is not congruent with the agro-climatic characteristics of this region”, former member of the Maharashtra State Planning Board said.
- Mismanagement of water resources by successive governments, coupled with four decades of incessant water mining, had led the groundwater table across the Marathwada region to decline precipitously to the point where rejuvenating it had become impossible.
- According to data by the Groundwater Surveys and Development Agency, the water table had dropped alarmingly in 70 of the 76 talukas, with more than 25 reporting a drop of more than two metres.
- The crop pattern in the region has drastically changed over the past decades.
- Earlier, the main crops cultivated here used to be cereal and oilseeds - the crops not only conducive to Marathwada's arid climate, but also drought-resistant and helped moisture harvesting.
- But now, the predominant crops here are soybean and Bt Cotton, which dominate more than 80% of Marathwada's 50 lakh hectares of cultivable land.
- These crops, coupled with the lure of easy profits from sugarcane, have led the farmers and the citizens to the edge of the current hydrological disaster.

Way forward:

- The way out of this ecological mess is to prohibit the cultivation of sugarcane.
- There has to be effort on the government's part to wean farmers away from cultivating sugarcane and switching to drought-resistant ones like oilseeds and pulses.
- There are provisions within the Maharashtra Irrigation Act of 1976 wherein the government can notify people in the command area not to go in for water-intensive crops like sugarcane in the case of acute water scarcity.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Crisis in NBFC sector could hurt economic growth

Context:

The current liquidity crisis in the non-banking financial companies' (NBFCs) is a matter of concern for the investors over its potential impact on the overall growth of the economy in the near term.

Background:

The recent past had seen brokerages highlighting concerns in the NBFC segment and their impact on the overall consumption story thereby affecting macroeconomic growth even as many such NBFCs are facing rating downgrades and tighter access to liquidity.

Details:

- Many investors still appear concerned about the on-going financial crunch led by the NBFC sector and its impact on discretionary consumption and hence overall growth,” said UBS in a report.
- High risk aversion, delayed monetary transmission and subdued mutual fund flows could result in a further slowing of the sector, the report added.
- According to the global financial major, large NBFCs with strong parents and track records are better positioned while small NBFCs could lose market share, with a sharper slowdown for mid-sized and small housing finance companies (HFCs).

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. ISRO launches radar imaging observation satellite RISAT-2B

Context:

In a predawn launch, a PSLV rocket of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) placed RISAT-2B, an X-band microwave Earth observation satellite, into orbit 556 km above earth.

Details:

- The PSLV-C46 launcher carrying the 615-kg RISAT-2B blasted off at 5.30 a.m. The satellite reached its designated position and started orbiting in space with an inclination of 37°.
- After the satellite separated from the launcher, its solar arrays deployed automatically.
- the RISAT-2B is built to operate for at least five years.
- Two important secondary or piggyback trial payloads that would revolutionise its future missions were also included in the launch.
- They are the new Vikram processor from Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL), Chandigarh, that will control future launchers, and a low-cost micro-electronic inertial navigation system from the ISRO Inertial Systems Unit, Thiruvananthapuram.
- This is the third Indian RISAT in 10 years, and follows the Israeli-built RISAT-2 in 2009 and the ISRO-built RISAT-1 in 2012. The older RISATs have reached the end of their lives.
- ISRO has planned a series of radar imagers in the coming months to enhance its space based observation of Earth and the Indian region.

Significance:

- Its X-band synthetic aperture radar can give added details such as the size of objects on earth, structures and movement.
- Information from RISAT-2B will complement data from normal optical remote sensing satellites.
- Such data are useful for agencies that need ground images during cloud, rain and in the dark.
- “The new satellite will enhance India’s all-weather [space-based] capabilities in agriculture, forestry and disaster management,” ISRO said.
- Data from the satellite would be vital for the Armed Forces, agriculture forecasters and disaster relief agencies.
- ISRO chairman described RISAT-2B as “an advanced Earth Observation satellite with an advanced technology of 3.6-metre radial rib [unfurlable] antenna”.

2. IAF successfully testfires aerial version of BrahMos

Context:

The Indian Air Force has successfully test fired the aerial version of the supersonic BrahMos cruise

missile from a Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft.

Details:

- The 2.5 tonne air-to-surface missile has a range of around 300 km, and it will significantly enhance the IAF's combat capability.
- The BrahMos cruise missile travels at a speed of Mach 2.8, nearly three times that of sound.
- The IAF became the first air force in the world to have successfully fired an air-launched 2.8 Mach surface attack missile of this category on a sea target on November 22, 2017.
- BrahMos missile provides the Indian Air Force a much desired capability to strike from large stand-off ranges on any target at sea or on land with pinpoint accuracy by day or night and in all weather conditions.
- The capability of the missile coupled with the superlative performance of the Su-30MKI aircraft gives the IAF the desired strategic reach," the IAF said.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Eye in the sky

What's in the news?

- India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C46) successfully launched the RISAT-2B satellite from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.
- This was the 72nd launch vehicle mission from SDSC SHAR, Sriharikota and 36th launch from the First Launch pad.
- **RISAT-2B is a radar imaging earth observation satellite weighing about 615 kg. The satellite is intended to provide services in the field of Agriculture, Forestry and Disaster Management.**
- ISRO is now gearing up for the launch of Chandrayaan-2 onboard GSLV MkIII during the window of July 09, to July 16, 2019, with an expected Moon landing on September 06, 2019.
- Experts opine that with the successful pre-dawn launch of RISAT-2B satellite on May 22nd, 2019, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has added another feather to its cap.

How will the satellite help?

- The satellite will enhance India's capability in:
 1. crop monitoring during the monsoon season,
 2. forestry mapping for forest fires and deforestation, and
 3. flood mapping as part of the national disaster management programme.
- Further, it is important to note that given that overcast skies are a constant during the monsoon season and during times of flood, the ability to penetrate the cloud cover is essential.
- While optical remote sensing that relies on visible light for imaging gets obstructed by clouds, RISAT-2B will not.
- As a matter of fact, much like the RISAT-1 satellite that was launched by ISRO in April 2012,

RISAT-2B will also use microwave radiation.

Characteristics of microwaves:

- Unlike visible light, microwaves have longer wavelength and so will not be susceptible to atmospheric scattering.
- Microwave radiation can thus easily pass through the cloud cover, haze and dust, and image the ground.

Specifics on the RISAT-2B:

- As a consequence, the RISAT-2B satellite will be able to image under almost all weather and environmental conditions.
- Further, **since it does not rely on visible light for imaging, it will be able to image the ground during both day and night.**
- The satellite does not have passive microwave sensors that detect the radiation naturally emitted by the atmosphere or reflected by objects on the ground.
- Instead, the RISAT-2B will be transmitting hundreds of microwave pulses each second towards the ground and receiving the signals reflected by the objects using radar.
- The moisture and texture of the object will determine the strength of the microwave signal that gets reflected.
- While the strength of the reflected signal will help determine different targets, the time between the transmitted and reflected signals will help determine the distance to the object.

A Note on the RISAT-2B's synthetic aperture:

- The RISAT-2B satellite uses X-band synthetic aperture radar for the first time; the synthetic aperture radar was developed indigenously.
- Unlike the C-band that was used by RISAT-1, the shorter wavelength of the X-band allows for higher resolution imagery for target identification and discrimination.
- Since it has high resolution, the satellite will be able to detect objects with dimensions of as little as a metre.
- This capacity to study small objects and also movement could be useful for surveillance.
- As a matter of fact, **the satellite could be used for civil and strategic purposes.**

Concluding Remarks:

- RISAT-2B will have an inclined orbit of 37 degrees, which will allow more frequent observations over the Indian subcontinent.
- Further, with ISRO planning to launch four more such radar imaging satellites in a year, its ability to monitor crops and floods as well as engage in military surveillance will be greatly enhanced.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Disclosing dissent

What's in the news?

- The recent rejection of the demand of one of the Election Commissioners that dissenting opinions be recorded in the orders passed by the three-member Election Commission on complaints of violations of the Model Code of Conduct has come under a lot of scrutiny.
- This editorial analysis will aim to go through this issue and bring out the different perspectives

related to it.

Editorial Analysis:

- The rejection of the demand of one of the Election Commissioners that dissenting opinions be recorded in the orders passed by the three-member Election Commission on complaints of violations of the Model Code of Conduct **may be technically and legally right.**
- Having said this, **there was indeed a strong case for acceding to the demand of Ashok Lavasa at least in regard to complaints against high functionaries such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi.**

The EC being at the receiving end of much criticism:

- The EC has been widely criticised for giving a series of ‘clean chits’ to the PM, despite some questionable remarks that appeared to solicit votes in the name of the armed forces. Experts opine that such criticism was warranted.
- Added to the widespread unease was the unexplained delay of several weeks in disposing of complaints against Mr. Modi.
- **It is in this context that Mr. Lavasa’s dissenting opinion may have been relevant enough to merit inclusion in the EC’s orders.**
- After all, the public is aware of the allegedly offending actions and remarks, and is entitled to be informed if the decision was not unanimous.
- As a matter of fact, in this hotly contested election, one in which the level of discourse was abysmally low, the onus on the poll panel to maintain a level-playing field and enforce the election code was quite high.
- Making public a dissent in the final order would have deepened the popular understanding of the issues in play.

What does the law say?

- The law requires the multi-member EC to transact business unanimously as far as possible — and where there is a difference of opinion, by majority.
- Therefore, there is nothing wrong if decisions are made by a 2:1 ratio.
- The apparent justification for excluding any dissent from the final order, but merely recording it in the file, is that the practice of including dissent is limited to quasi-judicial matters such as allotment of symbols.
- An important question arises: **should recording of a dissenting opinion be based on such a distinction?**
- A more appropriate distinction would be between decisions that require reasoning — absolving the Prime Minister of an election code violation surely ought to be one — and administrative matters that need to be resolved with dispatch.
- Experts opine that **if members have specific reasons for deciding for or against a particular course of action, there would surely be no harm in spelling out their respective positions.**

Concluding Remarks:

- It would be unfortunate indeed if Mr. Lavasa stays away from meetings concerning violations of the Model Code of Conduct.
- However, as he has taken up the issue through as many as three letters, it is reasonable to infer that there is some basis for his grievance.
- At a time when the institution’s reputation is being undermined by sustained criticism, **the EC should not shy away from making public any difference of opinion within.**
- Finally, it would be unfortunate if the majority in the EC were to be afraid of any public reaction that

may result from disclosure of a split opinion.

2. Why China changed its stand on Masood Azhar

Editorial Analysis:

- It is important to note that Masood Azhar was listed as a global terrorist on May 1st 2019, by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1267 Committee after China withdrew its hold.
- The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said this decision flowed from a lengthy consultative process with all the concerned parties.

What may have prompted a shift in China's position:

- The shift in China's position after a decade-long stalemate can be attributed to many reasons. These reasons are as follows:
 1. the first being the changing geo-strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region and mounting U.S.-China tensions. Against this backdrop, China's support for Azhar, whose organisation, the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), was already proscribed by the UN, would only have nudged India closer to the U.S.
 2. Secondly, the escalation by the U.S. of the matter in the UNSC would have compelled China to openly provide convincing reasons for its stand.
 3. Thirdly, instead of letting the U.S., France and the U.K. take credit for helping India, China would have seen merit in reassuring India on a key concern, which, alongside the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, had emerged as a major bugbear in bilateral ties.
 4. Fourth, it is also important to note that India's air strikes on Balakot in Pakistan had also placed China in a quandary over escalation in hostilities due to terrorist attacks in India by the JeM.
- Thus, China could not have been unmindful of the public sentiment in India over this issue and the fact that reassuring India could pave the way for greater convergence at the second round of the Wuhan Summit in India, possibly later this year (2019).
- China would also expect such accommodation to soften India's cut-and-dried position against the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- 1. Fifth, with more terror attacks in India and the neighbourhood emanating from Pakistan, and the growing influence of Pakistan-based groups on radical elements throughout the region, China must have realised that the game was simply not worth the candle.
- China's continued hold would have raised questions about its commitment to fighting global terror, and adversely impacted its image at a time when the country is projecting its "new major power diplomacy" and propounding an alternative narrative on developmental issues such as President Xi Jinping's "community of common destiny".
- As a matter of fact, any change in China's stand may have been difficult when the UN Sanctions Committee last considered the matter on March 13, 2019 because it came too soon after the Pulwama incident.
- As an "iron brother", China would have been loathe to let Pakistan down and endorse India's claim that Pakistan was complicit in the attack.
- Moreover, China would not have wanted to give other political parties in India the impression that it was aiding the BJP's electoral prospects by vacating the hold on the eve of the elections. Notably, its turnaround came after the main phases of the election were over.

What can be expected of Pakistan?

- Like in the case of Hafiz Saeed of the Lashkar-e-Taiba in 2009, Pakistan is most unlikely to bring Azhar to justice.
- As a matter of fact, the ‘deep state’ of Pakistan, backing him since his release from an Indian prison in 1999, will ensure that he remains safe and capable of organising attacks against India without direct attribution.

Concluding Remarks: Looking forward

- The next step for India would be to sustain the pressure on Pakistan to take conclusive action against terror outfits operating from its soil.
- China’s changed position does not in any way dilute its close ties and support for Pakistan, as was reiterated by Mr. Xi in his meeting with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan during the BRI conference in Beijing before the listing.
- Nevertheless, China had condemned the Pulwama attack and cooperated at the Financial Action Task Force Plenary Session in Paris in ensuring that Pakistan remained on the “grey list”. Significantly, it had not reacted to India’s ‘pre-emptive strikes’.
- Post-Wuhan, India and China have embarked on a path of closer engagement.
- There is growing room for responding to each other’s concerns. It is important to note that **a well-structured India-China dialogue on regional and global terrorism may go a long way in convincing Beijing of the need to sustain pressure on Islamabad to act against terrorists, which is in the interest of the entire global community.**

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. A blueprint for a national security strategy

Editorial Analysis:

- American think tanker **George Tanham** in a paper prepared for the U.S. government in 1992, wrote, “Indian elites show little evidence of having thought coherently and systematically about national strategy... Few writings offer coherent, articulated beliefs or a clear set of operating principles for Indian strategy”.

Some Important Questions that need answering:

- It is important to note that most Indian students of strategy and security studies rightly disagree with this rather presumptuous argument, especially since Tanham located the causes of the Indian inability to think strategically in its historical and cultural specificities.
- Somehow, it is pertinent to ask, even today, **whether India thinks about strategic affairs in a systematic, consistent and coherent manner or whether its national security runs on ad hoc arrangements and ‘raw wisdom’.**
- Or is it that the political class has traditionally been too cagey about putting out a national security strategy, even a mere declaratory one as opposed to an operational one, in black and white?

Lt. Gen. (retd) D.S. Hooda’s Strategy Document:

- Earlier this year (2019), the Indian National Congress tasked Lt. Gen. (retd) D.S. Hooda, a former Northern Army Commander, to write a strategy document which it eventually endorsed and made part of its manifesto.
- In fact, there have been several attempts at formulating a national security strategy for India.

According to some accounts, the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) had formulated draft national security strategy documents on four different occasions and presented them to successive governments, however, the political class didn't take things further.

- There has been a lingering worry in the minds of the politicians about a potential commitment trap if a national security strategy were to be put on paper.
- Recently a senior member of the NSAB stated that there is indeed in existence a national security strategy of sorts, though not disclosed to the general public — though Gen. Hooda has said that as the Northern Army Commander, he at least had not seen the document.
- Hence, **experts opine that if indeed there is such a document, it is odd that one of the senior-most generals tasked with managing Kashmir and India's border with Pakistan didn't know about it.** Further, if there isn't a strategy in place, we should be worried.

Some Key issues that merit discussion:

- There are some major shortcomings in India's national security architecture that must be addressed.
- As a matter of fact, there is a need to take a relook at some of our key national security institutions and revamp their functioning.
- **The National Security Council (NSC), which was set up in 1998 almost never meets, primarily because it is an advisory body, with the Cabinet Committee on Security being the executive body.**
- If the NSC is to be made more useful, the government's allocation of business rules should be amended to give more powers to the NSC and its subordinate organisations, such as the Strategic Policy Group.
- Secondly, **the job of the National Security Adviser needs to be reimagined.** Although the NSA plays a vital role in national security, he has no legal powers as per the government's allocation of business rules.
- **The K.C. Pant Task Force in the late 1990s** had recommended the creation of an NSA with the rank of a Cabinet Minister.
- **Over the years, the NSA's powers have increased, even though he is not accountable to Parliament.** The institution of the NSA today requires more accountability and legal formality.
- Also, it is important to note that more national security organisations are not the answer; **fundamental structural reforms in national security planning are needed.**
- Take the case of the recently constituted **Defence Planning Committee (DPC)** tasked to recommend policy measures to improve India's defence capability and preparedness, and national security in general.
- It is important to note that **not only does the DPC have too many responsibilities on its plate, it is also an advisory body.**
- More worryingly, there is a feeling among the armed forces that by having the NSA chair the DPC, the government may have scuttled the demands to appoint a Chief of the Defence Staff, an issue the Hooda document highlights.

A Look at the Hooda document:

- The Congress promised Gen. Hooda that it would adopt his national security strategy document after internal consultations.
- **The document was prepared in less than two months and in consultation with six key core group members and many domain experts.**
- The guiding philosophy of the document is enshrined in the following sentence: **“This strategy recognises the centrality of our people. We cannot achieve true security if large sections of our population are faced with discrimination, inequality, lack of opportunities, and buffeted by the risks of climate change, technology disruption, and water and energy scarcity.”**
- This is by far the most comprehensive treatment of national security in the Indian context.
- The document offers a comprehensive definition of national security ranging from challenges posed

by new technologies to social unrest to inequality.

- At a time when national security is referred to in strictly military terms, it is heartening to see that a strategy document written by a former Army general, **the man behind the 2016 surgical strikes, defines security in an out-of-the box and inclusive manner.**
- A glance at the key themes shows how well-designed the document is: **“assuming our rightful place in global affairs”, “achieving a secure neighbourhood”, “peaceful resolution of internal conflicts”, “protecting our people” and “strengthening our capabilities”.**
- Furthermore, the key recommendations in the document are both timely and well-thought-out.
- On the issue of military jointmanship, it recommends that **“the three services should undertake a comprehensive review of their current and future force structures to transform the army, navy and air force into an integrated warfighting force.”**
- It argues that it would take “a cultural change in the way the DRDO is currently operating” to improve domestic defence production.
- While discussing emerging national security threats, the document differs with the BJP-led government’s decision to set up a Defence Cyber Agency instead of a Cyber Command as was originally recommended.
- On the Kashmir question too, the document seems to differ with the incumbent government’s muscular policy, and Gen. Hooda’s wise words should be a wakeup call for everyone: **“Killing terrorists is an integral part of military operations to ensure that the state does not descend into chaos. However, this is not the primary measure of success or conflict resolution. Serious efforts are required for countering radicalisation. There is a need to initiate structured programmes that bring together civil society members, family groups, educationists, religious teachers and even surrendered terrorists in an effort to roll back radicalisation.”**

Concluding Remarks:

- One hopes that this document is the beginning of a tradition in India of thinking about national security and strategy more systematically, consistently and comprehensively.

F. Tidbits

1. Gender diversity good for businesses: UN

- Companies that improve gender diversity, especially at the top, perform better and rake in higher profits, while countries that increase women employment see better economic growth, the United Nations said.
- The UN’s International Labour Organization found in a study that companies that improve gender diversity in their management reported significant profit increases.
- According to the survey, nearly three-quarters of companies that tracked gender diversity in their management reported profit hikes of between five and 20%.
- The study reported that 57% said growing the number of women at the top made it easier to attract and retain talent, while nearly as many said they saw improvements in creativity, innovation and openness, and an enhancement of the company’s reputation.
- The report also analysed data from 186 countries between 1991 and 2017, and found that increasing women’s employment is associated with more economic growth at the national level.

2. Kerala’s semi-high speed rail line gets a push

- The government has expedited steps for the 531.45-km semi-high-speed rail line from Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod.
- The project is found feasible and economically viable.
- Aid from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been sought and a detailed project

report (DPR) has been prepared.

- Tenders have been floated for carrying out the field survey by LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), a remote sensing survey method used to examine the earth surface to know terrain using helicopters. The bids for carrying out soil investigation will be floated soon.

3. Over 100 kg of bristle worms seized

- Tiruvallur police seized over 100 kg of polychaete worms (bristle worms) at Arambakkam being smuggled to Andhra Pradesh.
- According to forest officials, one kg of the worms was worth Rs.1,200.
- The worms are part of the backwaters bio-diversity food chain.
- They are found in Ennore and Pulicat in huge quantity.
- They are smuggled to prawn farms in Nellore and Sullurpet as a feed for the mother prawns.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Largest liquid hydrogen tank flagged off

- ISRO Chairman flagged off the country's largest liquid hydrogen storage tank at Sri City in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.
- VRV Asia Pacific manufactured the storage tank with a Liquid Nitrogen shield in a collaborative effort with the Satish Dhawan Space Centre.
- The tank can store 120 kilolitres of liquid hydrogen.
- Liquid hydrogen is used as fuel for satellite launch vehicles.

2. Crested ibises fly free in South Korea

- Crested ibises was reintroduced to the wild by South Korean authorities on Wednesday, four decades after it went extinct on the peninsula.
- The crested ibis is listed as South Korea's National Monument number 198, but was last seen in the wild in 1979 in the demilitarized zone dividing the peninsula.
- China and Japan are also part of the species' natural range, but the species was driven to the edge of extinction partially because pesticide use eliminated its food sources until captive breeding programmes were set up.
- The species, *Nipponia nippon*, is also known as the Japanese crested ibis, but is best known for a popular children's song composed in the 1920s, when Korea was under Japanese colonial rule.
- The song describes the sound of the bird's call as a sad reminder of a lost mother, and was banned by the Japanese authorities who reportedly saw it as a form of anti-colonial resistance but became popular again after Korea regained its independence in 1945.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. "Order of the Rising Sun" is awarded by

- a. Japanese Government
- b. Indian Government
- c. The U.S. Government
- d. Chinese Government

Answer: a

Explanation:

The Order of the Rising Sun is a Japanese order, established in 1875 by Emperor Meiji. The Order was the first national decoration awarded by the Japanese government created by decree of the Council of State. The badge features rays of sunlight from the rising sun. The design of the Rising Sun symbolizes energy as powerful as the rising sun in parallel with the "rising sun" concept of Japan ("Land of the Rising Sun"). The order is awarded to those who have made distinguished achievements in international relations, promotion of Japanese culture, advancements in their field, development in welfare or preservation of the environment. Prior to the end of World War II, it was also awarded for exemplary military service.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Maldives and the United States are in dispute over Chagos Island.
2. It is located in the Indian Ocean.

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:

Chagos Islands, which is in news, is the disputed islands between Mauritius and United Kingdom.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. BrahMos is a medium-range ramjet supersonic cruise missile.
2. It can be launched from land only.

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:

BrahMos is a medium-range ramjet supersonic cruise missile. It can be launched from submarine, ships, aircraft, or land. The BrahMos cruise missile travels at a speed of Mach 2.8, nearly three times that of sound.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Can India benefit from the US-China tariff war? Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)
2. The RBI needs to urgently address the liquidity issues plaguing the NBFC sector. Elucidate. (15

