

# 31 May 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS1 Related

### Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

#### 1. Children of today better off than 20 years ago

#### Context:

Recently a report named Global Childhood Report was released by Save the Children, an NGO working for the education and protection of child rights.

#### Findings of the report:

- Document indicates that in 2000, an estimated 970 million children were robbed of their childhood due to ill-health, malnutrition, exclusion from education, child labour, child marriage, early pregnancy and violent death.

- That number has reduced to 690 million which effectively means that at least 280 million children are better off today than they would have been two decades ago.
- The overall situation for children has improved in 173 of 176 countries since 2000.
- Children born today have a better chance than at any time in history to grow up healthy, educated and protected, with the opportunity to reach their full potential.
- Even a generation ago, a child was twice as likely to die before reaching age 5, 70% more likely to be involved in child labour and 20% more likely to be murdered.
- Globally, child deaths have dropped and there are 49 million fewer stunted children, with China and India accounting for more than half of the global decline.
- The number of children living in war zones or forced to flee their homes due to conflict has skyrocketed since 2000.
- 1 child in 4 is being denied the right to a childhood.
- Children make up about 30% of the world's population, but more than half the world's refugees are children.

### Significance:

- The report highlights the fact that tremendous progress is taking place in some of the poorest countries, providing ever increasing evidence that development work is paying huge dividends in countries where needs are greatest.
- However, it warns that the world has made less progress in reducing adolescent births and child homicide.
- Additionally, there has been no progress at all in reducing the number of children living in areas of violence and conflict.

## B. GS2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Plea seeks jail inmates' rights

##### Context:

A petition moved before the Delhi High Court has sought to hold conjugal visits in jail as a fundamental right of prisoners and their spouses.

##### What are conjugal visits?

Conjugal visits in prison are private meetings between a male or a female inmate with their spouse or partner, during which the couple may share intimacy or engage in whatever legal activity they desire.

##### Issue:

- The petition said conjugal visitation rights were not provided in prisons in the State though most of the prisoners fall under sexually active age group.
- Despite courts taking a progressive approach and various countries allowing conjugal visits considering it an important human right and also in the light of studies backing conjugal visits as a factor to cut down crimes in jail and reform inmates, the Delhi Prison Rules, 2018 are totally silent on the issue, the petition said.
- The conjugal visit cannot be denied to prisoners on the ground of already existing provisions of parole and furlough, which in any case, are not available to undertrial prisoners, it said.
- The petition also sought direction to set aside Rule 608 of Delhi Prison Rule, 2018 which mandates

the presence of a prison officer when a prisoner is meeting his or her spouse.

### **Previous judgements:**

- In 2010, while hearing a public interest litigation on treatment facilities for HIV positive inmates, the Bombay High Court had directed the Maharashtra government to examine the possibility of allowing jail inmates to engage sexually with their wives in privacy within the jail premises as a preventive step instead of spending crores of Rupees to curb AIDS menace in prisons.
- In 2015, the Punjab and Haryana High Court held that the right to procreation survives incarceration and falls within the ambit of Article 21 of our Constitution read with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- In a recent order, the Madras High Court had read down prison rules to hold that interactions between a prisoner and spouse should not be monitored.

### **Examples from international jurisprudence where conjugal visits are allowed:**

- Denmark, Brazil, Philippines, Kenya, Israel, and five states in the United States (California, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, and Washington), offer conjugal visitation programs within their prisons.
- Mexico even allows the same-sex conjugal visit.

### **Why should Conjugal visits be allowed?**

- Various researches have shown that conjugal visits reduce frequency of prison riots, sexual crimes, homosexual behaviour while moving prisoners towards reformation and good behaviour.
- Psychologists and psychiatrists believe that the frustration, tension, the ill feelings and the heart-burnings can be reduced and a human being can be better constructed if they are allowed conjugal relationship even rarely and it also cuts down criminal behaviour inside jails.
- Denial of conjugal rights is one of the reasons for increasing sex crimes, homosexuality, violence and spread of HIV in jails.

### **Way forward:**

A scheme has to be formulated for creating an environment for conjugal and family visits for a certain categories of jail inmates keeping in mind the beneficial nature and reformatory goals of such facilities.

## **2. Court questions PIL pleas challenging every tender**

### **Context:**

Almost every public tender is being challenged through PIL petitions as a matter of routine, affecting the promptness and efficacy of delivery in public sector projects, the Supreme Court said in a recent judgment.

### **Details:**

- The courts had found it appropriate to build in certain checks and balances in procedure to ensure fairness, considering the fact that government and public sector enterprises are increasingly venturing into economic activities.
- It is this approach by the courts that has given rise to close scrutiny of tenders by the judiciary.

### **Issue:**

- In the backdrop of every public tender is being challenged through PIL petitions, awarding of

contracts has become a cumbersome exercise.

- This is reducing the efficacy of commercial activities of the public sectors, which are in competition with the private sector.
- An unnecessary, close scrutiny of minute details, contrary to the view of the tendering authority has makes awarding of contracts by government and public sectors a task, with long drawn out litigation.
- This works as a great disadvantage to the government and the public sector.

#### **Way forward:**

- Normally parties would be governed by their contracts and the tender terms, and no writ petition would be maintainable. The Bench said courts should exercise some restraint while giving their own interpretations to the terms of a contract at the behest of third parties, who file writ petitions after failing to garner it.
- The object must not be that in every contract, where some parties would lose out, they should get the opportunity to somehow pick holes, to disqualify the successful parties, on the grounds on which even the party floating the tender finds no merit.

### **3. 37 EC recommendations pending since 2014**

#### **Context:**

The nine working groups set up by the Election Commission of India to suggest improvements in specific areas, based on their experience during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, had submitted a total of 337 recommendations, of which 300 have been disposed of so far.

#### **Details:**

Among the 37 recommendations of the Election Commission's (EC) Working Groups, which are pending since 2014, are

- Disqualification of candidates at the stage of framing of charges (rather than on conviction) to attract a minimum of five years' imprisonment.
- Increased punishment for false affidavits.
- Permanent disqualification of those guilty of corruption and heinous crimes.
- A candidate contesting a different election should resign from the current seat.
- With respect to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), a working group had suggested amendments empowering the Commission to issue notice to a party for necessary corrections in its manifesto.
- It was also for the setting up of courts to adjudicate electoral offences and disallowing the use of government designations for the purposes of political publicity.
- Another pending recommendation pertains to the introduction of indelible marker ink pens, instead of ink vials, as a pilot project.
- In order to constrict the duration of the election process, a Working Group had said that, under the community legal demographic profiling and election time zones system, factors like weather, examination schedules and festivals should be mapped in each State to facilitate the scheduling of polls.
- A major recommendation is for drafting a comprehensive bill that deals with registration, recognition and funding of political parties.

## **Category: HEALTH**

### **1. Snakebite cases in Telangana down by 50%**

**Context:**

According to statistics, the number of snake bite cases in Telangana from January to first week of May this year is 50% to 70% less than first five months of 2017 and 2018.

**Issue:**

There are speculations that such a drop in the number of Snakebite cases could be attributed to under-reporting. Officials from the Telangana Health Department said that they will find out the reason for the sharp decline in number of snake bite cases. However, they did not completely discard the possibility that cases might be under-



reported.

**Details:**

- In the executive summary - Snakebite Envenoming: A strategy for prevention and control launched by WHO - four strategic aims were listed to achieve the target-
  - empower and engage communities
  - ensure safe and effective treatment
  - strengthen health systems
  - increase coordination, partnership and resources.
- The second strategic aim is about building a sustainable, stable market for safe, effective anti-venoms at reasonable cost and assured access to treatment.

**Snake bites:**

- Untreated snakebites can lead to gangrene, disfigurement of injured portion, amputation or death, depending on varying degrees of snakebites envenoming.
- If someone gets bitten by a viper snake, they could suffer from kidney failure leading to multi-organ failure.

**Way forward:**

- 80% of the snake bite cases, people get bitten on hands and feet.
- It is suggested that farmers must wear gum boots while working in field.
- People have to be careful while picking up stones, wood logs or any object lying on ground as the reptiles might be resting under them.
- The current crisis in the supply of anti-venoms should be addressed by the WHO by creating a

revolving stockpile of anti-venoms proven to be effective, so they can be sent where they are needed.

## C. GS3 Related

### Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

#### 1. Microbes in body could help predict future health

##### Context:

A recent research found that repeat testing spotted the microbial zoo changing in ways that eventually may help doctors determine who's at risk of preterm birth, inflammatory bowel disease, even diabetes.

##### Details:

- At issue is what's called the microbiome.
- The instability of one's microbiome might be an early indicator of something going wrong.
- Microbiomes start forming at birth and are different depending on whether babies were born vaginally or via C-section.
- They change with age and different exposures, such as a course of antibiotics that can wipe out friendly bacteria along with infection-causing ones.
- During the study, many times a patient's gut microbiome changed radically in just a few weeks before a flare-up.
- The researchers did quarterly tests for microbial, genetic and molecular changes, plus testing when the volunteers caught a respiratory infection and even while some deliberately put on and lost weight. They found a list of microbial and inflammatory early warning signs of brewing diabetes.
- People who are insulin-resistant showed delayed immune responses to respiratory infections, correlating with tamped-down microbial reactions.

##### Microbiome:

- Microbiome is the community of bacteria, viruses and fungi that live on the skin or in the gut, nose or reproductive tract.

## D. GS4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

#### 1. Bills of rights for the vulnerable

##### Editorial Analysis:

- Experts opine that towards the end of the previous government's tenure, a number of controversial bills were introduced in Parliament.

**What happened to these controversial bills?**

- As a matter of fact, political imperatives ensured that they were not, ultimately, enacted into law: for example, some of these controversial bills were stalled in the Rajya Sabha after being passed by the Lower House, while in other cases, the government itself decided not to proceed with them.
- With the dissolution of Parliament, these bills lapsed; however, with the 2019 general election yielding a decisive mandate in favour of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the attention will undoubtedly turn to whether the new government will attempt to revive some aspects of its erstwhile legislative programme.

### What were these bills?

- A look at some of the problematic social bills:
- In the social sphere, the government introduced the Transgender Bill, the Surrogacy Bill, and the Trafficking Bill.
- In each of the cases, the draft legislation was — correctly — introduced with the aim of addressing an existing lacuna in the legal landscape.
- As a matter of fact, the recognition of transgender rights by enshrining them in law had long been a demand of the community.
- Further, the legal regulation of surrogacy and the tackling of trafficking as well arose out of the articulated claims of grassroots social movements, debated and framed over many years of engagement and activism.
- However, when it came to the content of these bills, experts opine that the consultation with impacted communities was effectively avoided, and the result was a set of drafts that, far from protecting rights, actively harmed them.

### A look at the objections and protests:

- Unsurprisingly, therefore, the draft bills were met with a spate of objections and protests. For example, the Transgender Bill did away with the fundamental and non-negotiable principle — and one recognised by the Supreme Court in its NALSA judgment — **of the right to self-determination of gender identity**.
- Instead, it placed such decisions in the hands of government-appointed committees, extending state control over gender identities rather than liberating or emancipating them.
- It also contained deeply suspect provisions on gender reassignment surgery.
- Similarly, experts opine that the Surrogacy Bill excluded LGBT individuals from its ambit (despite their recognition as equal citizens under the Constitution by the Supreme Court), imposed discriminatory age restrictions upon men and women, and by entirely outlawing “commercial” surrogacy (instead of regulating it with appropriate safeguards) opened up space for underground and unreported exploitation of women, effectively creating a black market.
- Lastly, experts opine that the Trafficking Bill criminalised begging without providing any manner of effective alternatives and failed to distinguish between non-consensual trafficking and consensual sex work.
- It thus opened the door to criminalising livelihoods on the basis of what was effectively a set of narrow, moral objections.

### What united these problematic bills?

- What united these three problematic bills were as follows:
  1. Firstly, each of them dealt with intimate subjects such as individuals’ decisions of what to do with their body, personal dignity and autonomy, and gender identity.
  2. Secondly, they concerned the rights of some of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of our society.
  3. Thirdly, they were drafted without adequately consulting with, or listening to, the members of the

communities who were impacted.

4. Fourthly, instead of guaranteeing and securing the rights of these communities to be free from state interference, they extended the state's control and domination.
5. Lastly, they were met by extensive and widespread protests from the communities themselves.

### A Look at the Citizenship Bill and the NRC:

- The government also attempted to enact the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill into law — an attempt it was forced to abandon when its own allies protested against it.
- As a matter of fact, this was advertised as a measure for benefiting the vulnerable and the marginalised, the bill would have granted fast-track to citizenship to persecuted minorities from neighbouring countries, who were Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians — but not Muslims.
- Experts opine that this was, at a very basic level, illogical and self-contradictory, apart from being clearly discriminatory on grounds of religion: **the examples of the Ahmadiyyas and the Baloch in Pakistan make it clear that, just like any other identity, there are communities of Muslims in neighbouring countries who face persecution on the basis of their religious beliefs.**
- Experts opine that had the bill been enacted, therefore, it would undoubtedly have been challenged in the courts and tied up for a long while in litigation.
- However, strong movements in the northeastern States — concerned both about the demographic consequences and the anti-secular nature of the bill — ultimately forced the government to not go through with the legalisation.
- At the same time, however, the Supreme Court-driven National Register of Citizens (NRC) process in Assam became a significant aspect of the ruling party's election rhetoric during the recent campaign.
- As a matter of fact, some senior party figures stated that they would replicate the NRC process for the whole of India.
- It is important to note that apart from the principle of it — there is something particularly repugnant over placing the entire country under a presumption that they are interlopers, unless they prove otherwise — such a move would be a nightmare of administration and implementation, as the example from Assam has shown.
- Further, there has been considerable — and continuing — confusion over the methods and form of identity that one can use to “prove” one's citizenship (including “family trees”, which have been found to have a disproportionate impact upon vulnerable and minority claimants).
- The overlapping functions of the NRC process and the Foreigners Tribunals have added to the confusion.
- The “objections” process has been openly and publicly abused by individuals in order to harass NRC applicants (what they have called “collateral damage”), families have found themselves bizarrely separated from each other in the NRC, and there have been reports of suicides after each round of the draft.
- Experts opine that when this is all happening in Assam, one can imagine the consequences of an attempt to scale it up to the national level.
- Some experts also add that there is no credible evidence to demonstrate that there actually is large-scale, illegal immigration taking place in India.
- Therefore, apart from being constitutionally suspect, a massive waste of resources, and a gateway to triggering violence, it is unclear why there even exists the need for such a step.

### Concluding Remarks:

- It is important to note that a general election confers a mandate upon the incoming government to legislate in the manner that it deems best and in the public interest.
- While the government is, of course, entitled to frame its own policies, and draft and implement legislation to enact those policies, there are certain constraints upon how it should go about that task.



- At the minimum, the voices of those who will be directly impacted by the policy should be listened to and engaged with in good faith, and basic constitutional principles and values ought to be respected.
- In conclusion, the last phase of the previous government's tenure presented a number of examples where these constraints were insufficiently complied with, and the resulting bills would therefore have ended up harming those whose rights they were meant to protect, apart from falling foul of crucial constitutional rights.
- One hopes that these lacunae and shortcomings are remedied by the present government in power.
- Lastly, it is important to note that apart from the courts, however, this would need a sustained public movement around these issues, which can make its voice heard in the halls of power.

## Category: GEOGRAPHY

### 1. Changing the earth

#### What's in the news?

- On May 21, 2019, the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) overwhelmingly voted to recognise Anthropocene as an epoch.

#### Editorial Analysis:

- It is important to note that the pervasive and persistent signatures of modern human activity on the earth have been so striking that they are now set to be officially recognised and named as a new geological epoch.
- **Experts point out that this vote gives form to the efforts of scientists, notably the Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, who coined the term in 2000 to highlight how human activity had changed many facets of the earth.**
- As a matter of fact, so overwhelming is the concept of the Anthropocene that it got mainstreamed in scientific and general literature years ago.
- Experts opine that the recent AWG vote is a sobering reminder to humanity that failure to end destructive activities will irrevocably change the face of the earth and make it uninhabitable.
- Officially, however, **humans will continue to live in the Holocene epoch for a couple of years more before the Anthropocene epoch is finally ratified by the International Union of Geological Sciences.**

#### Significance of the recent vote:

- The vote by the working group will contribute to the formalisation of the Anthropocene as a stratigraphic entity on a par with other geological epochs.
- However, unlike the others, it will be the first time that the beginning of an epoch would be based on human activity and not the consequences of changes brought about by nature.
- For instance, **the start of the Holocene epoch 11,700 years ago marks the end of the transition from the last glacial phase to a period of warming and a rise in sea level.**
- Human activity has been drastically changing the earth, with the greatest impacts coming from agriculture, large-scale deforestation, the industrial revolution and increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide, besides the creation of materials such as concrete and plastic.

#### Looking for unique signatures to define the start of the Anthropocene period:

- **The working group voted to look for unique signatures around the 1950s to define the start of the Anthropocene.**

- A decrease in deuterium excess, a proxy for climate change, owing to the reorganisation of North Atlantic Ocean-atmosphere circulation was a definitive geological marker, or golden spike, to signify the base of Holocene.
- As a matter of fact, **radionuclides from atomic bomb tests from the early 1950s are emerging as a favourite golden spike candidate to define the base of the Anthropocene.**
- To be chosen as a geologic marker, the golden spike must be present globally across most environments and must be a part of deposits for a geologically significant length of time.
- Thus, plutonium isotope Pu-239 with a half-life of 24,110 years will remain detectable for more than 1,00,000 years and continue to exist as uranium 235 when Pu-239 decays.
- Lastly, the next task is to find a single site from among the 10 sites chosen across the world for inclusion in the formal proposal.
- Here, **coral reefs and Antarctic glacial ice located far from nuclear detonation test sites might be more suitable as they would not reflect any local spike but a global distribution pattern.**

## Category: ECONOMY

### 1. Capital buffers

#### Editorial Analysis:

- Experts assert that Non-banking financial companies, already reeling under a painful liquidity crisis, are up against a fresh challenge in the form of new regulatory norms set by the Reserve Bank of India.
- As a matter of fact, the central bank has released draft norms on liquidity risk management for deposit taking and non-deposit taking NBFCs.

#### What do these proposed rules say?

- According to these proposed rules, NBFCs would have to comply with a higher liquidity coverage ratio (LCR).
- It is important to note that a liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) is the proportion of assets that an NBFC needs to hold in the form of high-quality liquid assets that can be quickly and easily converted into cash.
- The new norms, which are expected to be implemented by the RBI over four years starting from April 2020, would likely put significant pressure on the margins of NBFCs.
- Under these norms, NBFCs would have to maintain their LCR at 60% of net cash outflows initially, and improve it to 100% by April 2024.

#### What would happen if these norms are implemented?

- If the norms are implemented, NBFCs may be forced to park a significant share of their money in low-risk liquid assets, such as government bonds, which yield much lower returns than high-risk illiquid assets.
- The strict norms have to be seen in the context of the present crisis where even prominent NBFCs are struggling to meet their obligations to various lenders.

#### Reasons to be optimistic:

- While the profit outlook and other short-term financial metrics of NBFCs may be affected by the norms, there are good reasons to be optimistic about their long-term impact on the health of NBFCs and the wider financial sector.
- NBFCs, which are in the business of borrowing short term to lend long term, typically run the risk of

being unable to pay back their borrowers on time due to a mismatch in the duration of their assets and liabilities.

- This is particularly so in instances where panic sets in among short-term lenders, as happened last year (2018) when lenders, worried about the safety of their capital, demanded to be paid back in full.
- In other words, NBFCs rely heavily on short-term lenders rolling over their loans without fail in order to avoid any kind of liquidity crisis.
- The new norms would discourage NBFCs from borrowing over short term to extend long-term loans without the necessary buffer capital in place.
- This could compel NBFCs to shrink the scope of their lending from what it is today, but it would save them from larger crises and significantly reduce the need for the government or the RBI to step in as the lender of last resort.

### Concluding Remarks:

- Undeniably, NBFCs have done a tremendous job in recent years in widening and deepening access to credit by taking a share from the public sector banks, which have been severely affected by the bad loans crisis.
- However, the latest liquidity norms for NBFCs are still necessary to ward off systemic crises.

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Season of populist discontent

##### Editorial Analysis:

- The word populism has been much used, though never clearly defined.
- The dictionary meaning of this word thus assumes importance— ‘various, often anti-establishment or anti-intellectual political movements that offer unorthodox political policies and appeal to the common person’.
- Over the past few months it has been a season of elections.
- As a matter of fact, the election result in India has been greeted with predictable hostility in the British and U.S. media, with commentators, often of Indian origin, scorning the electorate’s decision and accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of populism, majoritarianism and failure to deliver on promises.
- It can be argued that these analysts clearly want India transformed into a mirror image of the subsiding Western liberal democratic model.

##### A Look at the European Political landscape:

- It is in Europe that the populist nationalist trend is most pronounced.
- In Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, whose political experience is confined to portraying a president on TV, beat the incumbent by winning over 70% of the vote to become the head of state.
- As a matter of fact, his new political party, **Servant of the People**, will now contest elections to Parliament.
- In France, President Emmanuel Macron brought a new party called **Republic on the March** into office with him.
- Nigel Farage, who is an ardent champion for Britain leaving the European Union, launched a new party called **Brexit Party** to contest European Parliament elections, and in France **Marine le Pen rebranded her party ‘National Rally’**.
- Experts opine that the changes of name are to distance the new entities from the well-established parties of the centre-right and centre-left.
- In Spain this April 2019, despite bitter memories of dictator Francisco Franco, the far-right Vox

party won nearly 10% of the vote.

- Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary, presenting himself as the defender of Hungarian and European values, secured a third term last year (2018) for his party Fidesz.
- The **Italian Five Star Movement**, founded by comedian Beppe Grillo, is in a government coalition with the far-right Lega Nord, and Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini has emerged as a powerful personality in trying to unify right-wing parties across Europe, including Austria, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Estonia and Finland, with some success.
- Furthermore, the Dutch provincial elections saw the newcomer **Forum for Democracy** win most seats.
- Salvini has pledged to change the European Union (EU) by making the populist alliance one of the largest groupings in the European Parliament. This group, seeing the chaotic process of Britain leaving the EU, prefers instead to stall any reforms proposed by France and Germany, and to change the EU from within. **Its stated aim is to regain sovereignty for their countries, take back the power to make their own rules and control their borders.**
- As a matter of fact, with typical bravura, **Salvini described the European Parliament elections as a “referendum between life and death”.**

### Examples from other parts of the world:

- In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte, condemned in the West for authoritarianism and abuse of human rights in dealing with drug users and traffickers, has swept the mid-term polls, enabling him to restore the death penalty.
- Newly-elected Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has made common cause with U.S. President Donald Trump against immigration, climate change, abortion and gun control.

### Enthusing voters:

- Experts opine that these populist parties have internal differences on free trade, fiscal responsibility and dealings with Russia and China.
- It is of little consequence that they hold different positions; this is about political marketing, presenting an alternative to current Europe, and obtaining power in the European institutions.
- As a matter of fact, **the populist surge has squeezed the traditional political parties; only the populists seem to be able to light the fire of enthusiasm among voters.**
- Furthermore, **the elections for the European Parliament for the first time became national rather than purely European; all the top leaders were involved, including the British political bosses, ironically when the country is on the cusp of leaving the EU.**
- The overall EU voting turnout of 51% was the highest for two decades.
- The results announced on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 showed the traditional centrist parties losing ground, nationalist-populist parties gaining, and the Greens and Liberals also doing well across Europe.
- No group appears to be able to dominate the agenda. It will be harder for the European leaders to manage the Parliament or the European Commission, and reformers like Mr. Macron will have to lower their ambitions.

### A Closer Look at the EU:

- The EU is a hybrid confederacy where political fragmentation and polarisation have reached serious proportions.
- The public are abandoning mainstream political parties because they feel that existing political and economic systems have failed.
- Experts opine that after the global financial crisis of 2008, for which bankers were responsible but none were punished, **the implicit Western social contract that promised equal opportunity and rising incomes for both elites and masses is discredited.**
- While financial corporates benefitted hugely from globalisation, the working class lost jobs in global

competition.

- In the U.S., the average income of the bottom half declined, while the average income of the top 1% was 138 times higher than the bottom 50%.

### Concluding Remarks:

- The democratic insurrection seen in recent elections is a sign of acute concerns about globalisation, corruption, immigration, alienation, dilution of national identity, social injustice and economic inequality.
- The conclusion is that liberalism and liberal democracy cannot be taken for granted.
- Experts opine that western democracy, the flagship model which prolonged its career through widening the franchise and the empowerment of women, is now heading for a long decline.
- **Lastly, economic redistribution of wealth is the answer to the dilemma confronting liberal and inclusive societies.**
- It is important to note that economists from Adam Smith to Thomas Piketty have stressed that an economically equal society is a contented society.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Ministers must now take heed and bend themselves urgently to this task.

## F. Tidbits

### 1. WHO award for Rajasthan Health Dept.

- The World Health Organization has selected the Rajasthan government's Medical & Health Department for its award this year in recognition of its achievements in the field of tobacco control.
- The Medical & Health Department launched several campaigns against tobacco consumption at places such as schools, colleges, police stations and government offices during 2018-19.
- As part of the tobacco-free initiatives, 1.13 crore people took a pledge against tobacco consumption at the events held in 1.56 lakh government institutions on January 30 this year, marking Martyrs' Day.
- The Health Department of the Rajasthan is the only government body in the country which will be awarded for its tobacco-free initiatives.
- Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute, New Delhi, is also among the recipients of the award.

### 2. Foundation laid for processing plant

- As a part of the "Invest Punjab" initiative, Punjab Chief Minister has laid the foundation stone of a vegetable processing plant.
- It is being set up jointly by Indian Farmers' Fertilizer Cooperative Ltd. and Spain's Congelados de Navarra (CN Corp) at Samrala in Ludhiana.
- The plant will have a processing capacity of 80,000 tonnes per annum.
- The project, which is expected to create 2,500 direct and indirect jobs, will also help boost farm income as the plant will procure raw vegetables directly from the local farmers within a radius of 150 kilometres

### 3. Aadhaar linked to 90% beneficiaries in Maharashtra

- A recent Maharashtra government report has announced Aadhaar linkage with at least 90% of the State's beneficiaries of various social schemes.
- At least 87% of beneficiaries under the public distribution system (PDS) have been linked to Aadhaar, while another 93% of the above poverty line farmers in 14 drought-prone districts have been linked to the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), reducing chances of leakages in

social schemes directed towards the underprivileged.

- However, concerns around the presence of 10 lakh bogus and 29 lakh dormant cards reported last year in the distribution system still remain.
- The Maharashtra government has been working hard to link ration cards and other schemes with the UIDAI.
- It had received a report reporting over 3 crore bogus ration cards from across the country last year. The cards found to be bogus have been flagged in the State's e-system and frozen.
- With Aadhaar in mind, the State has already turned 51,259 fair price shops cashless to conduct transactions through point-of-sale terminals.
- It is also providing an e-wallet facility to card holders in rural areas to augment the use of Aadhaar

## G. Prelims Facts

### 1. Nandankanan Zoological Park

- Nandankanan Zoological Park is a zoo and botanical garden in Bhubaneswar in Odisha.
- Established in 1960, it was opened to the public in 1979.
- It became the first zoo in India to join World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) in 2009.
- It also contains a botanical garden and part of it has been declared a sanctuary.
- Nandankanan, literally meaning The Garden of Heaven is located in the environs of the Chandaka forest, and includes the Kanjia Lake.

## H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1) Consider the following statements:

1. Lokpal Act includes its own members under the definition of "public servant".
2. Lokpal does not apply to public servants outside India.

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:**

Lokpal Act allows setting up of anti-corruption ombudsman called Lokpal at the centre and Lokayukta at the state level. The Lokpal covers all public servants including the Prime Minister. It also applies to public servants outside India. However, armed forces do not come under the ambit of Lokpal.

Q2) Consider the following statements:

1. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) is a scheme under the Ayushman Bharat.
2. PMJAY will have health benefit cover of Five Lakh rupees per family per year, free of cost.

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:**

Self-explanatory

Q3) Which of the following states has launched Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) ?

- a. Madhya Pradesh
- b. Tripura
- c. Arunachal Pradesh
- d. Maharashtra

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

Tripura has launched the SCATFORM project. It is undertaken with the assistance of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). The SCATFORM project aims to address issues such as forest cover loss, promotion of bamboo plantation, agroforestry based livelihood, eco-tourism development, development of value addition for bamboo and other Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) in order to create alternate livelihood opportunities for local communities.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to National Policy on Bio-fuels:

- 1. National Policy on Bio-fuels has set a target of 50% blending of biofuels.
- 2. Under the policy, third generation bio fuels are derived from algae.

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:**

The National Policy on Bio-fuels has set a target of 20% blending of biofuels, both for bio-diesel and bio-ethanol. The Policy categorises biofuels as Basic Biofuels i.e, First Generation (1G) bioethanol & biodiesel. “Advanced Biofuels” – Second Generation (2G) ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels, Third Generation (3G) biofuels, bio-CNG etc. Third generation bio fuels are derived from algae.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

- 1. Increasing influence of social media has contributed to the growth and increased reach of cyber crimes. Discuss. (15 Marks, 250 Words)

2. Elucidate on the significance of ethics in public and private relationship. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

