06 June 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. EC to review penalty for 'false plaint'

Context:

The Election Commission may "revisit" the rule for prosecution of a voter for making a false complaint of malfunction of an electronic voting machine or a voter verifiable paper audit trail machine, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora has said.

Rule 49 MA:

Rule 49MA of the Conduct of Elections Rules was inserted to prescribe the procedure to be followed in case of complaint made by the elector about alleged wrong particulars of a candidate, symbol on paper slip generated by the printer on casting votes using the EVM.

- Any person making a claim about the malfunction after casting his vote has to make a declaration, after which the person is allowed to cast a "test" vote under Rule 49 MA.
- If the allegation is found true, the presiding officer shall report the facts immediately to the returning officer, stop further recording of votes in that voting machine and act as per the direction that may be given by the Returning Officer.
- If the allegation is false, a case under Section 177 of the IPC is made out for giving a false submission.
- It prescribes simple imprisonment for a term extending to six months, or with fine of Rs.1,000, or both.

Background:

- In April, during the 17th Lok Sabha elections, the Supreme Court had sought a response from the poll panel on a plea seeking to revoke the rule.
- The plea alleged that putting the onus on the elector in cases of arbitrary deviant behaviour of machines used in election process infringes upon a citizen's right to freedom of expression under the Constitution.
- This could have the impact of terrifying a voter into not complaining and thus impacting negatively on a free and fair election process, it said.
- The rule infringed upon a citizen's right to freedom of expression, which is a fundamental right of free expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, the petition said.
- The petition explained the various forms of deviant behaviour the EVMs and VVPATs could possibly have, including an unsolicited programme by ballots cast for one candidate may be transferred, not sequentially, but rather intermittently (at pre-programmed intervals or otherwise) to another candidate.

Issue:

- The EC has maintained that if there is no penal provision, people may make false claims.
- The penal provision is used as "an exception, very, very, very rarely", Chief Election Commisioner said, adding that the intention of the provision must have been to discourage those who want to disrupt the electoral process by making such complaints.
- According to EC officials, it takes 20 to 30 minutes to go through and settle complaints about VVPAT machines malfunctioning.

2. Centre wants all States to join PMJAY

Context:

Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has urged the Chief Ministers of Delhi, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal, urging them to join the Centre's flagship health protection scheme,

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).

Details:

- It is important that the benefits of a scheme like Ayushman Bharat should reach all deprived and vulnerable people in the country, the Minister said.
- "Financial resources will be made available to the States with adequate flexibility in the spirit of cooperative federalism. The ultimate beneficiary of this collaboration will be poor and vulnerable people. Due to the portability of services, the States will gain from the nationwide network of hospitals and will also help provide services in their own State to those from outside their States," added the Minister.
- Full support and cooperation to States in aligning their own schemes with Ayushman Bharat was also assured.
- The states will also benefit from a well-proven fraud monitoring and control system and exchange of key learning and best practices of other States towards equitable healthcare, he added.

Ayushman Bharat Programme:

- Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme having central sector component under Ayushman Bharat Mission anchored in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- It is an umbrella of two major health initiatives, namely Health and wellness Centres and National Health Protection Scheme.
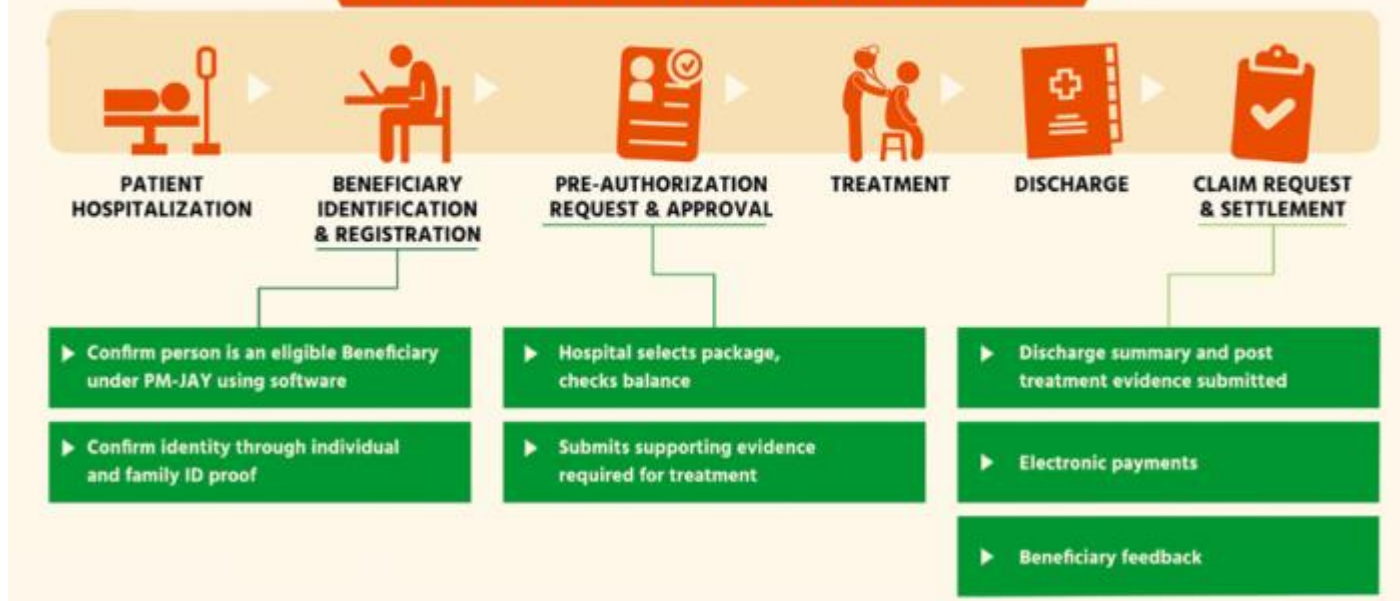
Health and Wellness Centre:

- Health and Wellness Centres have been envisioned as the foundation of India's health system under the National Health Policy, 2017.
- Under this 5 lakh centres will bring health care system closer to the homes of people.
- These centres will provide comprehensive health care, including child health services, maternal and non-communicable diseases.
- Free diagnostic services and free essential drugs will also be provided in these centres.
- Contribution of private sector through philanthropic institutions and Corporate Social Responsibility in adopting these centres is also envisaged.

National Health Protection Scheme:-

- The second flagship programme under Ayushman Bharat is National Health Protection Scheme.
- It covers approximately 50 crore beneficiaries over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families providing coverage upto 5 lakh rupees per family each year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
- This will be the world's largest government funded health care programme.
- The mega health insurance scheme for the poor will give the sector a big boost.
- To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme.
- The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.

AYUSHMAN BHARAT PM-JAY SCHEME - HOW DOES IT WORK

PROCESS OF AVAILING CARE UNDER PM-JAY

PATIENT HOSPITALIZATION → BENEFICIARY IDENTIFICATION & REGISTRATION → PRE-AUTHORIZATION REQUEST & APPROVAL → TREATMENT → DISCHARGE → CLAIM REQUEST & SETTLEMENT

▶ Confirm person is an eligible Beneficiary under PM-JAY using software

▶ Confirm identity through individual and family ID proof

▶ Hospital selects package, checks balance

▶ Submits supporting evidence required for treatment

▶ Discharge summary and post treatment evidence submitted

▶ Electronic payments

▶ Beneficiary feedback

3. How a DBT scheme broke under the weight of bank charges

Context:

Barely two-and-a-half years after unveiling a direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme to transfer money for school uniforms directly to accounts opened in the name of schoolchildren, the Maharashtra government has decided to permanently remove the clothing from the list of goods mentioned under the scheme.

Issue:

- The government has blamed banks for applying various charges on beneficiaries' accounts, which is making it difficult for them to access the money.
- The Planning Department issued a government resolution (GR), as per which beneficiaries are finding it difficult to maintain the minimum balance and pay various charges on bank transactions.
- It said the banks were making it mandatory to pay charges such as SMS charge, goods and services tax charge as well as minimum balance charges.
- If the money being deposited in the accounts is being spent on paying charges applied by banks, then the whole purpose of the scheme is defeated.
- The beneficiaries of the scheme come from economically backward classes and it is difficult for them to pay bank charges.
- At the same time, banks have to maintain the account for an entire year where no transaction is happening

Details:

- On December 5, 2016, the Planning Department issued a GR explaining the importance of the DBT scheme and listing 44 items.
- Earlier, the beneficiaries used to get these items directly from government agencies.
- The State government claimed the DBT would cut the chain of middlemen and help reduce corruption.
- It later added 18 more items to the list.

- The government has now permanently removed clothing from the list of goods mentioned under the scheme.

4. From Swachh to 'Nal se Jal'

Context:

With the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan scheduled to officially complete its mission of an open defecation free India by October 2 this year, there is uncertainty on what lies ahead for the Centre's flagship sanitation scheme.

Details:

- Since its launch by the Prime Minister in 2014, the rural component of the mission alone has attracted government spending of about Rs.1 lakh crore, split between the Centre and the States in a 60:40 ratio.
- Discussions are now being held with the Finance Ministry to work out a potential allocation for the scheme in the Budget to be presented on July 5.
- While government officials and funding agencies alike stress the importance of a second phase past October, with continued behavioural changes and solid and liquid waste management programmes required to maintain the scheme's gains, it is unclear if funding and attention could be sustained at levels matching those of the high-profile first phase.

Nal Se Jal Scheme:

- Minister of the newly created Jal Shakti Ministry, which is expected to absorb the Drinking Water and Sanitation Ministry, released a UNICEF study showing that groundwater is 12.7 times less likely to be contaminated in ODF villages than non-ODF ones.
- Noting that the sanitation mission had improved the environment as well as people's health and dignity, Mr. Shekhawat said the mission would "continue to positively impact people's lives for a long time to come".
- While a World Bank grant would continue till January 2021, representatives of UNICEF and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation said they were working on faecal sludge management projects for phase two, but expected that greater attention and government funding may now be focussed on a new piped water scheme.
- The Nal Se Jal scheme aims to provide piped drinking water to every rural home by 2024, in response to studies showing that 84% of rural homes have no access to piped water, with more than 70% of the country's water contaminated.
- A second phase of Swachh Bharat may be key to reducing contamination, as the UNICEF study suggests.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Nirmala to attend G-20 meeting in Japan

Context:

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will attend the two-day meeting of G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank governors in Japan.

Details:

- The deliberations at the meeting would be followed by the G-20 Leaders' Summit scheduled on June 28-29 at Osaka.
- The meeting would also deliberate on issues such as increasing protectionism and its implication on global growth and trade.
- The International Monetary Fund has cut its forecast for global growth from 3.6% last year to 3.3% in 2019.
- In this context, the deliberations would focus on surveillance of global economic risks, global imbalances, ageing population and its policy implications, addressing financial market fragmentation and opportunities and challenges in financial innovation.
- The other issues which would figure are international taxation in the context of digitised economy, issues concerning shifting of tax liability to low tax jurisdiction and real time exchange of tax-related information, are likely to come up during the discussion.

G-20:

- G-20, which is a group of developing and developed nations, include India, the U.S., the U.K., China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, France and Australia.
- The G20 meetings are convened annually since 1999.
- It provides a forum for key countries in the international financial system to discuss major international economic issues and to coordinate to achieve the stable and sustainable growth of the global economy.

Category: HEALTH

1. Imperative to test all pregnant women for gestational diabetes

Context:

It has become imperative that every pregnant woman be screened for high blood glucose even if no symptoms are exhibited, a recent paper published in the Journal of the Association of Physicians of India has posited.

Details:

- Arguing that primordial prevention or, in this case, at the earliest stage of development of the foetus, is essential to prevent children from becoming predisposed to diabetesor other non-communicable diseases (NCD), the paper makes a case for testing all pregnant women.
- The paper states that while several reasons have been ascribed for the rising trend of NCD, the concept of intrauterine programming has not received adequate attention.
- Quoting David Barker's 'Fetal Origin of Adult Diseases' theory, it says the body's susceptibility to lifestyle diseases was programmed in the intra-uterine period.
- Higher glucose transfer to the foetus, when the mother has high blood sugar, stimulates the foetal pancreatic cells to start secreting insulin earlier and in higher quantities. Once initiated, it becomes self-perpetuating.

National guidelines:

- The Ministry of Health has developed national guidelines for testing, diagnosis and management of hyperglycaemia in pregnancy, and they recommend early testing at the time of contact (during the first trimester) and if the test is negative, yet another test should be done between 24-28 weeks.
- Uttar Pradesh has implemented this programme extremely well. They are even using advanced testing equipment not seen in other parts of the country.

- Testing all pregnant women has become the norm across the world. The common test is the single dose oral glucose, because it is simple and economical.
- A single reading of blood sugar two hours after the ingestion of 75 gm oral glucose solution is taken. A value of 140 mg/dl or more indicates GDM.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. PM to head committee on economic growth

Context:

To address the twin problems of sluggish economic growth and rising unemployment, the government has constituted two Cabinet committees to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Issue:

- As per figures released by the government, the country's economic growth saw the third straight fall in quarterly growth, raising concerns about the slowdown.
- Similarly, employment data for 2017-18, brought out that India's unemployment rate rose to 6.1% in the said period, which is the highest in 45 years.
- The fall in growth is result of dip in the performance of the core sectors of the economy, as the eight core sectors — coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity — recorded a growth of just 2.6 % in April, compared with 4.6% in the same month last year.

Details:

- The five-member Committee on Investment and Growth consists of Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister for Road Transport and Highways and MSME Nitin Gadkari and Railways Minister Piyush Goyal.
- This committee will be a focussed group to take measures to bring investments and spur growth in the critical sectors including infrastructure, manufacturing and agriculture, as the economy is passing through a highly volatile period.
- The government also set up a 10-member Cabinet committee for Employment and Skill Development.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Navy steams ahead with its plans to go 'green'

Context:

The Navy is pressing ahead with its eco-friendly programme, the Indian Navy Environment Conservation Roadmap (INECR) that comprises specific action plans covering the gamut of operations, maintenance, administration, infrastructure and community living, the service said in a statement on Environment Day.

Details:

- The roadmap envisions 'reduction in energy consumption' and 'diversification of energy supply' as the key result areas.
- Under the INECR, numerous policies aimed at reduction of energy consumption and environment

sustenance have been formulated and disseminated to all ships, as well as shore establishments.

- As a progressive step, Indian Navy has pledged 1.5% of its 'Works' budget towards renewable energy generation.
- Solar photovoltaic (PV) projects has been one of the focus areas of the Navy since the inception of the INECR and 24 MW of Solar Photo Voltaic (PV) projects consisting of both rooftop and land-based solar panels are under execution at various shore establishments of the Navy under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM).
- Pilot projects utilizing wind or a mix of both solar and wind (hybrid) are also being taken up progressively which would not only reduce the carbon footprint but also help achieve self-sustenance in energy security.
- Afforestation drives are being carried out at at Naval stations, under which more than 18,000 plants have been planted over the past one year, would mitigate an estimated 365 tonnes of CO2 emissions.
- Other measures being propagated include promoting renewable energy usage on all bases and ships, segregated waste collection and improved waste management techniques.
- An estimated savings of 140 LPG cylinders per year is accrued through implementation of biogas plants using bio-degradable waste and organic waste converters across naval units.
- Project to blend High Speed Diesel:
  o To promote use of biodiesel, plans are afoot to replace High Speed Diesel (HSD) (annual usage of 6,300 kL) with B5 blend of HSD.
  o This would result in a direct savings of 5% of HSD, which translates to approximately 315 kL annual savings of HSD,.
  o The project to blend HSD is set to start at Visakhapatnam in the coming months.

2. Studying Olive Ridleys

Context:

A proposal has been made to establish a permanent research centre near the Rushikulya rookery on the Odisha coast to study the mass nesting of Olive Ridleys and the environmental factors related to it.

Details:

- The research centre is expected to be established at a cost of more than Rs. 9 crore.
- The Forest Department is planning to have it in the Khallikote forest range, which is near the Rushikulya rookery.
- The centre would be involved in a detailed study of the habits and the habitat of the turtles and the coastal flora and fauna.

Busting myths:

- The centre would also allay myths and unscientific theories related to the mass nesting, said the DFO.
- Recently, it became viral on social media that the turtles had sensed Cyclone Fani and gave the rookery the skip.
- But past data proved the assumption wrong. Mass nesting occurred at the rookery in 1999 and 2013, when major cyclones hit the Odisha coast.
- In both cases, the Rushikulya rookery was affected.
- Mass nesting had not occurred in 1998, 2002, 2007 and 2016 though no major cyclone hit the coast.

Olive Ridley Turtles:

- Odisha is home to 50 percent of the total world's population of Olive Ridleys and about 90 percent of Indian population of sea turtles.

- The unmanned island, located close to the Wheeler's Island defence test range centre, a prohibited territory, is one of the largest rookeries in the world.

- These turtles get their name from the olive colored carapace, which is heart-shaped and rounded.
- Olive Ridley sea turtles come in large numbers for nesting to Odisha coasts. The mass nesting draws worldwide attention on the conservation of Olive Ridley in Odisha.
- The synchronised nesting in mass numbers is called Arribadas.
- They are mostly carnivorous and feed on jellyfish, snails, crabs, and shrimp. They occasionally consume algae and seaweed.
- The major breeding ground for these turtles is Rushikulya (Odisha), Dharma (Odisha), Devi estuary (Odisha), Astaranga Coast (Odisha), Gahirmatha beach (Odisha) and Hope Island of Coringa Wild life Sanctuary (Andhra Pradesh).
- They are classified as Vulnerable — IUCN Red List.

3. To mark Environment Day, Rupani kicks off Sabarmati clean-up drive

Context:

A drive to clean the polluted Sabarmati River was launched to mark World Environment Day.

Details:

- Sabarmati is counted among the most polluted rivers in the country, under the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) National Water Quality Programme.
- As per a CPCB study based on the biological oxygen demand, Sabarmati is amongst the most polluted rivers in the country, and among the top three polluted rivers in Gujarat, the other two being Amlakhadi and Khadi.
- The 'Swachh Sabarmati Maha Abhiyan' was launched by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani from the banks of the river near the historic Sabarmati ashhram. The drive will continue till June 9.
- Mahatma Gandhi had set up the ashram on the banks of the river after his return from South Africa in 1915.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. China launches its first sea-based space rocket

Context:

China launched a space rocket from sea for the first, its space agency announced, the latest step in Beijing's push to become a major space power.

Details:

- China now spends more than Russia and Japan on its civil and military space programmes — unveiling ambitious plans for missions to the moon and beyond in the coming decade.
- A Long March 11 rocket was launched from a ship in the Yellow Sea, the China National Space Administration said in a statement.
- This is the first time that China has tested a launch vehicle at sea.
- The rocket carried two experimental satellites and five commercial ones.
- Earlier this year, China became the first nation to land a rover on the far side of the moon.
- It also unveiled ambitious plans to build a research base on the lunar surface, send a probe to Mars and build a space station in Earth orbit.

- In 2003, China became only the third nation to have the capability of launching humans into space.
- And with sea launches, China now has the ability to deploy satellites from a mobile platform.
- Most recently, Russian-backed firm Sea Launch used a floating platform to launch dozens of rockets between 1999 and 2014.
- According to Russian company Energia, the majority shareholder in Sea Launch, launching from sea has a number of advantages, such as the ability to send off rockets from a variety of locations on Earth, as well as reduced costs and risks.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Hindi or English, comparing apples and oranges – On draft National Education Policy

The editorial talks about how the project to remove English from India remains misplaced and is dangerous to development and integration.

Issue:

- India's language policy is based on a honourable objective: decolonising all walks of the national life. Therefore, progressive replacement of English with Hindi was thought to be a sound beginning. But things didn't work out the way it was hoped to turn out, in 1950.

Details:

- The project to remove English has become redundant. From being a language of colonialism, English transformed itself into a global language of culture, science and technology, and world politics.
- Its universalist claims are also backed by its capacity to absorb words from other languages.
- The intent to replace English with Hindi is based on an erroneous understanding that all languages are similar.
- All Indian languages are languages of identity and cultural expression whereas English is a language of mobility and empowerment. There is no point in comparing apples and oranges.
- History also teaches us that primacy of a language is rather transient. There was a time the English (and even Germans) were communicating in French.
- One cannot now rule out the possibility of Mandarin replacing English as the global language in future.

Three Language Formula:

- The three-language formulafor language learning was formulated in 1968 by the Ministry of Education of the Government of India in consultation with the states.
- The formula as enunciated in the 1968 National Policy Resolution provided for the study of "Hindi, English and modern Indian language (preferably one of the southern languages) in the Hindi speaking states and Hindi, English and the Regional language in the non-Hindi speaking States.
- However, the recent update to the National Education Policy has dropped the mandate to choose Hindi as one of the three languages under the Three Language Formula.
- The TLF in any form is unconstitutional. A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court ruled in 2014

(in Karnataka v. Recognised-Unaided Schools) that imposition of even the mother tongue as the medium of instruction is violative of one's fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression [Article 19(1)(a)]. If the government cannot even force students to learn in their own mother tongue, let alone teaching in other language(s).

- Reflecting the 'condition' that Article 344(3) imposes on the language policy that it must "have due regard to the industrial, cultural and scientific advancement of India," the Bench advanced the rationale for English: "For example, prescribing English as a medium of instruction in subjects of higher education for which only English books are available and which can only be properly taught in English may have a direct bearing and impact on the determination of standards of education.
- The common thread that runs through issues such as language in administration, medium of instruction and inclusion of a third language in curriculum is the project to remove English. Until the project is dismantled, the forces it unleashed through Part XVII will continue to wreak havoc with the country. The draft NEP recommends English throughout school education but it is, strictly speaking, counter to the spirit of Part XVII.
- **Part XVIIof the constitution of India (Articles 343 to Article 351) makes elaborate provisions dealing with the official language of the Republic of India.**
- While English stands dismantled as a second/link language in administration, Hindi remains unacceptable to non-Hindi States. So, an educated person from a non-Hindi State will be clueless in a Hindi State and vice-versa.

Way forward:

- While firing the opening salvos in India's language war, Lord Macaulay suggested a simple test of asking people on what language they prefer. The least a government in a democracy can do is to fathom the people's will and act accordingly.
- A case can be made that India ought to introduce English throughout school and college education so that all Indians will be conversant in their mother tongue and English.
- Such a policy will be beneficial to the Hindi States.
- Consider the demographic trends: by 2060, non-Hindi States, especially in the south, are projected to experience demographic decline and attendant labour shortage. The situation in the north will be the opposite.
- Embracing English as the second language will promote mobility and economic development, especially in the north, and make India a more legible place to its citizens.

Category: HEALTH

1. Caught napping – On Nipah outbreak

Context:

A year after Kerala's prompt action quickly brought the deadly Nipah virus infection outbreak under check in two districts (Kozhikode and Malappuram), the State has once again shown alacrity in dealing with a reported case.

Issue:

- A 23-year-old student admitted to a private hospital in Ernakulam tested positive for the virus.
- But even as the government was awaiting confirmation from the National Institute of Virology, Pune, steps had been taken to prevent the spread of the disease by tracing the contacts, setting up isolation wards and public engagement.
- Two health-care workers who had come into contact with the patient exhibited some symptoms and are being treated.

- While 311 people who had come in close contact with the student are kept in isolation to prevent the spread of the disease.

Details:

- Containing the spread of the Nipah virus is important as the mortality rate was 89% last year.
- Transmission to 18 contacts last year and the two health-care workers this year has been only through the human-to-human route.
- The virus isolated from four people and three fruit bats (Pteropus medius) last year from Kerala clearly indicated that the carrier of the Nipah virus which caused the outbreak was the fruit bat.
- Analysing the evolutionary relationships, the study found 99.7-100% similarity between the virus in humans and bats.

Concerns:

- The confirmation of the source and the recurrence mean that Kerala must be alert to the possibility of frequent outbreaks.
- That being so and considering the very high mortality rate when infected with the virus, it is shocking that Kerala had not undertaken continuous monitoring and surveillance for the virus in fruit bats.
- One reason for the failure could be the absence of a public health protection agency, which the government has been in the process of formulating for over five years, to track such infective agents before they strike.
- Not only should Kerala get this agency up and running soon, it should also equip the Institute of Advanced Virology in Thiruvananthapuram to undertake testing of dangerous pathogens.
- Known for high health indicators, Kerala should not lag behind on the infectious diseases front.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Needed: a solar manufacturing strategy

Issue:

Despite making significant progress in solar power generation, India still relies on China for equipment.

Details:

- India has made significant progress in creating capacity for solar energy generation in the last few years.
- The Prime Minister's emphasis since 2014 has given a new fillip to solar power installation. The unit costs of solar power have fallen, and solar energy has become increasingly competitive with alternative sources of energy.
- India expanded its solar generation capacity eight times from 2,650 MW on May 26, 2014 to over 20 GW on January 31, 2018, and 28.18 GW on March 31, 2019.
- The government had an initial target of 20 GW of solar capacity by 2022, which was achieved four years ahead of schedule.
- In 2015, the target was raised to 100 GW of solar capacity by 2022.

Issue:

- Despite the new policy focus on solar plant installation, India is still not a solar panel manufacturer.
- Just as India has had no overall industrial policy since economic reforms began, there is no real plan

in place to ensure solar panel manufacture.

- The share of all manufacturing in GDP was 16% in 1991; it remained the same in 2017.
- The solar power potential offers a manufacturing opportunity.
- The government is a near monopsonistic buyer.
- India is regarded by the global solar industry as one of the most promising markets, but low-cost Chinese imports have undercut its ambitions to develop its own solar technology suppliers.
- Imports, mostly from China, accounted for 90% of 2017 sales, up from 86% in 2014.
- Most Indian companies are engaged in only module assembly or wafer manufacturing and module assembly. No Indian company is involved in silicon production, although a few are making strides towards it.
- According to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (2018), India has an annual solar cell manufacturing capacity of about 3 GW while the average annual demand is 20 GW. The shortfall is met by imports of solar panels.

Way forward:

- Substituting for imports requires human capabilities, technological capabilities and capital in the form of finance.
- On the first two capabilities, the supply chain of solar photovoltaic panel manufacturing is as follows: silicon production from silicates (sand); production of solar grade silicon ingots; solar wafer manufacturing; and PV module assembly.
- The capital expenditure and technical know-how needed for these processes decreases from the first item to the last, i.e. silicon production is more capital-intensive than module assembly.
- While the safeguard duty now puts locally made panels on par with imported ones in terms of cost, the domestic sector needs to do a lot more to be effective.
- For instance, it will have to go down the supply chain and make the input components locally instead of importing them and putting the modules together. Public procurement is the way forward.
- The government is still free to call out bids for solar power plants with the requirement that these be made fully in India. This will not violate any World Trade Organization commitment.

Lessons from China:

China's cost advantage derives from capabilities on three fronts.

- The first is core competence.
  - The six largest Chinese manufacturers had core technical competence in semiconductors before they turned to manufacturing solar cells at the turn of the century.
  - Experts suggest that the human and technical learning curve could be five to 10 years.
  - Indian companies had no learning background in semiconductors when the solar industry in India began to grow from 2011.
  - State governments need to support semiconductor production as part of a determined industrial policy to develop this capacity for the future.
- The second source of cost advantage for China comes from government policy.
  - The Chinese government has subsidised land acquisition, raw material, labour and export, among others. None of this is matched by the Indian government.
  - Perhaps even more important is commitment by the government to procure over the long run — without that the investment in building up the design and manufacturing for each of the four stages of production of solar power equipment would come to nought.
- The third is the cost of capital. The cost of debt in India (11%) is highest in the Asia-Pacific region, while in China it is about 5%.
- Fifteen years ago, the Chinese could also have remained dependent upon imports from Korea or Germany; they did not. Remaining dependent on imports only leads to short-term benefits for India.
- A continuation of the current approach means India's energy sector will be in the same condition as

its defence industry, where enormous amounts of money have been spent procuring weaponry — so much so that India has been the world's second largest importer of defence equipment for years.

- In the solar panel manufacturing sector, the Indian government allows 100% foreign investment as equity and it qualifies for automatic approval. The government is also encouraging foreign investors to set up renewable energy-based power generation projects on build-own-operate basis.
- But the Chinese government is clearly adopting an aggressive stance while the demand for solar power in India continues to grow, as does the government's commitment to renewables.
- The Chinese strategy is to undercut any planned effort by India to develop the entire supply chain capacity within India so that dependence on imports from China continues.

Conclusion:

As a counter to China India needs a solar manufacturing strategy, like the Automotive Mission Plan (2006-2016), which is credited with making India one of the largest manufacturers of two-wheelers, three-wheelers, four-wheelers and lorries in the world. This would also be a jobs-generating strategy for an increasingly better educated youth, both rural and urban.

F. Tidbits

1. Sympathy can't be allowed to substitute justice: HC

- The Delhi High Court has declined to grant relief to a B.Com (Hons) student, who fell short of the requisite attendance due to his heart ailment, seeking permission to write the 4th semester examination.
- The claim of the petitioner was effectively for the court to grant relief solely on the ground of sympathy, even though it is an admitted position that grant of such relief would fly in the face of the applicable statutory provisions.
- The Ordinance governing GGSIPU requires a student to attend 75% classes in order to be eligible to appear in the end-semester examination, but the student had 21% attendance.
- "Sympathy must always inform and temper, but can never be allowed to substitute justice," the High Court remarked.

2. 10% drop in H-1B visa approvals in 2018: U.S.

- There has been a sharp 10% decline in the approval of H-1B visas by the U.S. in the fiscal year 2018.
- The experts attributed the decline to the aggressive policies of the Trump administration to clamp down on the use of the work visa programme, popular among highly skilled Indian IT professionals.
- "Buy American and Hire American" executive order seeks to create higher wages and employment rates for U.S. workers.
- The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows U.S. companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

3. India, France to hold mega air exercise in July

- The Indian and French Air Forces will carry out a two-week-long mega air exercise beginning July 1 in France in a boost to military-to-military ties between the two countries.
- A fleet of Sukhoi 30 fighter jets of the Indian Air Force will engage in dogfights with France's Rafale multirole aircraft in simulated scenarios as part of the 'Garuda' exercise.
- A large number of other assets including mid-air refueller will also be sent to France by the IAF.
- It will be one of the largest air exercises between the two strategic partners.
- The exercise will also provide an opportunity to a sizeable number of IAF pilots to have a close look at the Rafale jets being operated by the French Air Force.

- India had signed a government-to-government deal with France in 2016 to buy 36 Rafale fighter jets at a cost of about the Rs 58,000-crore. The first Rafale jet is scheduled to be delivered in September.
- The air exercise will take place nearly two months after Indian and French navies carried out a naval warfare exercise in the Arabian Sea as well as in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa.

4. Workshops on prevention of drug use to be held for students

- Workshops focussing on prevention of drug use would be conducted for about 8 lakh students around the country with the help of State education boards and NGOs this year.
- Apart from programmes for de-addiction and rehabilitation of those affected by drug abuse, the Ministry's National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (2018-2025) highlights the need for education to prevent use of drugs among children.
- According to the Magnitude of Substance Use in India report submitted by the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences to the Ministry in February this year, 1.3% of children between 10 and 17 years reported current use of alcohol, 0.9% reported use of cannabis, 1.8% reported use of opioid and 1.17% reported use of inhalants.
- It was said that the drug demand reduction programmes would emphasise on not stigmatising addicts, but rather trying to educate people, particularly school and college students.

G. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Encephalitis is caused by a virus infection and is the inflammation of the brain.
2. Meningitis is caused by bacterial infection and is the inflammation of the meninges or tissues that surround the brain.

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:

Encephalitis, caused by a virus infection, is the inflammation of the brain, and meningitis, caused by bacterial infection, is the inflammation of the meninges or tissues that surround the brain or spinal cord. Symptoms of encephalitis include fever, headache, neck pain, drowsiness and nausea. Those with meningitis will have headache, fever, stiff neck, and nausea.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court can issue writs only for the enforcement of fundamental rights.
2. High Court can issue writs for enforcement of fundamental rights along with legal rights.

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. Consider the following statements:

1. Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) consists of securities and other financial assets held by investors in another country.
2. It provides the investor with direct ownership of a company's assets.

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:

Unlike FDI, FPI consists of passive ownership. Investors have no control over ventures or direct ownership of property or a stake in the company.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. The Western Ghats is declared an ecological hotspot.
2. The Western Ghats is a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site.
3. The Western Ghats are older than the Himalayas.

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

a. 1 only
b. 1 and 2 only
c. 2 and 3 only
d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: d

Explanation:

The Western Ghats were declared an ecological hotspot in 1988.The Western Ghats was included as a 'World Natural Heritage Site' by UNESCO in 2012. The Western Ghats are older than the Himalayas.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Comment on the influence jet streams on Indian monsoon. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. India's Bay of Bengal outreach is a well-judged attempt to expand regionalism. Critically comment. (15 Marks, 250 Words)