

12 June 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. SC orders release on bail of journalist arrested in U.P.

Context:

The Supreme Court has ordered the immediate release of journalist Prashant Kanojia who was arrested for

allegedly making “objectionable comments” against UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on social media.

Details:

- Underlining that “fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India and in particular Articles 19 and 21... are non-negotiable”, the Supreme Court ordered the immediate release on bail of freelance journalist
- The court said that it had no intention to sit back and watch a citizen deprived of his personal liberty for his social media posts.
- A vacation bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and Ajay Rastogi called Kanojia’s arrest as “excessive” but made clear that its order for his release on bail should not be read as approval of his social media posts.
- Kanojia’s wife subsequently filed a habeas corpus petition, which requires the arrested person to be brought before the court.
- Appearing for UP, Additional Solicitor General said the petitioner should have first approached the High Court for relief instead of coming straight to the Supreme Court with a petition under **Article 32**.
- But the bench did not agree, saying: “As a matter of self-imposed discipline and considering the pressure of mounting cases on this Court, it has become the practice of this Court to ordinarily direct that the High Court first be approached even in cases of violation of fundamental rights. However, Article 32, which is itself a fundamental right, cannot be rendered worthless in a glaring case of deprivation of liberty as in the instant case. We are not inclined to sit back on technical grounds. In exercise of power under **Article 142** of the Constitution of India, this Court can mould the reliefs to do complete justice.”
- The Bench repeatedly expressed its incredulity at the “harshness” with which Mr. Kanojia was dealt with.

2. Centre told to give pay revision benefits to prosecutors

Context:

The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre to give prosecutors all the benefits which have been recommended by the Delhi government regarding revision of their pay scales.

Issue:

- The bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon (since retired) and Justice Brijesh Sethi noted that the orders passed by it on September 3, 2015 and February 1, 2019, in the matter of granting revision of pay scales to the prosecutors as recommended by the Delhi Government have not been implemented yet.
- The court was informed that the committee constituted by the Centre has accepted recommendations of Delhi government regarding certain posts and there are differences on others and some reductions have been recommended by the panel. However, the Centre is yet to take a final decision.
- A contempt petition filed by Delhi Prosecutors Welfare Association has alleged "deliberate and willful disobedience" on the part of the Centre and the city government in complying with the court's 2015 order.
- The court was hearing two PILs seeking upward revision in the pay scales of prosecutors and for equipping them with facilities and infrastructure needed to do their job.
- It had earlier asked how the government lawyers or prosecutors could be expected to perform efficiently if they were not paid properly and on time.
- In 2009, the high court had initiated a petition on its own on the poor condition of the prosecutors here.
- The court was also informed that one of the causes for delay in disposal of the cases with regard to

under trials was the shortage of prosecutors as well as infrastructure facilities and supporting staff for them.

Details:

- The bench said that in view of the categorical direction of the Supreme Court in the Delhi-Centre power tussle, the Union of India has no other option but to accept the recommendations made by the Government of NCT of Delhi in its totality and implement them.
- It pointed out that the Supreme Court had already considered as to who would have authority for dealing with the service conditions and other issues relating to public prosecutors and special public prosecutors in the city.
- The top court had ruled that, “Lieutenant-Governor, while appointing the Special Public Prosecutor, is to act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers”.
- The bench said as far as the service conditions and benefits pertaining to prosecutors are concerned, the Centre has to accept the recommendations made by the Delhi government and the Lieutenant Governor, while appointing the Special Public Prosecutor, is to act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.

Category: HEALTH

1. 28 children die of ‘brain fever’ in Bihar

Context:

At least 28 children have died in the last one month in Muzaffarpur district of north Bihar, allegedly due to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES), which is locally known as Chamki bukhari (brain fever).

Details:

- High temperature during summer, along with humidity more than the normal, is considered to be an ideal situation for the outbreak of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome, say doctors.
- Every year during summer time, especially in the season of luscious fruit litchi, AES outbreak gets reported and takes the lives of children in the district, which is India’s largest litchi cultivation region.
- In 2014, when altogether 90 children died in the district due to suspected AES, a research carried by the Lancet Global Health established the connection between litchi consumption and encephalitis deaths.

Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES):

- AES is characterized as acute-onset of fever and a change in mental status (mental confusion, disorientation, delirium, or coma) and/or new-onset of seizures in a person of any age at any time of the year.
- The disease most commonly affects children and young adults and can lead to considerable morbidity and mortality.
- AES has symptoms of high fever, vomiting, nausea and unconsciousness.
- Viruses are the main causative agents in AES cases, although other sources such as bacteria, fungus, parasites, spirochetes, chemicals, toxins and noninfectious agents have also been reported over the past few decades.
- Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) is the major cause of AES in India (ranging from 5%-35%).
- Herpes simplex virus, Influenza A virus, West Nile virus, Chandipura virus, mumps, measles, dengue, Parvovirus B4, enteroviruses, Epstein-Barr virus and scrub typhus, S.pneumoniae are the

other causes of AES in sporadic and outbreak form in India.

- Nipah virus, Zika virus are also found as causative agents for AES.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. GDP growth overestimated during 2011-17: Arvind Subramanian

Context:

Former Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) Arvind Subramanian has said India's GDP growth in the period 2011-12 to 2016-17 is likely to have been over-estimated, and the tag of fastest-growing major economy may not hold.

Details:

- In a research paper, 'India's GDP Mis-estimation: Likelihood, Magnitudes, Mechanisms, and Implications', published by Harvard University, Mr. Subramanian has argued that GDP growth during that period was actually 4.5% rather than the 7% presented by the official data.
- He attributes the overestimation to a change in methodology for calculating the Gross Domestic Product
- He argued that one of the problems with the new methodology for calculating GDP growth since 2011 was that the growth numbers no longer correlated with other indicators of economic growth such as electricity consumption, two-wheeler sales, airline passenger traffic, index of industrial production, and export figures, to name a few.
- Mr Subramanian also argued that the shift in 2011 to using values rather than volumes meant that price changes, especially in important inputs such as oil, would have started to have a big impact on the final growth number.
- Under the old, establishment-based GDP estimates, price changes mattered less because real growth numbers were largely based on volumes not values.
- Subramanian says, "Under the new system, however, values had to be deflated by prices to get real magnitudes. And this mattered crucially for the manufacturing sector where the often-dramatic changes in oil prices can heavily influence input costs"
- Mr Subramanian's paper also points towards the fact that the way the informal sector in India was measured was using formal sector proxies, which was an increasingly inaccurate approach.
- Responding to Mr Subramanian's paper, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation late on Tuesday evening reiterated its stance that the methodology adopted was in line with international standards as set by the United Nations and was as such robust.

Way forward:

- Subramanian derives several implications from the findings of his paper.
- The first is that growth needed to be restored to high levels.
- The second that the quality and integrity of data in India needs to be improved, something called for by several other economists.
- And the third is that India must restore the reputational damage suffered to data generation in India across the board.
- He also called for the creation of a taskforce to revisit the entire methodology and implementation of GDP estimation.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Gujarat put on high alert as cyclonic storm 'Vayu' inches towards coast

Context:

Cyclonic storm "Vayu" has intensified into a severe cyclonic storm, forcing authorities to put Gujarat on high alert.

Details:

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the speed of "Vayu" had increased to 17 km per hour and was located in the Arabian Sea, about 350 km west-northwest of Goa, 410 km south-southwest of Mumbai and 530 km nearly south of Veraval (Gujarat).
- It is expected to make landfall in Gujarat on 13th of June.
- Cyclone "Vayu" is named by India.

Precautions taken:

- Army, the NDRF, the Coast Guard and other agencies have been roped in for rescue and relief work.
- People living in coastal areas have been shifted to safer locations.
- The National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC), chaired by Cabinet Secretary also met to discuss preparedness.
- The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has deployed 26 teams, comprising about 45 personnel each, and the rescuers are equipped with boats, tree-cutters and telecom equipment.

Category: SECURITY

1. New agency to develop space warfare weapon systems

Context:

To enhance the capabilities of the armed forces to fight wars in space, the government has approved the setting up of a new agency which will develop sophisticated weapon systems and technologies.

Background:

- In March, India had carried out the Anti Satellite Test (ASAT) which demonstrated its capability to shoot down satellites and joined an elite club of four nations with similar capability.
- The test also helped the country develop deterrence capability against adversaries who may want to attack Indian satellites to cripple systems in times of war.

Details:

- The Cabinet Committee on Security headed by the Prime Minister has cleared the setting up of the Defence Space Research Agency (DSRO) which has been entrusted with the task of creating space warfare weapon systems and technologies.
- The agency would be provided with a team of scientists which would be working in close coordination with the tri-services integrated Defence staff officers.
- It would be providing the research and development support to the Defence Space Agency (DSA) which comprises members of the three services.
- The DSA has been created to help the country fight wars in the space

- The government has created agencies for tackling space and cyber warfare along with a Special Operations Division to tackle the need for special operations required to be carried out both inside and outside the country.

D. GS4 Related

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E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. Squandering the gender dividend

Editorial Analysis:

- Experts opine that if labour force survey data are to be believed, rural India is in the midst of a gender revolution in which nearly half the women who were in the workforce in 2004-5 had dropped out in 2017-18.
- It is important to note that the 61st round of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) recorded 48.5% rural women above the age of 15 as being employed either as their major activity or as their subsidiary activity — but this number dropped to 23.7% in the recently released report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).
- An important question arises: Is this part of a massive transformation of rural lifestyles or are our surveys presenting a skewed picture? If this change is real, does it offer a cause for worry?

An Incremental decline:

- It is important to note that the drop in work participation by rural women is not sudden.
- As a matter of fact, the latest data from the PLFS simply continue a trend that was well in place by 2011-12.
- Worker to population ratio (WPR) for rural women aged 15 and above had dropped from 48.5% in 2004-5 to 35.2% in 2011-12, and then to 23.7% in 2017-18.
- In contrast, the WPR for urban women aged 15 and above declined only mildly, changing from 22.7% in 2004-5 to 19.5% in 2011-12, and to 18.2% in 2017-18.
- One can view this drop in the rural female WPR both positively and negatively.
- If rising incomes lead households to decide that women's time is better spent caring for home and children, that is their choice. However, **if women are unable to find work in a crowded labour market, reflecting disguised unemployment, that is a national tragedy.**
- If the WPR is declining due to rising incomes, we would expect it to be located in richer households — households with higher monthly per capita expenditure and among women with higher education. A comparison of rural female WPRs between 2004-5 and 2017-18 does not suggest that the decline is located primarily among the privileged sections of the rural population.

A Look at Specifics:

- Between 2004-5 and 2017-18, women's WPR declined from 30.6% to 16.5% for the poorest expenditure decile, and from 31.8% to 19.7% for the richest expenditure decile.
- More importantly, most of the decline in the WPR has taken place among women with low levels of education. For example, as far as illiterate women are concerned, the WPR fell from 55% to 29.1% while that for women with secondary education fell from 30.5% to 15.6%.

- This broad-based decline with somewhat higher concentration among the least educated and the poorest is consistent with the industries and occupations in which it has occurred.
- Decomposing the 24.8 percentage point decline in women's WPR between 2004-5 and 2011-12, the decline in work on family farms and allied activities contributed the most (14.8 percentage points), followed by casual wage labour (8.9 percentage points) and in work on family enterprises in other industries (2.4 percentage points).
- These were counter-balanced by a 0.7 percentage point increase in regular salaried work and a 0.5 percentage point increase in engagement in public works programmes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).
- Also, most of the decline — 23.1 percentage points out of 24.8 — came from reduced participation in agriculture and allied activities.

The Conundrum for rural women:

- Men's participation in agriculture has also declined.
- Among men aged 15 and above, 56.1% participated in agriculture in 2004-5, while only 39.6% did so in 2017-18.
- However, men were able to pick up work in other industries whereas women reduced their participation in other industries as well as agriculture — resulting in a lower WPR. Therein lies the conundrum for rural women.
- Mechanisation and land fragmentation have reduced agricultural work opportunities for both men and women.
- However, it is important to note that other work opportunities, except for work in public works programmes, are not easily open to women. This challenge is particularly severe for rural women with moderate levels of education.
- A man with class 10 education can be a postal carrier, a truck driver or a mechanic; these opportunities are not open to women. Hence, it is not surprising that education is associated with a lower WPR for women; in 2016-17, 29.1% illiterate women were employed, compared to only 16% women with at least secondary education.
- Another clue to the decline in women's work opportunities rather than women's desire to work is reflected in the fact that women who are counted as being out of labour force are not simply content to be homemakers but often engage in whatever economic activities they find.
- As a matter of fact, women's work and family responsibilities rarely fit in neat compartments but household responsibilities do not prevent women from working.
- Many rural women raise chickens as well as children; husk paddy for sale while daal simmers; and sell vegetables in a market while caring for babies.

Questions on which the NSSO and PLFS survey design relies on:

- The NSSO and PLFS survey design relies on two questions.
- Firstly, interviewers assess the primary activity in which respondents spent a majority of their prior year.
- Then they note down the subsidiary activity in which individuals spent at least 30 days. If individuals are defined as working by either primary or subsidiary criteria, they are counted among workers.
- This is a categorisation that serves well in cases where agriculture is the primary activity and various agriculture-related tasks can be grouped together to comprise the 30-day threshold.
- However, as demand for agricultural work declines and women engage in diverse activities, their work tends to become fragmented.
- For example, a woman who spends 15 days on her own field during the sowing period, 10 days as a construction labourer and 15 days in MGNREGA work should be counted as a worker using the subsidiary status criteria, but since none of the activities exceed the 30 days threshold, it is quite possible that interviewers do not mark her as being employed.
- Further, on-going experimental research at the National Council of Applied Economic Research's

National Data Innovation Centre (NCAER-NDIC) suggests a tremendous undercount of women's work using standard labour force questions, particularly in rural areas.

- This is not to suggest that fixing the problem of undercount in surveys is the solution to declining WPRs. The undercount is a symptom of the unfulfilled demand for work.
- It is important to note that although women try to find whatever work they can, they are unable to gain employment at an intensive level that rises above our labour force survey thresholds. This suggests an enormous untapped pool of female workers that should not be ignored.

Concluding Remarks: The Way Forward

- Establishment of the Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development is a welcome move by the new government.
- However, it is to be hoped that this committee will take the issue of declining female employment as seriously as it does the issue of rising unemployment among the youth.
- It is also important to note that not all policies need to be gender focussed. One of the most powerful ways in which public policies affect rural women's participation in non-agricultural work is via development of transportation infrastructure that allows rural women to seek work as sales clerks, nurses and factory workers in nearby towns.
- In conclusion, if the cabinet committee were to focus on multi-sectoral reforms that have a positive impact on women's work opportunities, the potential gender dividend could be far greater than the much celebrated demographic dividend.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. A welcome verdict

What's in the news?

- In a recent development, a trial court verdict found three men guilty of the horrific gang-rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district last year (2018).
- Experts opine that this must be seen as the victory of justice over communal propaganda.

Editorial Analysis:

- This was a heinous crime against a girl belonging to the nomadic **Bakerwal tribe**.
- As a matter of fact, there were efforts made to derail the investigation and trial by projecting the heinous crime against a girl belonging to the Bakerwal tribe as a plot to implicate Hindus.
- This case was transferred from J&K to Punjab for a fair trial.
- Experts opine that this development is also a triumph for the justice system, as the Pathankot district and sessions court has lived up to the faith reposed in it by the Supreme Court last year (2018).
- The honourable Supreme Court of India had taken note of the hindrances to a fair trial in the jurisdictional court, especially the hostile atmosphere against the prosecution.
- It is important to note that the formation of a group called the **Hindu Ekta Manch** in support of those arrested and the role played by members of the Bharatiya Janata Party, including two Ministers in the then J&K government, had whipped up communal frenzy.

Commendable work done by the J&K Police:

- It is commendable that the Crime Branch of the J&K Police and the prosecutors have brought home the guilt of Sanji Ram, Parvesh Kumar and Deepak Khajuria, who have been sentenced to life for murder and 25 years in prison for gang-rape.
- Further, the role of some police personnel in trying to destroy evidence has also been exposed.

- Sub Inspector Anand Dutta, Special Police Officer Surender Verma and Head Constable Tilak Raj get a five-year term for washing some blood-stained clothes, concealing the victim's necklace and hair band, and misleading the investigating police team about the place of occurrence of the crime.

A Look at Some Specifics:

- The investigation had been fairly quick, and the charge-sheet was prepared in two months.
- The trial lasted a year, and the verdict has been delivered within 17 months of the occurrence.
- Appeals by the convicts are only to be expected, and the Judge Tejwinder Singh's approach and the manner in which he appreciated the evidence would be determined by higher courts.
- Even the prosecution may appeal against the acquittal of one of the accused, whose alibi that he was appearing in an examination in Uttar Pradesh at the time of the incident has been accepted.
- **Some may question the verdict for not imposing the death penalty in what was presented as a crime aimed at dislodging the Bakerwal community from the territory.**
- However, experts opine that this is a needless and unnecessary objection, as what matters is that criminal liability has been established and a life term, which ought to mean the remainder of the convicts' natural life, has been awarded.

Concluding Remarks:

- The larger takeaway is that efficient investigation, diligent prosecution and judicial sensitivity can ensure speedy justice in all cases, and more particularly in cases of ghastly crimes that cause widespread revulsion and outrage.
- It is indeed a judgment that will inspire confidence in the justice system.

2. Thin-skinned masters

What's in the news?

- In a recent development, the honourable Supreme Court of India gave an order granting immediate bail to journalist Prashant Kanojia, who was arrested by the Uttar Pradesh Police for sharing on Twitter a video pertaining to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Editorial Analysis:

- Experts opine that this development was not unexpected.
- It was obvious that the arrest was arbitrary, unwarranted and without any basis in law.
- As a matter of fact, the State government's attempt to justify its action smacked of perversity and malice.
- The vacation Bench, comprising Justices Indira Banerjee and Ajay Rastogi, made the right call in ignoring technical objections by counsel for the State government that the apex court should not intervene as only a regular bail petition could secure relief to someone remanded by the jurisdictional magistrate.
- Importantly, the Bench did not consider the controversial tweets as sufficient grounds for abridging personal liberty.
- Further, in observing that the order of release would not amount to an endorsement of Mr. Kanojia's tweets, the court was only making a minor concession to the police claim that he was making inflammatory comments on social media.

A matter of concern:

- It is difficult to believe that at a time when social media networks are full of rampant abuse and distasteful material, the police can be allowed to choose one or two that appear to target political

functionaries and incarcerate those airing such views. Thus, disregarding well-established norms for arrest and remand in the process.

- In Mr. Kanojia's case, defamation, which is a non-cognisable offence, and Section 66 of the Information Technology Act were cited initially.
- The latter (Section 66 of the Information Technology Act) relates to damaging computer systems, and is inapplicable to a social media post. It was quite clear that there was no case for remand.
- There was a more flagrant illegality when Mr. Kanojia was taken out of Delhi without a transit remand from a local magistrate, mandatory when an accused is taken from one State to another.
- Faced with criticism, the U.P. Police added a section dealing with the offence of causing public mischief and disturbing public tranquillity, besides Section 67 of the IT Act, which relates to sharing of obscene or prurient material, with the motive of obtaining a remand order.
- As a matter of fact, a few other journalists have been arrested for discussing the content of the video clip, in which a woman is seen expressing her wish to marry the Chief Minister.
- However, what is disquieting, but unsurprising, is the perfunctory attitude of civil servants towards the personal liberty of citizens.

Concluding Remarks:

- It is one thing to pursue violations through legal action, but quite another to lock up people for posts they deem offensive to their political masters and conjure up justifications for their arrest.
- It is time magistrates who pass mechanical orders without application of mind and officers who carry out illegal instructions from the political leadership are made to face exemplary disciplinary action.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The importance of being neighbourly

Editorial Analysis:

- Experts opine that the Modi government has acted swiftly to pursue its foreign policy priorities.
- As a matter of fact, focused on strengthening India's place in the world, the Modi government has begun by shoring up the country's position in the immediate neighbourhood.
- This message emanated from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's trip to Bhutan.

Ties with South Asian neighbours:

- It is important to note that ties with South Asian neighbours were a priority even earlier, as seen in the invitation extended to SAARC leaders to attend Mr. Modi's swearing-in ceremony in 2014.
- However, after that there were some difficulties. India's relations with Pakistan soured, while China continued to expand its footprint in Nepal, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.
- However, **India's cooperation with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Myanmar showed tangible progress.**
- As a result, **attention was consciously shifted from SAARC to BIMSTEC, thereby giving an eastward shift to India's neighbourhood policy.**
- As a matter of fact, in 2016, BIMSTEC leaders were invited to the BRICS summit in Goa. BIMSTEC leaders also attended Mr. Modi's swearing-in ceremony in the month of May, 2019.

A Look at recent high-level visits:

(a) India- Bhutan:

- In a period of a week after the swearing in ceremony of PM Modi, Mr. Jaishankar was in Bhutan holding comprehensive discussions with his counterpart and the Prime Minister.
- He also met King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.
- **The visit was perhaps meant to assess the current thinking in Thimphu about Chinese overtures to open diplomatic relations and the border issue before Mr. Modi's meeting with President Xi Jinping at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit.**

(b) India- Maldives:

- Experts opine that Mr. Modi's visit to the Maldives was astutely designed to showcase that a dramatic turnaround has taken place in India-Maldives relations.
- Former Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen gave a blatantly pro-China tilt to his foreign policy. The result was that Mr. Modi had to wait until Mr. Yameen's ouster before he could visit the Maldives in November 2018.
- Working in concert, the two governments have succeeded in deepening mutual understanding.
- While visiting India in December 2018, President Ibrahim Solih was still somewhat cautious as he spoke of balancing friends, old and new.
- But by the time Mr. Modi landed in the Maldives recently, Male had become more receptive.
- The President and the Majlis speaker reiterated the Maldives' commitment to its 'India first policy'. **The Majlis invited Mr. Modi to deliver a special address. The President conferred the nation's highest honour on Mr. Modi.**
- This visit demonstrated how India has begun to implement recent decisions to extend ample financial assistance, move ahead with projects to be funded through a new \$800 million Line of Credit, and focus on people-centric welfare measures in accordance with the priorities of the Maldives.
- This is in sharp contrast with China's approach of extending massive loans for mega infrastructure projects that end up in debt traps.
- Experts opine that Mr. Modi hit all the right buttons, highlighting India's resolve to assist the Maldives in every possible manner. He identified countering terrorism, addressing climate change, and promoting an integrated and balanced Indo-Pacific as the key challenges for the region.

(c) India- Sri Lanka:

- Modi's recent visit to Colombo was prudent.
- It conveyed India's solidarity with Sri Lanka as the latter struggles to overcome the overwhelming effects of the Easter Sunday attacks.
- Modi held discussions with all the main actors: the President, the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, and Tamil leaders.
- President Maithripala Sirisena reflected the nation's view as he publicly thanked Mr. Modi for a productive visit.

Four subtle elements in India's Neighbourhood First Policy:

- New Delhi has clearly indicated that the neighbourhood will continue to be a priority, but four subtle elements are being introduced in the policy matrix.
- Firstly, without always insisting on reciprocity, **India may get into a proactive mode and adopt measures "to incentivise cooperation in the neighbourhood"**, as Mr. Jaishankar put it.
- Secondly, India will prefer to work on quick impact projects that bring socio-economic benefits to the people.
- Thirdly, recognising its "limited capabilities", as Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale disclosed, New Delhi would have no objection in forging a trilateral development partnership, involving India and Japan in a neighbouring country.
- Fourthly, SAARC's drawbacks have caused India's conscious shift to BIMSTEC. Mr. Jaishankar

explained that India sees a mix of “energy, mindset and possibility” in the latter grouping.

Concluding Remarks:

- The government is moving in the right direction. It could also consider bringing the Maldives into BIMSTEC, at least as an observer.
- Finally, Mr. Jaishankar should visit other neighbours soon, particularly Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. Saving childhoods

Editorial Analysis:

- On World Day Against Child Labour (June 12) in 2017, India ratified two core conventions of the International Labour Organization on child labour.
- Experts opine that India now has to double its efforts to ensure that the benefit of those conventions reach the most vulnerable children.

A Look at Specifics:

- Although comprehensive data on child labour are not available for India, as per the 2011 Census, in the age group 5-14 years, 10.1 million of 259.6 million constituted working children.
- Further, even though there was a decline in the number of working children to 3.9% in 2011 from 5% in 2001, the decline rate is grossly insufficient to meet target 8.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is to end child labour in all forms by 2025.
- India therefore needs to embark on new and innovative approaches in its fight against child labour.
- It is important to note that **the ratification of the core conventions on child labour gives rise to a range of priorities such as strengthening policy and legislative enforcement, and building the capacities of government, workers’ and employers’ organisations as well as other partners at national, State and community levels.**
- It is worthy of mention that India had taken important steps to eliminate child labour even before ratifying these conventions.
- In addition, there are a few more important steps that the country can take in this direction.

The Way Forward:

- India should invest in enhancing its body of knowledge on child labour, emphasising quantitative information.
- While there are many common factors across the spectrum, each sector and each demographical segment will have its own set of factors and drivers that push children into the labour market. These have to be addressed.
- It is important to note that such factors and drivers can only be identified and analysed through proper research, surveys and assessments.
- Eliminating child labour is firmly placed within Goal 8 of the SDGs. A stronger nexus between the discourse on SDGs and the discourse on eliminating child labour can take the advantage of complementarities and synergies of a wide range of actors engaged in both areas of work.
- Further, the growing interest of the private sector is a great opportunity that has to be further utilised, particularly to leverage key influencers in domestic and multinational supply chains.
- It is also a matter of competitive advantage for multi-nationals to ensure that child labour is effectively eliminated in their supply chains.
- A sector-wide culture of child labour-free businesses has to be nurtured.

- Lastly, as the world of work is transforming and new actors are emerging, one cannot underestimate the importance of creating a sound and vibrant platform to bring together these actors.
- The fight against child labour is not just the responsibility of one, it is the responsibility of all.

F. Tidbits

1. Kailash Mansarovar Yatra commences

- External Affairs Minister announced the start of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra for the Lipulekh route.
- He asserted that the pilgrimage was an “important step” towards strengthening the friendship between India and China.
- UNESCO has included the Indian part of Kailash Mansarovar in its tentative list of world heritage sites.
- In the proposal, Kailash Mansarovar is in the mixed category — both as a natural as well as a cultural heritage.
- Covering an area of 6,836 sq km within India, the area is flanked in the east by Nepal and bordered by China on the north.
- The Indian site is part of the larger landscape of 31,000 sq km referred to as the 'Kailash Sacred Landscape' constituting the Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar in the remote south-western portion of the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and adjacent districts in the far-western region of Nepal.
- The Indian portion of the landscape in the State of Uttarakhand comprises four major watersheds viz. the Panar-Saryu, the Saryu-Ramganga, the Gori-Kali and the Dhauli-Kali.
- "I would also like to recognise the support extended by the government of the People's Republic Of China in organising of the yatra, which is an important step towards promoting people-to-people exchanges and strengthening friendship and understanding between the two countries," the minister said.

2. Botswana decriminalises gay sex in landmark case

- Botswana has decriminalised gay sex in a landmark case for Africa.
- The High Court rejected as unconstitutional sections of the penal code punishing same-sex relations with up to seven years in prison.
- The ruling came less than a month after Kenya's High Court had upheld similar sections of its own penal code in another closely watched case.
- Botswana in recent years has taken other steps toward protecting LGBTQ rights. The High Court in 2017 ruled that the government should issue a transgender man documentation reflecting his identity.
- “Botswana is the ninth country in the past five years to have decriminalized consensual same-sex relationships,” U.N. spokesman said.
- “Consensual same-sex sexual relationships remain criminalized in at least 67 countries and territories worldwide,” he said.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Pro tem Speaker

- Pro-tem Speaker is the temporary speaker who presides over the first meeting after the election.
- The process by which the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker are selected by members of the Parliament is held under the Pro-tem Speaker.
- The president/governor will administer the oath of the office for the pro-tem speaker.

- Duty of a Pro-tem Speaker is to administer the oath of office to new members of the house. He also enables the House to elect the new Speaker.
- The pro-tem speaker also has same powers, privileges as that of the Speaker.
- Once the new Speaker is elected, the office of the pro tem speaker ceases to exist. He also administers the floor test.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1) Consider the following statements:

1. Narrow money is a category of money supply that includes all physical money.
2. It only contains the most liquid financial 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: c

Explanation:

Narrow money is a category of money supply that includes all physical money such as coins and currency, demand deposits and other liquid assets held by the central bank. This category of money is considered to be the most readily available for transactions and commerce. The narrow money supply only contains the most liquid financial assets.

Q2) Which of the following countries border Sudan?

1. Eritrea
2. Ethiopia
3. Libya
4. Somalia

Choose the correct option.

- a. 1,2,3,4
- b. 1,2,3
- c. 1,2,4
- d. 2,3,4

Answer: b

Explanation:

Sudan is bordered by Egypt to the north, the Red Sea to the northeast, Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east, South Sudan to the south, the Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west and Libya to the northwest.

Q3) Consider the following statements with respect to Polar Vortex:

1. It is a large area of low pressure and cold air surrounding the Earth's North and South Pole.
2. There is one polar vortex in each hemisphere.

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:

There are not one but two polar vortexes in each hemisphere. One exists in the lowest layer of the atmosphere, the troposphere. The tropospheric polar vortex is the one that affects our weather. The other exists in the second-lowest, called the stratosphere. It is much more compact than the one in the troposphere.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Relations with our neighbours, irrespective of how we define our neighbourhood, will always be complex and need deft political management. Comment on India's foreign policy challenges. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. There is an urgent need for reforms to increase farm productivity and make Indian agriculture more competitive, enabling higher exports. Discuss with the initiatives taken by government so far. (15 Marks, 250 Words)