

# 24 June 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS1 Related

### Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

#### 1. MEA rejects U.S. report on state of religious freedom in India

##### Context:

The Ministry of External Affairs has rejected the U.S state department's annual report on religious freedom pointing to India's failure to protect minority communities stating that there is locus standi for a 'foreign entity/government' to pronounce on the rights of the citizens of India.

##### Details:

- The report pointed out that though India's Constitution guarantees the right to religious freedom, it has come under attack in recent years with the growth of exclusionary extremist narratives".
- In its annual report on religious freedom, the U.S has made references to multiple instances of the government at the Centre and various State governments of the Bharatiya Janata Party having taken steps that hurt the Muslim community.
- It has highlighted the growing instances of the murders and lynching by cow vigilante groups.

- Several attempts to undermine minority institutions and change the names of cities also find mention in the report, terming it the pluralistic nature of India.

### India's response:

- The centre has questioned the locus standi of a foreign agency to comment on Indian citizens' rights.
- It was further added that it is widely acknowledged that India is a vibrant democracy where the Constitution provides protection of religious freedom, and where democratic governance and rule of law further promote and protect the fundamental rights.
- The Ministry of External Affairs has refused to accept the report saying that India is proud of its secular credentials and is committed to tolerance and inclusion.

## B. GS2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Plea in SC seeks protection for non-Nagas in Dimapur

##### Context:

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition has been filed challenging certain sections of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 which gives unbridled power to a State to prescribe Inner Line Permit (ILP).

##### What is Inner Line Permit?

- ILP is an official travel document issued by the Government of India to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period.
- It is obligatory for Indian citizens from outside those states to obtain a permit for entering into the protected state.
- The document is an effort by the government to regulate movement to certain areas located near the international border of India.
- The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 gives powers to a State to prescribe ILP.
- Section 2 of the Regulation empowers a State government to prescribe 'Inner Line' to prohibit citizens of India or any class of such citizens going beyond the prescribed line without a pass.

##### Background:

- The regulation that dates back to the colonial-era regulation was passed by the British government to create monopoly in business.
- However, it now continues to be used in India, officially to protect tribal cultures in northeastern India.
- ILP is mandatory for Indian citizens of other states entering Nagaland through any of the check gates across the interstate borders.
- Dimapur - Nagaland's largest city and port head, was the only place in the state which did not require an ILP.
- The State Cabinet took a decision to extend the operation of the 1873 Regulation in Dimapur, and at present, it is also included for ILP.
- When Nagaland acquired statehood, Dimapur, being a part of Assam, was legally and constitutionally excluded from the Naga Hills and from Sixth Schedule.
- However, there is not much clarity as to how it was again included in the State of Nagaland after exclusion from Sixth Schedule.

**Details:**

- The petition has been filed in the Supreme Court to provide directions to the central government and the Government of Nagaland to take appropriate steps for the protection of life and liberty, properties and other fundamental rights of non-Nagas living in the commercial hub of Dimapur.
- The inclusion of Dimapur for ILP has raised several concerns.
- Gujaratis, Rajasthanis, Biharis, Jharkhandis, Bengalis, Gorkhas, Bodos, Dimasas, Karbis, Garos, etc. have been regarded as outsiders by the government of Nagaland. This accounts to racial discrimination.
- The non-Nagas with landed properties, properties with commercial shops, godowns, those staying as tenants, and many locals who earn their income by means of collecting house rent from tenants would be adversely affected.
- The petition argues that Dimapur cannot be converted exclusively for hills tribes on racial ground when it was never an integral part of the Naga hills.
- It is also argued that the imposing ILP would create a monopoly of trade, commerce, business only for new settlers who have come down to Dimapur from the Naga Hills.
- It would bar perpetual residency and right to free moment to others.
- Concerns are raised about such concept being adopted by all the North Eastern states which would dilute the citizenship and restrict Fundamental Rights.

## 2. CJI writes to PM for removal of Allahabad High Court judge

**Context:**

The Chief Justice of India has written a letter to the Prime Minister to initiate a motion for the removal of S.N. Shukla, the Judge of Allahabad High Court, months after he was found guilty of misconduct.

**Background:**

- Justice Shukla, who was heading a division bench in the high court, had allegedly defied the categorical restraint orders passed by a CJI-led bench of the apex court last year to permit private colleges to admit students for the 2017-18 academic session
- In January 2018, a three-judge committee, concluded there was sufficient substance in the allegations in the complaint against Justice Shukla.
- They had asserted that the aberrations were serious enough to call for initiation of proceedings for his removal.
- Following the committee's report, the then Chief Justice of India, Dipak Misra, in accordance with the relevant in-house procedure, advised Justice Shukla either to resign or seek voluntary retirement.
- Following Justice Shukla's refusal to do, the Chief Justice of Allahabad was asked to withdraw all judicial work from him with immediate effect.
- Justice Shukla then, went on a long leave.
- In March 2019, Justice Shukla addressed a letter to CJI Gogoi to allow him to discharge his judicial duties in the High court.
- Considering the findings of the three- judge committee proving Mr. Shukla guilty of misconduct, CJI has written to the PM to initiate a motion for removal of the high court judge.

**Details:**

- When the CJI writes to the President and the PM for removal of a High Court judge, the Rajya Sabha Chairperson appoints a three-judge inquiry committee in consultation with the CJI to look into the allegations.
- The committee appointed by the Rajya Sabha chairperson would examine the evidence and records, and opine if the same formed the basis for whether or not removal motion be debated in the Upper

House.

- After concluding its investigation, the Committee will submit its report to the Speaker or Chairman, who will then lay the report before the relevant House of Parliament.
- If the report records a finding of misbehaviour or incapacity, the motion for removal will be taken up for consideration and debated.
- The motion for removal is required to be adopted by each House of Parliament by: (i) a majority of the total membership of that House; and (ii) a majority of at least two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting.
- If the motion is adopted by this majority, the motion will be sent to the other House for adoption.
- Once the motion is adopted in both Houses, it is sent to the President, who will issue an order for the removal of the judge.

### 3. Cabinet nod for wage code Bill likely

#### Context:

The labour ministry is in the process of seeking the Union Cabinet's approval on amended wage code bill after its vetting by the parliamentary standing committee, so that it could be pushed for passage in Parliament.

#### Details:

- In line with the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour, the ministry has taken steps for formulating four labour codes on wages; industrial relations; social security and welfare; and occupational safety, health and working conditions by amalgamating, simplifying, and rationalising the relevant provisions of the existing central labour laws.
- The Code on Wages Bill 2017 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 10, 2017 and thereafter referred to the standing committee.
- The Bill lapsed after the 16th Lok Sabha was dissolved. Now, Cabinet's nod is necessary for introducing it in either House of Parliament.

#### Details:

- The wage code Bill is one of four codes envisaged by the government which would subsume 44 labour laws with certain amendments.
- The four codes will deal with wages, social security, industrial safety and welfare, and industrial relations.
- The Code on Wages will replace the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, Minimum Wages Act, 1948, Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- The bill provides that the central government will fix minimum wages for certain sectors, including railways and mines, while the states would be free to set minimum wages for other category of employments.
- The code also provides for setting of a national minimum wage.
- The central government can set separate minimum wages for different regions or states.
- The draft law also says that the minimum wages would be revised every five years.

## C. GS3 Related

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. Interface between taxpayer, tax collector must reduce

**Context:**

The Union Budget for 2019 will be presented shortly, the article talks about a few glitches that need attention.

**Details:**

- In the backdrop of the elections, Indian economy took some beating with sluggish growth rates and disconcerting unemployment numbers.
- The economists and statisticians also jumped in the fray, questioning the credibility of these numbers.
- It is true that none of the Union Budgets have escaped criticisms. There are too many stakeholders and most of the suggestions and representations are by and large self-centric.
- Of late, the trend is slowing reversing. It is now nation first, stakeholders second and owners third.
- Another redeeming feature is that the mystery of secrecy in budget-making is no longer pronounced because most policy decisions are now taken outside the budget-making process.
- Tax revenues have shown considerable increase over time.
- While raising resources is an important ingredient of Budget making, the shift is now clearly towards effective end-use of resources.
- Over the last two decades, the developments in infrastructure have provided the confidence to taxpayers that the money contributed to the exchequer is put to productive use.

**Way forward:**

- The first stage of filing returns and refunds using technology is working satisfactorily. There are some glitches on the ground that need to be sorted out.
- The next stage is reducing the interface between the taxpayer and the tax gatherer.
- Certainty in implementation is more important, combined with stability in tax rates.
- A massive clean-up is required to settle existing cases locked up in litigation and collecting arrears.
  - The success rate of the tax department at the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) to Supreme Court level hovers at a mere 13-27% in direct tax matters and at 11-12% in indirect tax matters.
  - In fact, 88% of the litigation at ITAT and the SC is initiated by the department.
  - International taxation is still saddled with a host of interpretation issues and unnecessary litigation.
  - The advance ruling mechanisms have helped partially, but have still not solved the problem of uncertainty.
- High value domestic transactions/restructuring exercises need clarity and certainty in tax treatment.
- A dedicated cell for advance-cum-settlement rulings in major cities catering to such complex cases with a time-bound framework will help in concluding such transactions without further litigation.

**Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****1. Plants may be spreading superbugs to humans****Context:**

A study has found that Plant-based foods could transmit antibiotic resistance to the microbes living in the gut.

**Issue:**

- Antibiotic-resistance is a threat to global public health and is an economic burden.
- In order to prevent Antibiotic-resistance infection, it is critical to understand how these bacteria are transmitted.
- Recent researches have shown plant-foods serve as vehicles for transmitting antibiotic resistance to the gut microbiome.

**Details:**

- Spread of antibiotic-resistant superbugs from plants to humans is different from outbreaks of diarrheal illnesses caused immediately after eating contaminated vegetables.
- Superbugs can colonise the intestines for long periods of time, and while escaping, cause an infection.
- Such superbugs are asymptomatic.
- "Superbugs" is a term used to describe strains of bacteria that are resistant to the majority of antibiotics commonly used today.

**Conclusion:**

There is an urgent need for tackling food-borne antibiotic-resistance from a food chain perspective including plant-foods and meat.

## 2. Scientists decode genome of 'miracle plant'

**Context:**

The genetic make-up of Arogyapacha (*Trichopus zeylanicus*) has been decoded by the Scientists from the University of Kerala.

**Arogyapacha:**

- Arogyapacha is a highly potent medicinal plant endemic to the Agasthya hills.
- Also termed the 'miracle plant' is known for its traditional use by the Kani tribal community to combat fatigue.
- It is known to have numerous pharmacological properties.
- The plant is anti-oxidant, aphrodisiac, anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory, anti-tumour, anti-ulcer, anti-hyperlipidemic, hepatoprotective and anti-diabetic.

**Details:**

- The lack of a reference genome hindered extensive research on Arogyapacha. This prompted the researchers to sequence the whole genome.
- This is the first report of draft genome sequencing of a plant species to be brought out by the University of Kerala.
- The genome and annotation data will be a valuable resource to expedite research on Arogyapacha, particularly its secondary metabolism, genetic breeding, and comparative studies.

## D. GS4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

## Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### 1. Reimagining the NITI Aayog

The editorial talks about India's fiscal federalism and proposes redesigning it around its four pillars.

#### Background:

- India's Constitution-makers thought of India as a union of States with a centripetal bias, meaning that the union is stronger than the states.
- The idea was to preserve the unity and integrity of a newly fledged nation.
- Since then, the Indian economy, polity, demography and society have undergone many changes. The new aspirational India is now firmly on a growth track.

#### Fiscal imbalances:

- Federations face vertical and horizontal imbalances.
- A vertical imbalance occurs because the tax systems are designed to yield much greater tax revenues to the Central government in comparison with the State governments; while the Constitution mandates relatively greater responsibilities to the State governments.
- The horizontal imbalances arise because of differing levels of achievements by the States owing to differential growth rates and their developmental status in terms of the state of social or infrastructure capital in the state.
  - It involves two types of imbalances.
  - Type I is to do with the adequate provision of basic public goods and services.
  - Type II, is due to growth accelerating infrastructure or the transformational capital deficits.
  - Type II imbalances are known to be historically conditioned or path dependent.

#### Details:

##### The First Pillar:

- Traditionally, Finance Commissions have dealt with fiscal imbalances in India in a stellar manner, and must continue to be the first pillar of the new fiscal federal structure of India.

##### The Second Pillar:

- Removing both the types of horizontal imbalances clearly comprises two distinct policy goals and calls for two different policy instruments.
- It is here that NITI Aayog 2.0 must create a niche, assume the role of another policy instrument and become the second pillar of the new fiscal federal structure.
- In the past, the Planning Commission used to give grants to the States as conditional transfers using the Gadgil-Mukherjee formula. Now there is a vacuum especially as the NITI Aayog is primarily a think tank with no resources to dispense. This renders it toothless to undertake a transformational intervention.
- It can be argued that the Finance Ministry is the other alternative to deliver the goods in this regard but it is ill-suited to do this; its primary duty is to concern itself with the country's macro-economic stability and the proper functioning of the financial system rather than be an instrument of growth at the sub-national level.
- It is best that the Union Finance Commission be confined to focussing on the removal of the horizontal imbalance across States of the Type I: i.e. the basic public goods imbalance.
- And to tackle the horizontal imbalance of the Type II the NITI Aayog is the most appropriate

institution.

- NITI Aayog 2.0 must be allocated significant resources to promote accelerated growth in States that are lagging, and overcome their historically conditioned infrastructure deficit, thus reducing the developmental imbalance.
- NITI Aayog 2.0 should also be mandated to create an independent evaluation office which will monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the utilisation of such grants.
- It must be also accorded a place at the high table of decision-making as it will need to objectively buy-in the cooperation of the richer States as their resources are transferred to the poorer ones.

### **The Third Pillar:**

- The same perspective will have to be translated below the States to the third tier of government.
- This is crucial because intra-State regional imbalances are likely to be of even greater importance than inter-State ones.
- Decentralisation, in letter and spirit, has to be the third pillar of the new fiscal federal architecture.
- For this, the missing local public finance must be birthed.
- One of the ways for this is through the creation of an urban local body/panchayati raj institutions consolidated fund.
- This would mean that the Constitution will need to be amended to ensure that relevant monies directly flow into this consolidated fund of the third tier.
- Through such constitutional amendments, the Centre and States should contribute an equal proportion of their CGST and SGST collections to the consolidated fund of the third tier.
- Further, the State Finance Commissions should be accorded the same status as the Finance Commission.
- The 3Fs of democratic decentralisation - funds, functions and functionaries must be vigorously implemented.

### **The Fourth Pillar:**

- The fourth pillar and in a sense what is central and binding is the model GST.
- The GST in its present form, it is far from flawless, needs further simplification and extended coverage.
- The goal of single rate GST with suitable surcharges on “sin goods,” zero rating of exports and reforming the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) and the e-way bill must be achieved quickly.
- The GST Council should adopt transparency in its working, and create its own secretariat with independent experts also as its staff. This will enable it to undertake further reforms in an informed and transparent manner.

These four pillars with the GST as an enduring glue holding the pillars together would create the new fiscal federal architecture and strengthen India’s unique cooperative federalism.

## **2. Lacklustre meet – On GST Council’s meeting**

### **Context:**

The GST council’s meeting was held under Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The focus of the first GSTC meeting under the new government indicates that the centre is keen to iron out gaps in GST implementation, while curbing tax evasion.

### **Details:**

- First GST Council meet under new govt. focuses on checking profiteering. Despite demands of tax



- cuts from the industry, the Council focused on anti-evasion measures and simplification of rules.
- There were anticipations about the council considering a significant cut in tax rates across the board in order to help spur consumer demand that has been sagging.
  - However, the meeting saw just a few minor changes to the existing structure and procedures under the GST.
  - It seems as though the government was worried about the revenue implications of any significant across-the-board tax cut.
  - The meeting ended with some changes in procedure that is expected to tackle tax evasion and make GST filing easier.
    1. Aadhaar has been approved as sufficient proof to obtain GST registration.
    2. The tenure of the National Anti-Profiteering Authority has been extended by two years, till November 2021. This decision sends out a signal that it could become a permanent feature under GST.
    3. The anti-profiteering clause assumes that government action is absolutely necessary in order to pass on the benefit of tax cuts to consumers, or else tax cuts may simply end up adding to the profits of businesses.
    4. The council increased the quantum of penalty that could be imposed by the authority on profiteering companies, from the current maximum of Rs. 25,000 to an additional 10% of the profited amount. This does not send a promising message to the business community.
    5. Deadline for filing returns has been extended by two months to August- end.
  - Now that the Council has approved the extension of the NAA by two years, one would expect the government to define the rules as to what constitutes profiteering. This is imperative to reduce potential interpretational disputes.

## Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. Walking a diplomatic tightrope – On India - U.S.A bilateral relations

#### Context:

US Secretary Of State Mike Pompeo to visit India this month to meet his Indian counterpart, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. The onus of managing a bilateral relationship that they both know is critical, without appearing to be undermining the nationalist, cultural and economic agendas of their leaders, which mirror each other, and hence create a situation of likes repelling each other lies on both the parties.

#### Details:

- A general presumption informing scholarship on international relations is that there is a non-negotiable and unchanging precept of national interest that determines the conduct of nations.
- Modi and Mr. Trump are two leaders who are rewriting the notion of national interest itself.
- For instance, secularism was considered to be India's national interest and soft power until recently and immigration and trade were considered to be in America's national interest.
- Trump and Mr. Modi are guided by nationalisms that have cultural and economic components. In both, their views converge in some aspects and conflict in some others.
  - Ex: on the cultural front, they could cooperate on global Islamism. But the growing presence of Indians in America is a source of conflict.
  - The sustained squeeze on Indian guest workers entering the U.S., particularly through the H-1B visa programme, is a case in point.

#### Challenges:

- India needs Investment, technology, arms, but does not want finished products (other than arms) or

foreign ideas — Christianity, an open global market, the right to self-determination, human rights, Western strands of democracy coming through missionaries, international bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

- This has been expressed through higher tariffs on imports and restrictions on global NGOs.
- This list does not entirely correspond to what Mr. Trump wants to sell — he wants to sell only finished products at lower tariffs, and keep technology and capital within the borders of America protected.
- Trump's approach to international ties gives precedence for commerce over the strategic, and workers over corporations.
- Multinational corporations wanted cheap manufacturing in China and Southeast Asia and U.S. policy enabled that pursuit.
  - Corporations wanted cheap labour from India by outsourcing work and importing workers into the U.S.
  - But Mr. Trump does not want American work coming to India, or Indian workers going to America; Mr. Modi wants both.
- When Mr. Trump sees India and China as two similar countries that are taking advantage of America with protectionism, weak intellectual property protection, and higher emissions under the climate treaty, the strategic reason for India-U.S. alignment, which is the menacing rise of China, gets weakened.
- One war that Mr. Trump wants to end (in Afghanistan) and another war that he appears to be itching to begin (with Iran) have major implications for India and its ties with the U.S. India wants America's continued engagement in Afghanistan and peace with Iran.

### **Conclusion:**

Over the last two years, there has been steady progress in the U.S.-India relationship. Strategically, both sides have seen the other as playing a crucial role in their Asia strategies—for the U.S., its Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy; for India, its Act East policy. This has paved the way for deeper diplomatic, defense, and security cooperation. However, even as the relationship has progressed steadily on many fronts, a number of problems have arisen. Both Mr. Mi8ke and Mr. Jaishankar have the task of navigating a bumpy ride.

## **F. Tidbits**

### **1. 7-year jail for killing mongoose, birds**

- A court in western Assam's Bodoland Territorial Council has set a precedent by wielding an earlier unused law related to wildlife crime.
- It has handed out the maximum punishment to five poachers for killing birds and lesser animals such as mongoose.
- The five persons have been sentenced for poaching deer, mongoose, hare and birds inside the Manas National Park.
- Assam Amendment of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 was referred to while pronouncing the judgments.
- It warrants at least seven years in prison, extendable to 10 years, and a minimum fine of ₹ 50,000.

## **G. Prelims Facts**

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Pichwai:

1. It is a folk dance form.
2. It is widely practiced in the state of Rajasthan.

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

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

Pichhwai are traditional Rajasthani Art (scroll paintings) which portray Lord Krishna. Pichwai paintings have their roots in Nathdwara Rajasthan.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to MANAV: Human Atlas initiative:

1. Project aims to create an atlas, exclusively of the tribes in India.
2. It was launched by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

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 MANAV Project aims to create an open and interactive atlas of human biology, compiling, curating and synthesizing data at the molecular, cellular, tissue and organismic level from scientific literature and public databases. It is an initiative towards improving knowledge on human physiology. The programme will involve gaining better biological insights through physiological and molecular mapping, develop disease models through predictive computing and have a holistic analysis and drug discovery. It was launched by Department of Biotechnology (DBT), the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Black Soil is rich in Nitrogen, Phosphorus.
2. It has high water retaining capacity.

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:**

Black Soils are poor in nitrogen, phosphates, and humus. These are clayey soils with a high moisture retaining capacity. The soils swell in the rainy season making it difficult to work on.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss why Coastal India is susceptible to tropical cyclones. Comment on the benefits they bring with them. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. Discuss the role of 'Digital India' programme in improving agricultural productivity and doubling farmers' income. (10 Marks, 150 Words)