

# 26 June 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## B. GS2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Two AAP rebel MLAs get a week to reply to charges of defection

#### Context:

Facing disqualification under the anti-defection law, Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) rebel MLAs, were given a week's time by the Delhi Assembly Speaker to submit their replies over joining the BJP.

### **Anti-defection law:**

- The Anti-defection law was passed by parliament in 1985 and reinforced in 2002.
- The 52nd Amendment to the Constitution included the 10th Schedule which set out the procedure by which legislators may be disqualified, popularly known as the Anti-defection law.
- The law aims at preventing politicians from frequently shuffling between political parties.
- The law disallows MPs/ MLAs to switch parties after elections.
- Speaker/ chairman of the house is the authority to decide on defection cases.

### **Legislators may be disqualified on following grounds:**

- A Member of Parliament or State Legislature is deemed to have defected if he/she either voluntarily resigned from his/her party or disobeys the directives of the party leadership on a vote.
- When a member abstains vote in the House contrary to any direction of such party.
- If the independent members join a political party.
- Nominated members should choose to join a party within six months. After 6 months, they are treated as an independent member or a party member.

### **Exceptions under the law:**

- Under the circumstance where  $\frac{2}{3}^{\text{rd}}$  of the legislators of a party decide to merge into another party, neither the members who decide to merge, nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification.
- A split in a political party won't be considered a defection if a complete political party merges with another political party.
- Any person elected as speaker or chairman could resign from his party, and rejoin the party if he demitted that post.
- The law initially permitted splitting of parties, but that has now been outlawed.

## **2. Disability pension will now be taxed**

### **Context:**

As per the notification issued by the Finance Ministry, disability pension for military personnel who retired normally from service and not invalidated will now be taxed.

### **Details:**

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said that “such tax exemption will be available only to armed forces personnel who have been invalidated from service on account of bodily disability attributable to or aggravated by such service and not to personnel who have been retired on superannuation or otherwise.”
- The notification, is silent on the date from which the notification will be effective.
- It is not mentioned if it would be prospective or retrospective.

### **Disability pension:**

- Disability pension for armed forces is available based on a 1922 notification.
- Disability pension are of two types, war and normal.
- War disability is 60% of the last salary drawn in case of 100% disability and normal disability is 30% of the last salary drawn in case of 100% disability.
- It goes down proportionally for lower percentage of disability.

- Till now both were not being taxed if the disability is decided by a team of doctors.

### Criticisms:

- Disability pension has long been an issue of contention over the rates and different slabs for officers and jawans, among others.
- The military fraternity has criticised the move calling it a measure lowering their status and equivalence compared to their civilian counterparts.
- There are also a large number litigations filed by veterans against the Defence Ministry over non-recognition of disability.

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. Kerala tops the list for best performing State in health

#### Context:

Niti Aayog has released the “Healthy States, Progressive India: Report on Rank of States and UTs”. It is the second edition of NITI Aayog’s Health Index.

#### Details:

- The first round of the Health Index was released in February 2018, which measured the annual and incremental performances of states and UTs for period 2014-15 (base year) to 2015-16 (reference year).
- The report has been prepared in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with technical assistance from the World Bank.
- The Index ranks the States and Union Territories based on 23 health-related indicators, including neonatal mortality rate, under-five mortality rate, proportion of low birth weight among new-borns, proportion of districts with functional Cardiac Care Units, full immunisation coverage and proportion of specialist positions vacant at district hospitals.
- The ranking is done under three categories -- larger states, smaller states and Union territories (UTs). This ensures comparison among similar entities.

#### Findings of the report:

- Kerala has occupied the top slot in terms of health performance while Uttar Pradesh retained the worst performer tag.
- Kerala is followed by Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- States at the bottom of the list were Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.
- Only about half the States and UTs have showed an improvement in the overall score between 2015-16 and 2017-18.
- Kerala and Tamil Nadu have already reached the 2030 SDG target for neonatal mortality rate (NMR), which is 12 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births.
- In Bihar, the deterioration between the base year and the reference year is linked to the performance related to total fertility rate, low birth weight, sex ratio at birth, TB (tuberculosis) treatment success rate, quality accreditation of public health facilities, time taken for NHM (National Health Mission) fund transfer.
- The general positive correlation between the Health Index scores and the economic development levels of states and UTs as measured by per-capita net state domestic product (NSDP) was

highlighted in the report.

## 2. 31.4% of Indian children will be stunted by 2022: report

### Context:

The report prepared by the UN World Food Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation states that almost one in three Indian children under five years will still be stunted by 2022 going by current trends.

### Details:

- The report highlights the need for India to double its rate of progress to reach the target of 25% by 2022.
- It is an analysis of the country's food and nutrition security.
- It states that over the last decade, child stunting which is a measure of chronic malnutrition has reduced at a rate of about 1% per year, the slowest decline among emerging economies. At this rate, 31.4% of children will still be stunted by the 2022 deadline.
- The report highlights the need for India to double its rate of progress to reach the target of 25% by 2022.
- Foodgrain yields have risen 33% over the last two decades, but are still only half of 2030 target yields.
- Despite Indian farmer is producing more foodgrains than ever before, the consumer's access to rice, wheat and other cereals has not increased at the same rate, due to population growth, inequality, food wastage and losses, and exports.
- As a result, the average per capita consumption of energy among the poorest 30% of the population is 1811 kilo calories, much lower than the norm of 2155 kilo calories per day. The signs of unequal access are starkest among children.
- In States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, almost one in two children are stunted, while it is only one in five children in Kerala and Goa.

## B. GS2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Trade, missile on agenda during Pompeo visit

### Context:

US Secretary Of State Mike Pompeo is on a visit to India to meet his Indian counterpart, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

### Details:

#### Russian S-400 Triumph anti-missile deal:

- A U.S. law bans military purchases from Russia, Iran and North Korea.
- However, India will press its case for a waiver of United States' sanctions on the \$5.4 billion Russian S-400 Triumph anti-missile deal, and discuss Washington's concerns over the issue during talks with Mike Pompeo.
- In the past few weeks, a number of senior U.S. diplomats and officials have suggested that if India goes through with buying the S-400, the U.S. will not offer India certain hi-technology platforms or

may hold back on F-21/F-35 sales, as it had done with Turkey which has also bought the S-400.

### **Generalized System of Preferences:**

- Impasse over a trade deal and the U.S. withdrawal of India's GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) status would be taken up for discussion.
- Trade issues between the two countries are expected to take centre stage.

### **Sanctions on oil imports from Iran:**

- India, which depends heavily on oil imports to meet its growing energy needs, had grudgingly stopped new import orders of Iranian oil from May 2, when waivers of U.S. Iran oil sanctions expired.
- Sanctions on Indian imports of oil from Iran and Venezuela would be taken up for discussions.

### **Huawei issue:**

- Washington's new demand that India must not allow Chinese telecom major Huawei to participate in 5G network trials are also likely to come up for discussion.
- The Indian government plans to balance the national security implications of the Chinese company with the demands of the local telecommunications market before deciding on 5G trials.

### **Other areas to be discussed:**

- No MoUs or agreements are expected to be announced.
- Negotiations on two important agreements, the Industrial Security Annex and the Geo-spatial cooperation agreement BECA have made considerable progress.

## **C. GS3 Related**

### **Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

#### **1. Joint effort to conserve wildlife at Bandipur**

##### **Context:**

Inter-State meet was held to discuss ways to mitigate man-animal conflict in the Bandipur region.

##### **Details:**

- It decided to make concerted effort to conserve wildlife in the region.
- The meeting was convened by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) regional zone.
- Issues such as the invasion of invasive plants in the forest areas, steps being adopted by the authorities to vulture conservation, movement of radio collared higher mammals such as tiger and elephants and various measures to be adopted to mitigate man-animal conflict in the region were discussed.
- The meeting decided to intensify joint efforts to eradicate invasive plants such as Senna Spectabilis which caused major threat to the wildlife habitat in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- The meeting decided to ensure inter-State coordination in conserving the endangered vulture population in the region.
- It also discussed various strategies to be made to conserve the remaining vulture population in the country.

- Standard operating procedure of the NTCA, such as joint patrolling, share enforcement-related information and monthly meeting of senior forest officials of borders areas of tiger reserves and protected areas, would be executed effectively for the conservation of big cats.
- Joint conservation measures with public participation would be executed to mitigate increasing human-wildlife conflict on the forest fringes of the region.
- As part of it, information regarding radio collared animals and their movements would be exchanged among the department staff.
- Joint actions would be taken to douse forest fire and information on such incidents would be handed over to the officials in the adjacent sanctuaries and tiger reserves.

## 2. 'Impressive' tortoise discovered in Arunachal

### Context:

A tortoise Impressed Tortoise (*Manouria impressa*) has been discovered in Arunachal Pradesh.

### Details:

- This is the first record of the tortoise in India, taking the count to five and the non-marine chelonian count to 29.
- Chelonian is an order of reptile that includes turtles, terrapins and tortoises.
- There are only two species of tortoises under the *Manouria*
- India was known to be the home of only the Asian Forest Tortoise (*Manouria emys*) until the discovery of the Impressed Tortoise.
- The Asian Forest Tortoise, the largest in mainland Asia, is found only in the northeast, as are 20 of the other 28 species of chelonians.

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## E. Editorials

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. The state of Indian prisons

##### Editorial Analysis:

- Experts that in the midst of the election process this year (2019), the release of the data-driven report, the **Prison Statistics India 2016**, published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) went largely unnoticed.
- It is important to note that this edition of the report is different from its earlier versions on account of its omission of certain key demographic data.
- However, despite these gaps, **the report raises a number of red flags signalling the rot in India's prison system.**
- However, having said this and before we go forward, a simple question needs to be asked. **Who are our prisoners?**

What does the report tell us?

- The report tells us that at the end of 2016, there were 4,33,033 people in prison; of them 68% were undertrials, or people who have yet to be found guilty of the crimes they are accused of.
- It is important to note that **India's under-trial population remains among the highest in the world and more than half of all undertrials were detained for less than six months in 2016.**
- This suggests that the high proportion of undertrials in the overall prison population may be the result of unnecessary arrests and ineffective legal aid during remand hearings.

#### a. Failure to include demographic details:

- Experts point out that the most significant shortcoming of the report lies in the NCRB's failure to include demographic details of religion and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe status of prisoners, which are crucial to understanding India's prison population.
- As a matter of fact, this information was consistently published for the last 20 years and instrumental in revealing the problematic overrepresentation of Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis among under-trials in prisons.
- The report of 2015, for instance, said that **Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis accounted for 55% of the under-trial population even though they made up only 50% of the convict population and 38% of the total Indian population.**
- Another disturbing point is the rise in the number of people held under administrative (or 'prevention') detention laws in Jammu and Kashmir (a 300% increase), with 431 detainees in 2016, compared to 90 in 2015.
- It is important to note that Administrative, or 'preventive', detention is used by authorities in J&K and other States to unfairly detain persons without charge or trial and circumvent regular criminal justice procedures.

#### b. Looking at data on prisoner release:

- It is also important to note that a new and important addition to the report is the number of prisoners eligible to be released and actually released, under Section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which allows undertrials to be released on a personal bond if they have undergone half of the maximum term of imprisonment they would have faced if convicted.
- In 2016, out of 1,557 undertrials found eligible for release under Section 436A, only 929 were released.
- Furthermore, **research by Amnesty India has found that prison officials are frequently unaware of this section and unwilling to apply it.**
- In 2017, **the Law Commission of India had recommended that undertrials who have completed a third of their maximum sentence for offences attracting up to seven years of imprisonment be released on bail.**
- Perhaps the NCRB should consider including the number of such undertrials in its upcoming report for informing the policy on the use of undertrial detention.
- The 2016 prison statistics do not mention the number of prison visits by official and non-official visitors which typically include district magistrates and judges, social workers and researchers.
- Experts point out that this number, while not as disaggregated as it should be, must nevertheless be used to provide some information on independent monitoring of prisons.
- As a matter of fact, **this is essential to uncover torture and other forms of ill-treatment, increase transparency and balance the power asymmetry in prisons.**

#### c. Looking at Mental health concerns:

- The relevance of prison visits is underlined by the number of "unnatural" deaths in prisons, which doubled between 2015 and 2016, from 115 to 231.
- The rate of suicide among prisoners also increased by 28%, from 77 suicides in 2015 to 102 in 2016.
- For context, **the National Human Rights Commission in 2014 had stated that on average, a**

**person is one-and-a-half times more likely to commit suicide in prison than outside, which is an indicator perhaps of the magnitude of mental health concerns within prisons.**

- The NCRB has said that about 6,013 individuals with mental illness were in jail in 2016.
- It does not provide information on whether these prisoners were diagnosed with mental illness before entering prison, making it difficult to determine whether prison conditions worsened their plight.
- Crucially, **the report states that there was only one mental health professional for every 21,650 prisoners in 2016, with only six States and one Union Territory having psychologists/psychiatrists.**
- Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the three States with the most prisoners with mental illness, did not have a single psychologist or psychiatrist.

### Concluding Remarks:

- All things considered, the report has important information which can be used to facilitate a dialogue on improving prison policies.
- However, these conversations will be limited and the public's right to know about the functioning of the criminal justice system thwarted if critical information is delayed inordinately or withheld without credible reason.
- In conclusion, experts point out that the NCRB's apparent reluctance to be prompt and open about its prison statistics does not bode well for the democratic discourse in India.

## Category: GEOGRAPHY

### 1. A city gone dry

#### Editorial Analysis:

- Experts point out that Chennai's aspirations to grow into a global economic hub appear considerably weakened as it struggles to find water.
- The shadow of drought from 2018 has stretched into the torrid summer this year (2019), evaporating not just the city's reservoirs, but also, the prosperity of its residents who are forced to hunt for tankers, pay bribes and spend hours even at night waiting for trucks to dispense some water.
- Ironically, Chennai, which is Tamil Nadu's capital, gets in a normal year anything between 1,300 mm and 1,400 mm of rainfall.
- However, the city has been impacted negatively by the indifference of successive governments.

#### Proof of the neglect of water governance:

- **That fact that residents are now given minimum piped water and meagre tanker supplies totalling a third of the installed capacity of 1,494 million litres a day, that too mainly from desalination plants, faraway lakes and farm wells, is proof of the neglect of water governance.**
- Yet, even searching questions posed by the Madras High Court to the AIADMK government have elicited only vague assurances on meeting basic requirements and restoring 210 waterbodies to augment future storage, rather than a firm timeline.
- Experts point out that Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami was wrong to dismiss reports on water scarcity as "an exaggeration", and he must end this business-as-usual approach.

#### The Way Forward:

- A time-bound plan is needed to augment the resources in the Greater Chennai region encompassing the neighbouring districts of Thiruvallur and Kancheepuram.
- As a matter of fact, this plan should be tasked to a Special Officer, to be framed by officials in



consultation with credentialed experts in research and academia, and public comments invited before it is finalised.

- Next, given the large base of tanks and reservoirs in Greater Chennai — over 4,000 waterbodies of significance — prudent rainfall management can help it through withering summers and weak monsoons.
- **A white paper with a full assessment of these wetlands and their storage potential should be a priority for the State's Sustainable Water Security Mission.**
- Deepening storage in the four major reservoirs must get priority.
- Such a project must quantify the increase in storage and set an early deadline of a year.
- As a matter of fact, these measures can harvest the bulk of the rain in a good year, and prove superior to the fire-fighting approach of installing expensive desalination plants and bringing small quantities by rail from another district.
- It is also important to note that **Tamil Nadu made rainwater harvesting mandatory quite early, but failed to follow it up with an institutional mechanism to help citizens implement it.**
- Going forward, **the government should give monetary incentives to NGOs, as NITI Aayog proposed in its Water Index report, to encourage them to install systems and show quantifiable recharge outcomes.**
- Lastly, on the consumer side, devices and practices to reduce wastage should be promoted, especially on commercial premises.
- **Droughts are bottlenecks for profit, and several actors have developed a vested interest in transferring water to the city at high cost. Long-term solutions can end this cycle.**

## Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

### 1. Lynching redux

#### What's in the news?

- The death of a 24-year-old man, named Tabrez Ansari in Jharkhand days after he was brutally beaten by a mob **is a sordid reminder that the disturbing phenomenon of lynching is not going away any time soon.**

#### Editorial Analysis:

- Experts opine that the assault on Tabrez Ansari follows a recognisable pattern.
- The victim was Muslim and came under the suspicion of a mob, which chose to mete out vigilante justice, and someone in the crowd recorded trophy footage.

#### Vigilante Justice and Mob lynching mentality:

- **This one was not motivated by cow vigilantism or suspicion of transporting cattle for slaughter or possessing beef.**
- **Yet, the communal angle was on display, with the crowd forcing him to shout 'Jai Sri Ram' and 'Jai Hanuman', confirming that vigilante justice and mob lynch mentality are invariably accompanied by a sectarian motive in the present context.**
- Following a public outcry, some of the villagers allegedly involved were arrested on suspicion of murder.

#### Mob Justice: A Way of Life?

- Experts opine that the conduct of the police typifies the official apathy and tacit acceptance of mob justice as a way of life in some parts of the country.

- As a matter of fact, Ansari was tied to a tree and beaten for hours before the police came to his aid.
- The police merely took him into custody based on a complaint of theft, and neither recorded his injuries nor mentioned in the FIR that he was assaulted.
- **It was only after his condition worsened in jail that he was taken to hospital, where he died.**
- It is distressing that lynching, as a consequence of vigilantism, communal bigotry and the dissemination of hate messages and rumours on social media, has acquired the status of a preponderant social trend.

### Observations by the Supreme Court:

- The Supreme Court observed in a judgment last year (2019) that **“rising intolerance and growing polarisation expressed through [a] spate of incidents of mob violence cannot be permitted to become the normal way of life or the normal state of law and order”**.
- As a matter of fact the Honourable Supreme Court of India **directed States to take specific preventive, punitive and remedial measures.**
- It mooted a special law to deal with lynching and the appointment of a nodal officer in each district to combat the threat.
- While these measures are not yet in place, the latest incident must be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrators brought to book.
- Having said this, the larger issue has to be faced squarely by the political leadership.
- Organised vigilantism by cow protection groups was initially behind a wave of lynchings; rumour-mongering through social media platforms came next.

### Concluding Remarks:

- The Ansari incident shows that the problem has transmogrified into a sinister form of enforcing the chanting of Hindu slogans by citizens professing other religions.
- Some have pointed out that it may well be that the unseemly political use of the religious chant of ‘Jai Shri Ram’ in Parliament by some ruling party members to heckle those in the Opposition ranks is finding its echo on the streets.

## Category: ECONOMY

### 1. An indecent settlement

#### Editorial Analysis:

- It is important to take a look at the **Acetabular Surface Replacement (ASR)** hip implant case.
- In this, Johnson & Johnson has been accused of selling its faulty ASR hip implants to approximately 4,700 Indian patients between 2004 and 2010.
- The company announced a global recall of the ASR hip implants in 2010 after doctors in the U.K. and Australia reported an extremely high failure rate for the implant.

#### What was wrong with the implants?

- The metal in the implant was apparently degenerating, causing damage to the bone and tissue, apart from leaching dangerous metals like cobalt and chromium into the blood stream of the patient.
- **By 2013, J&J announced a \$4 billion settlement to cover the claims raised by 12,000 patients in the U.S.**

#### Cases filed from India:

- Meanwhile, in India, individual patients filed cases against the company before consumer courts.
- There was no governmental response till 2017 when the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) set up a committee of experts to probe the matter.
- This committee stated that J&J, as part of its global recall, had published advertisements in two English language newspapers informing patients that it was effecting a recall of the ASR hip implants and would pay for the revision surgery of those patients who required the implant replaced.
- Apparently 1,032 Indian patients contacted the company in response to these advertisements. And of these patients, the company paid for revision surgeries of 254 patients, while another 774 patients were kept on monitoring.
- Experts point out that **the remaining 3,600 patients are likely not even aware of the issues with their hip implants because J&J did not contact each patient individually.**

### The challenge before court:

- In 2018, **an expert committee under Dr. R.K. Arya recommended that J&J be ordered to pay each patient a baseline compensation of ₹20 lakh and additional compensation based on the age of the patient and disability suffered by him.**
- However, when the DCGI ordered J&J to pay compensation as per the formula laid down by the expert committee, its order was challenged before the Delhi High Court on April 8, 2019 by J&J which argued, and rightly so, that **only courts of law and not regulators like the DCGI could order payment of compensation.**
- Later in the month of May, 2018, the company struck an entirely different chord, claiming that it was willing to pay ₹25 lakh to patients who had a revision surgery and approached the government's committee, provided that the payment was not construed as an acceptance of any liability.
- As per the court's order, this settlement offer would not affect the patient's right to claim further compensation subject to the fact that any possible future award of compensation from a court would have to be adjusted with the ₹25 lakh already paid.
- The order records that J&J was in effect extending this offer to merely 67 of the 289 patients who had approached the 'expert committee' of the Central government because only these 67 patients had been "verified" and had received revision surgeries.

### Problems with the settlement

- Experts point out that there are several problems with this settlement.

a. The first is that the patients who are the most important stakeholders are not party to this litigation. **One of the fundamental tenets of law is that no order, not even one that is perceived to be a favourable order, should be passed by a court of law without hearing the parties who are going to be impacted by the order.** As a matter of fact, the only way patient interests can be protected is to invite patients to be part of the process. This is not merely an issue of abstract theory but one of practical implications. For instance, if there was even one lawyer for the patients present in court, he or she would have informed the court that most patients have not approached the expert committee of the government because it was as clear as day that the committee did not have any legal powers to award damages. Instead, most patients moved consumer courts seeking compensation. Thus, dealing with the claims of only the 289 who contacted the committee is pointless.

**The same lawyers would have also informed the court that as per the expert committee report, J&J has knowledge of at least 254 patients who have had revision surgery.** Important questions arise: Why then is J&J prepared to pay only 67 patients who had the revision surgery?

Also, what of the remaining 3,600 patients who have not been informed of problems with the implant?

b. The second problem with this payment of ₹25 lakh per patient is that there is no theory of damages supporting the payment of this amount.

Normally damages are split under different heads such as loss of future earnings and solatium for hardship — all of which will be calculated on the basis of the age of the patient.

**A 40-year-old patient who has a much higher earning potential than a 60-year-old patient deserves to be compensated at a higher rate.**

J&J needs to explain the basis of treating all the patients equally.

The expert committee had recommended ₹20 lakh as a baseline compensation to which more could be added as per a formula it proposed.

Going by this formula, the compensation payable to these patients would depend on age and disability and would be far in excess of the ₹25 lakh proposed by J&J.

Experts opine that **the High Court needs to guarantee some transparency in this regard since there are pending cases before the consumer courts which will be dealing with similar questions.**

c. The third tragedy with this settlement is that it provides the perfect smokescreen to both J&J and the DCGI who have so far had to deal with intense media scrutiny over their failure to take care of patient interests.

By presenting to the media a deal that has the blessings of the Delhi High Court, both J&J and the DCGI will get away with the appearance of having taken care of patients even when it is clear that ₹25 lakh is a pittance of a compensation.

Lastly, the image of this settlement which costs J&J a paltry sum of ₹16.75 crore will end the public pressure on the company despite no justice being done to the patients.

## **Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### **1. The loss is not just Istanbul**

#### **Editorial Analysis:**

- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has often said, **“Whoever wins Istanbul wins Turkey.”** This must have come to haunt him recently when **Ekrem Imamoglu**, the Opposition CHP (Republican People’s Party) nominee, defeated Binali Yildirim, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) candidate, decisively in **Istanbul’s mayoral election.**
- Experts opine that what must have added insult to injury was the fact that Mr. Imamoglu garnered close to 55% of the votes.

#### **The beginning of the end?**

- An important question arises: **Does this mean the beginning of the end of Mr. Erdogan’s semi-authoritarian rule in Turkey?**
- As a matter of fact, if one accepts the fact that the Istanbul verdict is a bellwether for what could happen in the rest of the country when the national election is held, then it is good news for the Opposition.
- Experts opine that **the verdict is very important because one-fifth of the Turkish population**

**lives in Istanbul and the city contributes over 30% of the national wealth to the country's GDP.** Moreover, Istanbul is not alone in sending the signal that large segments of the population are disenchanted with Mr. Erdogan and the AKP.

- The second and third largest cities in the country, Ankara and Izmir, also elected Opposition candidates in the March 31st election, as did several other urban concentrations.
- **It is the Anatolian (Turkish) heartland with its conservative and religious orientation that has so far stood by the AKP.** But even there Mr. Erdogan's popularity seems to be waning.

#### **Reasons why Mr. Erdogan's popularity seems to be waning:**

- One of the main reasons for this is the very visible downturn in the economy and the precipitate fall of the Turkish currency over the past year.
- Some of this is the result of Mr. Erdogan's continuing feud with the U.S.
- More important, the AKP government has grossly mismanaged the economy by spending unwisely on giant and prestigious projects like a new airport in Istanbul, which is slated to be the world's largest, and constructing bridges and gigantic mosques that have depleted resources and driven the government into debts of huge proportions.
- **With the building boom turning into bust and inflation rising, the average voter has been hit hard.**
- Experts opine that this has also begun to alienate the religiously observant bourgeoisie in the towns and cities of interior Anatolia who had formed the financial backbone of the AKP and the engine of growth during Mr. Erdogan's long tenure first as Prime Minister and then as President.
- Simultaneously, **Erdogan has alienated a section of his Islamist base by constantly quarrelling with Fethullah Gulen, the leader of the Gulen movement.**
- Following the abortive military coup of July 2016, thousands of Gulen supporters, the most educated and skilled among the religiously observant population, are in jail and thousands of others have been sacked from their jobs.
- Several universities and schools run by the Gulen movement have been closed and this has affected the quality of education in the country.

#### **Alienating the Kurds:**

- Erdogan's popularity has also diminished because his recently cultivated ultranationalism seems to have boomeranged.
- This ultranationalism was intended to placate his allies in the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which provides the AKP government crucial support in Parliament, but it seems to have driven many moderates to side with the Opposition instead.
- **This is particularly true of the Kurdish population — and Istanbul with about three million Kurds is the largest Kurdish city in the world — that has been alienated by Mr. Erdogan's stridently anti-Kurdish rhetoric and the resurgence of conflict between the state and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party).**
- Furthermore, Mr. Erdogan's military campaign against the Syrian Kurdish enclave has added to Kurdish disenchantment with him.

#### **Involvement in the Syrian Civil War:**

- Also, it is important to point out that Turkey's ill-conceived involvement in the Syrian civil war has cost it hugely.
- A massive inflow of refugees and an expanding defence budget have added to its economic woes.
- At the same time, the Turkish government has been engaged in a running feud with its principal NATO ally, the U.S., over trade issues, differences regarding the Syrian Kurds, and the Turkish decision to buy the S-400 anti-missile systems from Russia.
- **The U.S. has threatened economic sanctions if Ankara acquires the S-400 systems.**

- Turkey has been defiant on this issue, and the first S-400 deliveries are scheduled for July 2019.
- Experts believe that these sanctions will kick in automatically under the CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), which is a 2017 Congressional law penalising any country that has purchased military equipment from an American foe.
- The continuing spat with the U.S. threatens to negatively affect the Turkish economy further, with the lira plummeting to new lows following the U.S.'s threats of sanctions.

### Concluding Remarks:

- While all these factors point to a gradual but certain weakening of Mr. Erdogan's hold on power, it is too early to say that it will lead to him being unseating in the next election.
- Parliamentary and presidential elections are more than four years away and much can happen in between to reverse the Istanbul verdict, especially given the way Mr. Erdogan has concentrated power in his hands and misused it to muzzle the media and harass opponents of all hues.
- Nonetheless, the Istanbul election does indicate that the President's semi-authoritarian rule has not been successful in quashing the democratic spirit among Turkey's voters. This is good news.

## F. Tidbits

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Prelims Facts

### 1. Bond vigilante

- Bond vigilante refers to any of the large bond market investors who aggressively sell government bonds in the open market as a mark of protest against the policies adopted by the government or the central bank of a country.
- The huge selling of government bonds can cause the price of these bonds to witness a sharp drop in price, thus leading to a significant rise in their yields.
- Bond investors can cause a considerable rise in the borrowing rates of governments, thus exerting significant pressure on them.
- While some view bond vigilantes as harmful speculators, others see them as an essential force disciplining governments that spend beyond their means.

## H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The period just after the question hour is called the Zero Hour.
2. Zero Hour is an Indian innovation.

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:**

The time immediately following the Question Hour has come to be known as Zero Hour. It starts at around 12 noon and members can, with prior notice to the Speaker, raise issues of importance during this time. It is not mentioned in any rule book but its existence since 1962 is by convention. It is an Indian innovation in the field of parliamentary procedures.

**Q2. Consider the following statements:**

1. Silicic magma is hotter than the basaltic magma.
2. The magma solidified between sedimentary rocks in a vertical position is known as dyke.

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:**

Magmas that form basalt, are hotter and less viscous than more silica-rich magmas. Low viscosity leads to gentler, less explosive eruptions. Most magmatic liquids are rich in silica.

**Q3. Consider the following statements:**

1. Motion of thanks must be passed in both of the houses.
2. Motion of Thanks is deemed to be a no-confidence motion.

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:**

Motion of Thanks is a motion in Indian Parliament which follows the address of the President of India to the joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha at the commencement of first session of a new Lok Sabha and first session of every year. Motion of thanks must be passed in both of the houses. A failure to get motion of thanks passed amounts to defeat of government and leads to collapse of government. This is why, the Motion of Thanks is deemed to be a no-confidence motion.

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. Salinity of the oceans decreases to pole wards.
2. The highest salinity is observed at the equator.

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:**

Salinity of the oceans decreases to pole wards. The highest salinity is observed between 20 to 40 degrees North latitude. Near the equator, the tropics receive the most rain on a consistent basis. As a result, the fresh water falling into the ocean helps decrease the salinity of the surface water in that region.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. India is facing one of its major and most serious water crisis. It is high time the country makes water diplomacy an important tool of its regional foreign policy. Comment. (15 Marks 250 Words)
2. The newly launched Jal Shakti Ministry is a right step towards cleaning up and saving Indian Rivers. Critically Analyse. (15 Marks, 250 Words)