BYJU'S
The Learning App

05 June 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS1 Related

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. In relief for Kiran Bedi, SC restrains Puducherry govt.

Context:

In the turf war between the elected government of Puducherry and Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi, the Supreme Court has restrained the former from implementing any cabinet decisions that might have financial implications or transfer of officials.

Background:

- In a recent order passed, the Madras High Court had held that the elected government of the Union Territory generally assumes supremacy over the Lieutenant Governor. And also that the Lieutenant Governor "cannot interfere" in the day-to-day affairs of the elected government there.
- The High Court had said, "The Central government as well as the Administrator [term used in the Constitution to refer to the LG] should be true to the concept of democratic principles. Otherwise, the Constitutional scheme of the country of being democratic and republic would be defeated."
- The 150-page judgment distinguished the significant differences in the powers conferred on the legislatures of Puducherry and Delhi under Articles 239A and 239AA of the Constitution.
- Unlike Article 239AA, which imposes several restrictions on the legislature of Delhi, no such restrictions were imposed explicitly on Puducherry under Article 239A, the High Court held. "The above Article symbolises the supremacy of the Legislature above the Administrator in case of the Union Territory of Puducherry," it said.
- The High Court also disapproved of the alleged practice of government officials being part of social media groups through which the LG was issuing instructions to them for redressal of public grievances, and reminded them that as per rules, they were bound to use only an authorised medium of communication when it came to issues related to administration.
- The judgment had held that government Secretaries of the Puducherry administration were required to report to the Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister on all official matters.
- The judgment was delivered while allowing a petition filed by Congress MLA K. Lakshminarayanan in 2017, and quashing two clarifications issued by the Union Home Ministry that year with regard to the powers of the LG. It held that those communications had been issued without reference to the constitutional provisions and other laws.
- The High Court had dealt with the provisions of Rules of Business of the Government of Pondicherry, of 1963, the Delegation of Financial Powers Rules, 1978, the Government of Puducherry (Custody of Public Money) Rules, 2006, the Government of Puducherry Accounting Rules, 2006, and the periodical orders issued by the Centre.

Concern:

The Central authorities said the High Court decision had brought the "administrative machinery of Puducherry to an impasse and required urgent rectification.

Details:

- The order by a Bench of Justices Indu Malhotra and M.R. Shah was based on an urgent plea by the Union of India and Ms. Bedi's office for clarity on the issue of control over bureaucrats in the wake of a turf war between the LG and the Chief Minister.
- The Supreme Court Bench further issued notice to the elected government and allowed the Cabinet to meet on June 7, but said that decisions with serious financial implications and transfers cannot be implemented till the next date of hearing.

Category: HEALTH

1. Patients turn litigants as new rules stall therapy

Patients turn litigants as new rules stall therapy

Context:

Several critically ill patients have been forced to line up at the Delhi High Court after they suddenly stopped getting their medication following the implementation of the Centre's 'New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rule 2019'.

New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules 2019:

- On March 19, 2019, the Union Ministry for Health and Family Welfare notified the new Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019 aiming to promote clinical research in the country via transparent and faster approvals process.
- The new rule will be applicable to all new drugs, ethics Committee and investigational new drugs intended for human use, clinical trial, and bioequivalence study.

Provisions of the New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules 2019:

- **Clinical Trial of New drugs:**
- **Clinical trial of indigenously developed drug**:
  - o The Rules provide that any drug discovered in India, or research and development of the drug are being done in India, and which is proposed to be manufactured and marketed in the country, will be deemed approval for clinical trials within 30 working days by Central Licensing Authority (CLA).
  - o If no communication has been received from the CLA to applicant, the permission to conduct clinical trial shall be deemed to have been granted.
- **Clinical trial of Drug developed outside of India**:
  - o For the clinical trial of drugs developed outside of India, which is already approved and marketed in a country, 90 working days is set as the limit for the CLA to respond.
  - o The validity of clinical trial approvals has been determined as two years for pharmaceutical companies to initiate a study, which is extendable by one year.

- **Post-trial access of new drug:**
- The Rules introduced the conditions for providing post-trial access of drugs to patients who require it for the first time.
- According to this the sponsor shall provide the investigational drug to the trial subject free of cost if the clinical trial is being conducted for an indication for which no alternative therapy is available and the investigational new drug or new drug has been found to be beneficial to the trial subject by the investigator; and if the trial subject has consented
- **Drug import for sale or distribution:**
- The Rules exempts local clinical trials for new drugs permitted to be imported for sale or distribution in India, to provide early access to patients to drugs already approved in the countries specified by the DCGI provided that –
- If no major unexpected serious adverse events have been reported for the drug, and
- If the drug is indicated in life threatening or serious diseases or diseases of special relevance to Indian health scenario or for a condition which is unmet need in India such as XDR tuberculosis, hepatitis C, H1N1, dengue, malaria, HIV, or for the rare diseases for which drugs are not available or available at a high cost or if it is an orphan drug.
- **Compensation and monitoring:**
- The Rules aim to ensure patient safety in clinical trials via defining the process of informed consent, ethics committee, monitoring and compensation in cases of adverse events.

- Compensation in cases of death and permanent disability or other injuries to a trial subject will be decided by the Drug Controller General of India.
- **Orphan drugs:**
- For the first time, orphan drugs have been defined as a drug intended to treat conditions which affects not more than five lakh persons in India.
- In addition, No fee shall be chargeable in respect of application for conduct of clinical trial for orphan drugs for rare diseases in India.
- Moreover, the Rules exempt local clinical trials for orphan drugs permitted to be imported for sale or distribution.

Issues:

- The March 19 2019 notification, issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, marked "stem cell derived products" under the definition of "new drug".
- It also mandated that such formulations are approved by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation.
- The new rules require clinics engaged in such 'new drug' therapy to acquire a marketing licence.
- But there is no provision for an interim arrangement for the period between an application being made to the Drug Controller and a decision being taken on the application.
- While this process is likely to take few months, four patients with different ailments, have moved the High Court as their treatments has been discontinued.

Details:

- While this process is likely to take few months, four patients with different ailments, have moved the High Court as their treatments has been discontinued.
- Taking note of the issue at hand, a Bench of Justice G.S. Sistani and Justice Jyoti Singh has bassed an interim order and said that the treatment being provided to the four patients should not be hindered.
- As an interim measure, and till such time as the clinics' application for a licence is processed, the Bench allowed patients to continue receiving therapy from their clinics.
- It also said the clinics in question should submit all information on the treatment being afforded to the patients to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSO).

2. Food safety is everyone's business: WHO

Context:

- World Health Organisation (WHO) which has released figures that estimate 600 million cases of food-borne diseases occur annually worldwide. This translates into one in 10 people falling ill after eating contaminated food.

Details:

- "Food safety is an increasing threat to human health. Children under 5 years of age carry 40% of the food-borne **disease** burden with 1,25,000 deaths every year,'' said WHO.
- A note issued by the organisation said the first-ever World Food Safety Day was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in December 2018 and this year it would be celebrated on June 7 with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) facilitating member-States' effort to celebrate it.

Way forward:

- Access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food is key to sustaining life and promoting good health. Food-borne diseases impede socio-economic development by straining health care systems and harming national economies, tourism and trade.
- The way in which food is produced, stored, handled and consumed affects the safety of our food. Complying with global food standards, establishing effective regulatory food control systems is essentials.
- Some ways in which governments, international organisations, scientists, the private sector and civil society can work to ensure food safety are as follows:
  o Including emergency preparedness and response
  o Providing access to clean water
  o Applying good agriculture practices (terrestrial, aquatic, livestock, horticulture),
  o Strengthening the use of food safety management systems by food business operators,
  o Building capacities of consumers to make healthy food choices

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. RBI study moots boost to acceptance infra for digital payments

Context:

- A study on digital payments by the Reserve Bank of India has observed that, while there has been robust growth in the volume of retail electronic transactions amid a strong regulatory framework, the country needs to enhance its payments acceptance infrastructure.

Details:

- The findings are from a report on 'Benchmarking India's Payment Systems', which provides a comparison of the payment ecosystem in India with the payment systems and usage trends in other major countries.
- The central bank had undertaken the exercise of benchmarking India's payment systems vis-à-vis payment systems in a mix of advanced economies, Asian economies and the BRICS nations.

Findings of the report:

- The study found that India has a strong regulatory system and robust large value and retail payment systems, which have contributed to the rapid growth in the volume of transactions in these payment systems.
- The report, however, notes that India is required to take further efforts to bring down the volume of paper-clearing and increase acceptance infrastructure to enhance digital payments.
- While the report acknowledged that the growth in the volume of payment systems transactions had been strong and steady, the relatively high level of cash in circulation offered scope for a higher level of digitisation of payments.
- There is an increase in Point of Sale (PoS) terminals, including mobile terminals, which, however, may not be enough to cater to the large population.

- The report observed low digital payment of utility bills, despite the existence of the Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), an integrated interoperable bill payment system which started live operations from October 2017.
- The report also said digital communications infrastructure in the form of a robust mobile network is growing strongly, though broadband infrastructure "lags behind."
- The report highlighted that the last few years since demonetisation have witnessed a sea change in the payments landscape, with large growth in digital payments.
- The report also said that the level of credit card penetration in India was low when compared to advanced countries, where it was a preferred option for making payments.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Operation Blue Star: Sikh body demands apology

Context:

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) has demanded an apology from the Government of India for the execution of Operation Blue Star on the eve of its 35th anniversary.

What is Operation Blue Star?

- The 1984 Operation Blue Star was the biggest internal security mission ever undertaken by the Indian Army.
- Operation Blue Star was Indira Gandhi's solution to the haywire going law and order situation in Punjab.
- Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, ordered the military operation to remove Sikh militants who were accumulating weapons in the Harmandir Sahib Complex (Golden Temple).
- Operation Blue Star was carried out between June 1 and June 8, 1984, in Amritsar.
- Operation Blue Star took birth after the rise of Khalistan movement in India. The Khalistan movement was a political Sikh nationalist movement which aimed at creating an independent state for Sikhs inside the current North-Western Republic of India.
- Even though the Khalistan movement started in the early 1940s and 1950s, it gained popularity between 1970s and 1980s.
- Official reports put the number of deaths among the Indian army at 83 and the number of civilian deaths at 492, though independent estimates ran much higher.
- The government faced a lot of backlash in 1984 as they had barred media from entering Punjab altogether.

Operation Black Thunder:

- Operation Black Thunder was the second phase of Operation Blue Star. The first phase was carried out on April 30, 1986, while the second Operation Black Thunder began on May 9, 1988.
- It was carried out by Black Cat commandos of National Security Guards (NSG) to remove Sikh militants from the Golden Temple.

Details:

- Terming it a "planned conspiracy" and a "hateful attack" against the Sikh community, the DSGMC has demanded an apology from the Government for the execution of Operation Blue Star.

- DSGMC president also demanded compensation for the families of those killed during the operation, in addition to provisional benefits for Sikh military personnel who left the Indian Army in disapproval of it.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The immediate neighbourhood

The editorial explains how SAARC still has the potential to become a platform for South Asian interests and shared growth.

Context:

- The Indian government has shown its commitment to its strategy of "Neighbourhood First" by inviting the leaders of neighbouring countries for the second time to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony.
- The focus will continue when he makes his first visit in this tenure to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, something that has become tradition for all Indian Prime Ministers.
- The obvious difference between Mr. Modi's invitations to his taking office the first and second time is that in 2014 they went to the leaders of the eight-member South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), while in 2019 they went to leaders of the seven-member Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).
- BIMSTEC includes five SAARC members (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka), and Myanmar and Thailand, while leaving SAARC members Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Maldives out, due to the geographical location of the Bay of Bengal.
- To extrapolate from this that BIMSTEC has replaced SAARC, or that the Modi government is in effect building the foundations of BIMSTEC over the grave of SAARC is both illogical and contrary to the founding principles of these organisations

SAARC - India:

- **SAARC**, as an organisation, reflects the South Asian identity of the countries, historically and contemporarily. This is a naturally made geographical identity.
- Equally, there is a cultural, linguistic, religious and culinary affinity that defines South Asia.
- Therefore, just as rivers, climatic conditions flow naturally from one South Asian country to the other, so do the films, poetry, humour, entertainment and food.
- As a result, since 1985 when the SAARC charter was signed, the organisation has developed common cause in several fields: agriculture, education, health, climate change, science and technology, transport and environment.
- Each area has seen modest but sustainable growth in cooperation.

For example, from 2010, when the South Asian University began in Delhi, the number of applicants for about 170 seats has more than doubled.

- SAARC's biggest failure, however, comes from the political sphere, where mainly due to India-Pakistan tensions, heads of state have met only 18 times in 34 years; it has been five years since the last summit in Kathmandu.

BIMSTEC – India:

- BIMSTEC, on the other hand, is not moored in the identity of the nations that are members.
- It is essentially a grouping of countries situated around the Bay of Bengal, and began in 1997 (Bhutan and Nepal joined in 2004), a decade after SAARC.
- The organisation did not even have a secretariat until 2014.
- While it has made some progress in technical areas, leaders of BIMSTEC nations have held summits just four times in 22 years.
- With India's growing frustration over cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan, it hopes to build more on BIMSTEC's potential. But the organisation is unlikely to supplant SAARC for a specific reason.
- One of BIMSTEC's two founding principles is: "Cooperation within BIMSTEC will constitute an addition to and not be a substitute for bilateral, regional or multilateral cooperation involving the Member States."
- Its official literature describes it as "a bridge between South and South East Asia" and a "platform for intra-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] members."
- It is significant that two of the leaders at Mr. Modi's swearing-in— Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena — have also emphasised that BIMSTEC would not replace SAARC.

India's SAARC aversion:

- Some of the resistance to SAARC has to do with the organisation's history
  o Bangladesh's former military dictator Ziaur Rahman, who was known to be inimical to India, conceived it, and was suspected of trying to constrain India by tying it to its smaller and much less developed neighbours.
  o In the 1990s, when India was beginning to see its role as an economic leader and an Asian power with a claim to a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, the SAARC identity may have seemed irrelevant.
  o Even Pakistan's elite establishment, which often looks to West Asia, was less than enthusiastic about the SAARC grouping.
- Terrorism emanating from Pakistan is clearly the biggest stumbling block cited by the government.
  o PM of India cancelled his attendance at the last planned SAARC summit in Islamabad in 2016, after the attack on the Indian Army's brigade headquarters in Uri. Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan followed suit.
- This principled stand by India, however, doesn't extend to other organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), into which India and Pakistan were inducted in 2017.
  o Unlike SAARC, which has never presumed to resolve bilateral issues of its members, the SCO is a security-based regional organisation that is keen to work on conflict resolution in the region; it even organises military exercises between members.
  o It is difficult to reconcile the staunch opposition to attending a SAARC summit where India is at least the largest country, with the concurrence to the SCO, where Russia and China take the lead.

- o Both Moscow and Beijing have made no secret of their desire to facilitate talks between India and Pakistan.
- o The SCO summit is hosted by rotation, and is likely to be in either India or Pakistan next year, something the government has refused to do at SAARC.
- Another reason offered by those declaring SAARC becoming defunct is the logjam because of Pakistan's opposition to connectivity projects such as the Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA), energy sharing proposals and others such as the South Asia Satellite.
  - o However, such agreements have not made progress in other groupings either: the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) grouping has failed to implement the MVA due to opposition from Bhutan, and India has held up for years cross-border power-exchanges that would allow Bhutan and Nepal to freely sell electricity to third countries such as Bangladesh.
  - o India has rightfully held Pakistan responsible for holding up the South Asia Free Trade Area agreement and refusing to reciprocate 'Most Favoured Nation' (MFN) status to India.
  - o After the Pulwama attack, India also withdrew MFN status to Pakistan.
  - o Nevertheless, New Delhi must admit that in other regional groupings such as the ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), it too is accused of stonewalling free trade regimes. In BIMSTEC, one can imagine similar logjams.

Way forward:

- Going forward, SAARC could adopt the "ASEAN minus X" formula — members who are unwilling to join the consensus can be allowed to join at a future date, while members who wish to go ahead with connectivity, trade or technology cooperation agreements are not impeded.
- India had began to see the benefits of leading SAARC, where neighbours became force multipliers for India's power projections.
- Some such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka even outstripped India on growth and human development indicators, leading to more opportunities for engagement with them.
- In a region increasingly targeted by Chinese investment and loans, SAARC could be a common platform to demand more sustainable alternatives for development, or to oppose trade tariffs together, or to demand better terms for South Asian labour around the world.
- This potential has not yet been explored, nor will it be till SAARC is allowed to progress naturally and the people of South Asia, who make up a quarter of the world's population, are enabled to fulfil their destiny together.

2. Decolonising the Chagos archipelago

Context:

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voted recently by a huge majority (116 out of 193 members) to demand that the U.K. withdraw its colonial administration within six months over the Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean in favour of Mauritius. The non-binding vote was a rebuke to the U.K.

Background:

- Mauritius, a British colony, achieved independence in 1968 but the U.K. refused to return the Chagos archipelago, claiming sovereignty over the islands.
- The archipelago is better known for hosting the U.S. military base at Diego Garcia.
- For several decades the Chagos archipelago has been the cause of a dispute between Mauritius and the U.K., over the decision in 1965 to separate Diego Garcia from the rest of the archipelago for setting up the military base, in collaboration with the U.S.

- The U.K. depopulated Diego Garcia by expelling all its inhabitants, to facilitate the building of the military base, paying just £4 million as compensation to Mauritius.
- In contravention of international human rights laws, from 1967 to 1973, the U.K. forcibly moved around 1,500 Chagossians to Mauritius and Seychelles, and prevented them from returning to their homes.
- The dispute festered over the decades, with Mauritius, as per its Constitution, rightly claimed sovereignty over Chagos and challenged the U.K.'s stand.

Details:

- In February this year, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) had ruled that the U.K. had illegally detached Diego Garcia from the archipelago and split the islands.
- The ruling, also non-binding, observed that the decolonisation of Chagos was incomplete and the U.K. had the obligation to complete the decolonisation process.
- The court rejected the U.K.'s argument that the ICJ lacked jurisdiction and the matter was a bilateral issue.

Issue:

- The U.K. had invented a new category called the British Indian Ocean Territory and argued at the ICJ that it had sovereignty over the Chagos.
- It also stated, in support of its position, that the military base at Diego Garcia was essential to provide maritime security against terrorists, organised crime and piracy.
- The U.K. did not act on the ICJ ruling, compelling Mauritius to take the case to the UN, which has now accepted its sovereignty over the whole archipelago.
- The ruling highlights the isolation of the U.K. and the U.S. on this issue.
- The U.K.'s decision to depopulate Diego Garcia was an egregious example of human rights violations.
- The U.S. and the U.K. have often wagged their fingers at developing countries on human rights violations and now find themselves in the dock for the same at the UN.

India's role:

- India has played an important role, away from the public glare, in this whole affair.
- India's relations with Mauritius are unique and it was a foregone conclusion that India would solidly back Mauritius's claims, given India's active role in decolonisation.
- The U.S. and the U.K. tried to influence India to restrain Mauritius. Both countries conveyed to Mauritius they could not hand over the Chagos as long as it is required for defence purposes.
- India-U.S. defence ties have also progressed significantly with the signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement, which provides mutual access to the armed forces of the two countries to selected military facilities.
- The other significant bilateral agreement is the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement, which facilitates encrypted communication between the two militaries.
- These developments have a bearing on Diego Garcia and India's more nuanced view on this military base.

Way forward:

- Though it is believed that not much will change, some accommodation or agreement can be worked out. India is likely to play a not too insignificant role in working out a modus vivendi.
- Eventually, the issue of sovereignty will have to be finessed by agreements that allow continuation of the military base at Diego Garcia with guarantees that Mauritius will retain sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago.

- Mauritius will agree to lease out the island for a long period to the U.S. for maintaining the military base.
- The U.K.'s role is more problematic in the aftermath of the ICJ ruling and the UN resolution. It would be best for London to step back and hand over sovereignty to Mauritius and simultaneously work out the leasing arrangement with the U.S.
- India can play a pivotal role in bringing such an agreement to fruition.

3. Low tactics – On India-Pakistan relations

Context:

India has issued a public statement of protest over the harassment of guests attending an Iftar party hosted by the Indian High Commission in Islamabad.

Details:

- Guests were allegedly intimidated and stopped by Pakistani security force personnel from attending the event.
- Describing the action by Pakistani security forces as "against all notions of civilised behaviour", India has asked the Pakistan government to conduct an inquiry into the incident.
- This development follows alleged actions by Indian security agencies in stopping guests to the Pakistan High Commission National Day function in New Delhi in March, as well as at its Iftar party on May 27.
- On both occasions, the Pakistan government had protested in similar terms, terming the behaviour of the security agencies towards invitees as being in "blatant disregard of traditional eastern values" and violative of the Vienna convention for diplomatic protocol.'
- It is clear that regardless of how undignified the actions appear, both governments are following a tit-for-tat approach to ties, targeting even diplomatic missions.
- This cycle of undiplomatic behaviour simply vitiates an atmosphere already fraught with tensions, and must end.

Way forward:

- The Indian Air Force has removed airspace restrictions, and Pakistan has begun to open airspace routes to and from India that it had closed after the Pulwama attack.
- Such positive steps need to be augmented.
- India and Pakistan have extremely serious issues to resolve. The harassment of diplomats and their guests is a diversion from the issues at hand.
- With a new government assuming charge in India, and a possible meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation next week, it is likely that both sides will try to turn the page in bilateral ties.
- The new External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, is a former diplomat himself and should reach out to his counterpart in Islamabad to raise the level of engagement above the petty point-scoring that such harassment of guests at diplomatic functions represents.

Category: EDUCATION

1. Fine-tuning the education policy

Context:

After about four years in the making, the draft National Education Policy, 2019 is out in the public domain, with comments sought from all stakeholders.

Details:

- Drawing inputs from the T.S.R. Subramanian Committee report and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), the K. Kasturirangan Committee has produced a document that is comprehensive, far-sighted and grounded in realities.
- The idea that lifelong education is based on four pillars — learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be — has inspired the committee to cover every aspect of the education sector: school, higher, vocational and adult education.
- It also includes the whole gamut of professional education — engineering, medicine, agriculture, law, etc.
- It explains the scientific rationale behind the policy's prescriptions and suggests how the proposals can be translated into practice at the State and Central levels.

Unique features of the policy:

The draft policy seeks to revamp all aspects of the sector and does not shy away from suggesting brave new ideas. Some of the key recommendations are:

- Cover children of 3-18 years [instead of the present 6-14 years under the Right to Education (RTE) Act].
  - o Three years under early childhood care and education (ECCE) and four years under secondary education.
  - o Based on evidence from neuroscience that over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of six and that 'school preparedness' at Anganwadis is light on educational aspects, ECCE would facilitate play and discovery-based learning for children of that age group.
- Achieve 'universal foundational literacy and numeracy' through initiatives like the National Tutors Programme and the Remedial Instructional Aides Programme.
- Introduction of school complexes.
- A system of modular Board Examinations to allow flexibility.
- Setting up Special Education Zones in disadvantaged regions.
- Recognising teachers at the heart of the system.
- Moving teacher education into the university system.
- Stressing the importance of learning new languages.
- The way ahead for higher education has also been marked by bold propositions.
  - o The aim is to double the Gross Enrolment Ratio from 25% to 50% by 2035 and make universities the hubs of research (with Tier I universities/institutions devoted primarily to research and some teaching, Tier 2 universities devoted to teaching and some research, and Tier 3 institutions comprising mainly colleges that are to be converted gradually into degree-giving autonomous institutions).
  - o The policy recognises the crucial importance of liberal arts (it recommends setting up five Indian Institutes of Liberal Arts offering four-year courses) and the study of modern and classical languages (it recommends setting up National Institutions for Pali, Prakrit and Persian).
  - o It proposes separate institutions for regulation, funding, standard setting and accreditation, a National Research Foundation, and a Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog/ National Education Commission.

o Interestingly, vocational education, meant for 50% of the students, is sought to be integrated with school and higher education.

Challenges in implementation:

- These are progressive ideas, but there are roadblocks in their implementation. These mostly relate to funding requirements and governance architecture.
- What is recommended is a doubling of public funding to 6% of the GDP and increasing overall public expenditure on education to 20% from the current 10%. This is desirable but does not appear to be feasible in the near future given that most of the additional funding has to come from the States.
- While establishing new institutions for Pali, Prakrit and Persian appears to be a novel idea, the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysuru could be strengthened and perhaps even upgraded to a university with an extended mandate to take care of these languages.
- Expanding coverage under the RTE Act to include pre-school children is extremely important, but should perhaps be introduced gradually, keeping in mind the quality of infrastructure and teacher vacancies.
- The idea of setting up the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog under the Prime Minister and having it serviced by the MHRD is crucial in order to integrate the approaches and programmes of multiple departments. However, it is fraught with many administrative problems and possible turf battles. Bringing medical or agricultural or legal education under one umbrella is likely to be met with stiff opposition.
- The idea of regulation being brought under the National Higher Education Regulatory Authority, standard setting under the General Education Council and funding under the Higher Education Grants Council may require a revisit so that there is synchronisation with the current Bill for the Higher Education Commission of India.
- Besides, the draft policy is silent on the Institutions of Eminence and agencies like the Higher Education Funding Agency.
- Language issues have to be handled sensitively in view of their emotional overtones, as witnessed recently. Protests are often made without understanding the spirit of the text.
- The details about financing and institutional structures should be fleshed out at the earliest, perhaps by an inter-departmental committee under the Cabinet Secretary.
- It is time for all conscientious persons to study the report and suggest the best path forward. If the political leadership backs it, implementation of the policy will transform our nation.

F. Tidbits

1. Party seeks White Paper on rising bank fraud

- The Congress has demanded a white paper on the rising incidence of bank frauds and cited a report by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to press its demand.
- It was stated that through an RTI query, it has been revealed that the the bank **fraud** cases rose in last one year to 6,800 to the tune of ₹71,500 crore.
- Criticising the BJP government for not disclosing the names of wilful defaulters, it was said, "The Supreme Court in 2015 directed the RBI and the government to disclose the names of the wilful defaulters. But the names have not been disclosed yet."

White Paper:

- A white paper is an authoritative report or guide that informs readers concisely about a complex issue and presents the issuing body's philosophy on the matter.
- It is meant to help readers understand an issue, solve a problem, or make a decision.
- They are usually published by the government for follow-up action or at least a conclusion
- The term white paperoriginated with the British government.

2. Ministry refuses to share details on notice to Rahul

- The Home Ministry has refused to share details on its notice to Congress president Rahul Gandhi following a complaint questioning his Indian citizenship, citing provisions of the RTI Act barring disclosure of information that will, among other things, impede the investigation.
- In an RTI application, the Ministry was asked to provide a copy of the notice to Mr. Gandhi and details of the response received from him.
- The information sought cannot be disclosed under Section 8 (1) (h) and (j) of the RTI Act – the Home Ministry said.
- Section 8 (1) (h) bars disclosure of "information which would impede the process of investigation or apprehension or prosecution of offenders".
- Provision (j) bars "information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual".
- Replying to another query in the RTI application, the Home Ministry said it was not required to maintain records of notices issued to individuals on their citizenship status.
- In November 2015, the Supreme Court dismissed a public interest litigation seeking a CBI investigation into the Congress chief's citizenship. It noted that PIL pleas were not meant to target one individual or organisation but were a medium to resolve human suffering through good governance.

3. Bank of China starts India operations

- Bank of China, one of the four largest state-run commercial banks of China, has started India operations with a maiden branch in Mumbai.
- The launch of Chinese bank in India comes after a series of successful meetings between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2018 to strengthen the strategic engagement between the 2 countries
- The bank started its operations to facilitate financial transactions related to corporate banking in India.
- The 107-year-old bank has been designated as a Global Systemically Important Bank for eight consecutive years.
- Bank of China has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with State Bank of India (SBI) to facilitate corporate clients of both the banks to access each others banking products and services, which will lead to a mutually beneficial relationship.

4. An experimental Ebola cure may also protect against Nipah virus

- The antiviral drug, Remdesivir, is also being tested against the Ebola virus in the outbreak now under way in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- The only current treatment for Nipah virus infection is a monoclonal antibody that is still experimental. It was tested during an outbreak in India last year.

- In the new trial, eight African green monkeys were given lethal doses of Nipah virus. Half of them later got intravenous Remdesivir. All four monkeys that got the drug survived; the four that did not died within eight days.
- If the drug wins approval for use against Nipah, it could be an extra treatment that could be used relatively quickly
- Nipah virus, which causes encephalitis and pneumonia, is lethal in about 70% of cases.
- The average person who reaches a hospital dies within two days.
- Ebola and Nipah belong to different viral families, but Remdesivir appears effective against both.
- Although the outer shells of all these viruses are very different, their polymerases — the genome-copying enzyme that Remdesivir targets are similar.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)

- The Council of Scientific and Industrial Researchabbreviated as CSIR was established by the Government of India in 1942 as an autonomous body.
- Although it is mainly funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology, it operates as an autonomous body registered under the Registration of Societies Act, 1860.
- CSIR has emerged as the largest research and development organisation in India.
- It is headquartered at New Delhi
- The research and development activities of CSIR includes aerospace engineering, Structural engineering, ocean sciences, Life sciences, metallurgy, chemicals, mining, food, petroleum, leather, and environment.
- The Prime Minister is the ex-officio President of CSIR

2. Monopoly

- A monopoly exists when a specific person or enterprise is the only supplier in the market, of a particular commodity.
- Monopolies are characterized by
  - A lack of economic competition to produce the good or service
  - A lack of viable substitute goods
  - The possibility of a high monopoly price well above the seller's marginal cost that leads to a high monopoly profit
- Monopolies can be established by a government, form naturally, or form by integration.

3. Oligopoly

- A monopoly exists when a specific person or enterprise is the only supplier in the market, of a particular commodity.
- Monopolies are characterized by
  - A lack of economic competition to produce the good or service
  - A lack of viable substitute goods

o The possibility of a high monopoly price well above the seller's marginal cost that leads to a high monopoly profit
• Monopolies can be established by a government, form naturally, or form by integration.

4. India at 95 on Gender Index

• First-ever SDG Gender Index measures strides made in achieving gender commitments against internationally set targets.
• It measures the state of gender equality aligned to 14 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 129 countries and 51 issues ranging from health, gender-based violence, climate change, decent work and others.
• The index has been developed by Equal Measures 2030.
• A score of 100 indicates the achievement of gender equality in relation to the underlying indicators. A score of 50 would indicate that a country is about halfway to meeting its goal.
• India ranked 95th out of a total 129 countries in the
• India's score of 56.2 means that it is among 43 countries in the 'very poor' category.
• India scores the highest in health (79.9), followed by hunger (76.2) and energy (71.8). Among the SDGs, on which the country performs poorly are patnerships (18.3), industry, infrastructure and innovation (38.1) and climate (43.4).
• The index finds that no country has fully achieved the promise of gender equality and that the global average score of 65.7 out of 100 is "poor".
• This means that almost 1.4 billion, or 40%, of the world's girls and women live in countries failing on gender equality and another 1.4 billion live in countries that barely pass.
• Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Slovenia, Germany, Canada, Ireland, and Australia rank as the top 10 countries in the index, while the bottom 10 comprise Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Yemen, Congo, DR Congo and Chad.

H. UPSC Prelims Practise Questions

Q1) Consider the following statements:

1. Bills that are introduced in the Rajya Sabha and are pending there lapse with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
2. Bills passed by the Lok Sabha and pending in the Rajya Sabha do not lapse with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.

Which of the given statements are correct?

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

[su_dropcap]See[/su_dropcap][su_spoiler title="Answer"]

Answer: d

Explanation:

A bill pending in the Rajya Sabha but not passed by the Lok Sabha does not lapse, whereas, the bill passed by the Lok Sabha and pending in the Rajya Sabha lapse with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.[/su_spoiler]

Q2) Which of the following are the criteria followed for determination of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups?

1. A pre-agriculture level of technology
2. A declining sex ratio
3. A stagnant or declining population
4. Extremely low literacy

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

[su_dropcap]See[/su_dropcap][su_spoiler title="Answer"]

Answer: c

Explanation:

The criteria followed for determination of PVTGs are as under:
i. A pre-agriculture level of technology
ii. A stagnant or declining population
iii. Extremely low literacy
iv. A subsistence level of economy
[/su_spoiler]

Q3) Consider the following statements:

1. The IUCN Red List Categories define the extinction risk of species assessed
2. Red List categorises the species assessed into five categories
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

[su_dropcap]See[/su_dropcap][su_spoiler title="Answer"]

Answer: a

Explanation:

The IUCN Red List Categories define the extinction risk of species assessed. Nine categories extend from NE (Not Evaluated) to EX (Extinct). Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) and Vulnerable (VU) species are considered to be threatened with extinction.[/su_spoiler]

Q4) Consider the following statements:

1. BirdLife International is the official Red List authority for birds, for the IUCN
2. It is a worldwide alliance of nongovernmental organizations that promotes the conservation of birds and their habitats

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

[su_dropcap]See[/su_dropcap][su_spoiler title="Answer"]

Answer: c

Explanation:

Self-explanatory[/su_spoiler]

I. UPSC Mains Practise Questions

1. Despite the progress made by the government in improving both the scale and quality of skilling, learners face a multitude of challenges on their skilling journey. Discuss. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. The citizen's Charter is an ideal instrument of organizational transparency and accountability but it has its own limitations. Identify the limitations and suggest measures for greater effectiveness of the Citizens Charter. (15 Marks, 250 Words)