

June 21st 2019 CNA

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A. GS1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. U.S. report cites Bihar shelter home abuse case

Context:

Trafficking in Persons Report June 2019, released by the United States Department of States annual finds mention of the horrific case of alleged rape of 34 minor girls housed at a state-run shelter home in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district.

What is Bihar shelter home abuse case?

- Muzaffarpur Shelter Home Rape case refers to a shelter home that ran under a non-governmental organization called "Sewa Sankalp Evam Vikas Samiti" at Muzaffarpur, where cases of sexual abuse, rape and torture were reported.

- In a medical examination, sexual abuse of 34 out of 42 inmates living at the shelter was confirmed.

Details:

- India has been criticised by the report for systemic failure to address forced labour.
- The report highlighted that sex trafficking in government-run and government-funded shelter homes has remained a serious problem.
- India finds its place among the countries like Pakistan, Nepal, Nigeria, and Singapore in the Tier 2 category. It has remained in the category since 2012.
- The Tier 2 countries are the ones where governments do not fully meet the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.
- According to the report, many cases of challenges in oversight of government run shelters continued in 2018, and also drew the attention of the Supreme Court.
- In a study commissioned by the Bihar government commissioned it was found that abuse varying in forms and degrees of intensity were prevalent in almost all 110 government-funded women and child care institutions surveyed.
- It also found that, in a few cases allegedly involving sex trafficking in government-funded shelters, lawyers and media reported government officials impeded the investigation.
- The report also took cognisance of prevalence of bonded labour, despite it being officially abolished in 1976.

B. GS2 Related

Category: HEALTH**1. NHRC questions frailty of health infrastructure****Context:**

A statement by the National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC) has said that it has issued notices to the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry (MoHFW), and all States and Union Territories, over the deplorable public health infrastructure in the country.

Details:

- The statement was issued in the backdrop of increasing death toll in Bihar's Muzaffarpur due to Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES).
- The NHRC took suo motu cognisance of several media reports on recent deaths across the country due to deficiencies and inadequacies in the healthcare system.
- It was observed that there are large number of deaths of innocent people including women, children and elderly persons owing to lack of proper medical care, infrastructure, manpower and due to administrative failure, across the country.

- The commission has cited as the loss of lives of children in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, due to the failure of oxygen supply in 2017 in addition to recent deaths of children in Muzaffarpur.
- The statement nudges the central and the state governments to take responsibility of their constitutional duty under Article 21 of the Constitution under which Right to Life is guaranteed.
- Quoting the Supreme Court of India, the Commission has observed that right to live with human dignity is part of Right to Life.
- The commission also reminded the government of its primary duty to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people as per Article 47 of the Constitution.
- The Commission has directed that teams comprising doctors on the panel of the Commission along with the officers of the Commission will visit hospitals, primary health centres and other health facilities in vulnerable States one by one starting with Bihar, U.P., Haryana and Punjab to conduct on-the-spot fact-finding investigation

NHRC:

- The National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC) is an autonomous body created in 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance.
- It was converted into a statutory body through the Protection of Human Rights Act of 1993. The NHRC has the responsibility for protecting and promoting human rights.
- Human rights have been defined by the act as “rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants.”
- The Chairperson and members of the commission are appointed by the President only.
- A committee chaired by the Prime Minister recommends the names to the president.
- The chairperson of the NHRC should be a retired Chief Justice.
- It has to include one member who is/has been a Supreme Court judge; another member who is/has been a High Court Chief Justice; 2 persons with knowledge and experience in human rights; and the chairpersons of 4 national commissions (for women, minorities, SC and ST).
- States can also have human rights commissions. They are also covered under the Protection of Human Rights Act.

2. WHO writes new prescription to prevent misuse of antibiotics

Context:

The World Health Organisation’s (WHO) has given out a prescription to combat the growing menace of antibiotic abuse and growing resistance across the globe. It has urged the countries to adopt the Access, Watch and Reserve guidelines to reduce the spread of antimicrobial resistance, adverse events and costs.

Issue:

- Antibiotic resistance is the ability of a microorganism to withstand the effects of an antibiotic.
- It is a specific type of drug resistance.
- WHO estimates that in many countries, antibiotics are used inappropriately for treatment of viruses or are the wrong choice of antibiotic, which in turn contributes to antimicrobial resistance.
- Antibiotic resistance calls for more expensive treatments and hospital admissions, taking a heavy toll on already stretched health budgets.

Details:

- 'Access, Watch and Reserve' is an approach that specifies which antibiotics to use for the most common and serious infections, which ones ought to be available at all times in the healthcare system, and those that must be used sparingly and used only as a last resort.
- The new campaign aims to increase the proportion of global consumption of antibiotics in the 'Access' group to at least 60%, and to reduce use of the antibiotics most at risk of resistance.

What are 'Access' antibiotics?

- Access antibiotics are narrow-spectrum antibiotics.
- Narrow spectrum antibiotics target a specific microorganism rather than several.
- 'Access' antibiotics lower the risk of resistance.
- They are also less costly because they are available in generic formulations.

C. GS3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. Navy to build 6 submarines

Context:

The Navy has issued an 'Expression of Interest' for shortlisting potential strategic partners for the construction of six P-75 (I) submarines costing nearly Rs.45,000 crore.

Details:

- The navy has said that it is the second project being undertaken under the latest Strategic Partnership (SP) Model.
- The first project was the procurement of 111 naval utility helicopters (NUH).
- The Strategic Partners in collaboration with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) have been mandated to set up dedicated manufacturing lines for these submarines in India with an aim to make India the global hub for submarine design and production.

- The Indian Navy currently operates 14 conventionally powered submarines and is in the process of inducting five more.
- The Navy also operates two nuclear ballistic missile submarines, both made in India, and a Russian-built nuclear powered fast attack submarine.
- India's nuclear submarine arm is based in Visakhapatnam while the diesel electric submarines are primarily based both in Mumbai and Visakhapatnam.

Merits:

- It is an initiative indicating a major step towards meeting broader national objectives and is in alignment with the government's 'Make in India' scheme.
- The project is expected to provide a major boost to the indigenous design and construction capability of submarines in India.
- It would also bring in the latest submarine design and technologies as part of the project.
- It would greatly enhance the manufacturing, industrial sectors, especially the medium, small and micro enterprises, by development of an industrial eco-system for manufacture of associated spares, systems, and equipment related to submarines.

Category: ECONOMY

1. SEBI sets up panel to review margins on derivatives

Context:

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has decided to review the current framework of margins in the futures and options segment, based on the feedback that the existing margin requirements in the derivatives segment is pushing the cost of trading – up, while not managing risk in the most efficient manner.

Derivative:

A derivative is a financial instrument that derives its value from an underlying asset or group of assets.

Details:

- In India, initial margin in equity Futures and Options segment consists of SPAN margin, exposure margin and other additional margins.
- A recent study highlighted the fact that trading in derivatives in India costs much more when compared with most of the other leading markets due to a variety of margins that are imposed on the traders.
- It was further found out that Indian bourses levy a variety of margins during the normal course thereby pushing up the overall cost of trading, while other markets apply event based margins temporarily during instances of increased volatility.

- SPAN is an upfront margin like a deposit that traders should have in their account at the time of placing a trade in futures and options.
- The collection of exposure margins from clients was made compulsory last year.
- A working group has now been constituted to look into the issue and submit its recommendations to the Secondary Market Advisory Committee.
- The motto is to rationalise the excessive marginal requirement existing in the Indian system.
- SEBI is likely to tighten margin rules for futures and options trades and restrict introduction of strike prices in options intra-day as it looks to curb wild speculation by traders.
- SEBI also intends to bring more securities under its various surveillance measures.
- Currently, there are three different surveillance measures being implemented by SEBI graded surveillance mechanism (GSM), additional surveillance mechanism (ASM) and short-term ASM.
- Of these, ASM and short-term ASM are applicable to derivatives.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Himalayan glaciers are melting twice as fast since 2000: study

Context:

A study that compared the data obtained by Cold War-era spy satellites with images from modern stereo satellites states that Himalayan glaciers have lost more than a quarter of their ice mass since 1975.

Details:

- In the 1970s, at the height of the Cold War, the U.S. had deployed spy satellites that orbited the globe and took thousands of photographs, using a telescopic camera system, for reconnaissance purposes.
- The scientists have now used those same images to highlight the devastating impact of climate change and global warming on the Himalayan glaciers.
- The study states that the melting rate has doubled after the turn of the century owing to a rise in the average temperatures.
- The study asserts that rising temperatures are responsible for the accelerating loss.
- Other factors the researchers blamed were changes in rainfall, with reductions tending to reduce ice cover, and the burning of fossil fuels which lead to soot that land on snowy glacier surfaces, absorbing sunlight and hastening melting.
- The authors have also noted an average increase of 1° celsius since 2000.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

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Category: INDIAN CULTURE

1. What yoga can teach us

Note to the Students:

- The points reflected in this analysis can help students while writing essays on the topic of yoga as well.

Editorial Analysis:

- The word yoga was first mentioned in the Rigveda. However, its philosophy, science and grammar were first provided by Patanjali in his magnum opus, **Patanjali Yoga Sutra**.
- It is heartening to note that yoga has been widely accepted across the world today. As a matter of fact, **the Polish government celebrates International Yoga Day**.
- At Aligarh Muslim University, special endeavours are being taken to make this event successful.

Yoga's journey to the West:

- Yoga was taken to the West by Indian gurus.
- They started centres where people practised yoga and realised its benefits. However, the popularity of yoga also created a massive business of approximately \$40 billion.
- This is set to grow with the rising popularity of yoga.

The Philosophy of 'All is one':

- Yoga is something beyond physical health and material wealth.
- The human persona is not only a body; it is also a mind, an intellect, and a soul.
- Yoga attempts to harmonise all of them.
- In the process, one attains a healthy body, a sharp intellect, and a focused mind capable of realising the unity between 'I', generally defined as personal consciousness, and 'I', the universal or cosmic consciousness.

What is Yoga and its goal?

- Yoga means to join.
- Its ultimate goal is to experience the unity of individual and universal consciousness.
- Yoga teaches us to recognise the fundamental unity between human beings and humankind, humans and the environment, and ultimately recognise a total interconnectedness of everything.
- The essence of this realisation is to experience that all is one. There is no 'us' and 'they' — everything is us. This is an integral or holistic approach.

Looking at Science:

- There is today a new vision of reality emerging from new physics.
- As we know, old physics was mechanistic; we had then the great figure of Isaac Newton.
- Corresponding to that mechanistic philosophy, but in a larger mould, we had a dualistic philosophy that divided the world into two components: **the world of matter and the world of mind.**
- The great figure of this philosophy was Descartes.
- However, a hundred years ago, a brilliant Indian physicist, Jagadish Chandra Bose, demonstrated to the scientific world that there was no fundamental division between plants, animals and human beings.
- When Darwin discovered the process of evolution, a series of new philosophies came to be developed.
- But none of these philosophies has the thoroughness of the evolutionary philosophy of Indian sages that bridges the gulfs between matter and life, and life and mind, and of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of evolution from mind to supermind. In fact, he reverses the entire process of evolution and points out that the real evolutionary force is not material but supramental in character, and that matter itself is nothing but a mode of the supermind. **He thus bridges, like the Vedic rishis, the three great oceans of existence — the inconscient, conscient, and superconscient.**
- This is extremely refreshing, and one feels a kind of rejuvenation of thought and life.
- One can see clearly the interconnection between Sri Aurobindo's vision of a world union of free nations, the vision of a spiritualised society, and the vision of integral humanism based on a holistic vision of the universe.

A new way of thought:

- Globalisation based on the mechanistic world view also attempts to integrate nations through the concept of the world as one market.
- The recent experience of attempts to integrate the economies and technologies of nations instead of creating any global consciousness leading to oneness has turned out to be **divisive, exclusivist, fragmentary and has not helped in resolving any of the conflicts.**
- The market forces, instead of harmonising conflicts, have further deepened the fault lines.
- As a matter of fact, this has resulted in a world that is out of balance.
- Currently, restoration of the balance in this planet is a big challenge. Enlightened global minds need to think about an alternative paradigm.

Yoga and its holistic tenets in the realm of international relations:

- Former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said,

“We should do this [yoga] before every negotiation so that we can work with a calm mind”.

- It can be argued that if international negotiations could be held on the basis of holistic tenets, along with a calm mind, perhaps the UN would be able to use its time for good purposes.
- If such and other practices of holistic behaviour are pursued, possibly a new culture of conducting world affairs and international relations might evolve in the future.
- It is important to note that there is increasing awareness that the present imbalance is the outcome of the inability of existing socio-economic institutions and political structures to deal with the current impasse, which is derived from the inadequacy of concepts and values of an outdated model of the universe and the belief that all problems can be solved by technology.
- In light of this, perhaps there is a need for a new paradigm.

Concluding Remarks:

- Some important questions arise: Can an alternative world view for transforming human society into a non-violent, eco-friendly, non-dogmatic, egalitarian, all-inclusive, secular world family be evolved through the harmonisation of yoga and science?
- Enlightened global minds should seriously ponder on such a probability.
- In fact, apart from emphasising the normal benefits of yoga, International Yoga Day should be utilised to think about how a peaceful transition can be achieved for peace, harmony and happiness.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Misplaced priorities (Simultaneous Elections)

What's in the news?

- The recent decision to form a committee to examine the issue of holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies is a significant step towards achieving Prime Minister Narendra Modi's objective of synchronising elections across the country.
- However, the fact that he took the initiative to convene a meeting of leaders of all political parties so early in his second stint in office shows that he attaches considerable importance to it.

Editorial Analysis:

Potential Advantages of Simultaneous Elections:

- Advocates of such elections point to potential benefits.
- There is the obvious advantage of curbing the huge expenditure involved and reducing the burden on the manpower deployed.

- The second point in its favour is that ruling parties can focus more on governance and less on campaigning.
- The idea that some part of the country is in election mode every year, resulting in impediments to development work due to the model code of conduct being in force, is cited in favour of reducing election frequency.
- However, there are challenging questions of feasibility that the political system must contend with.

Looking at the Potential Challenge Areas:

- First, it may require the curtailment or extension of the tenure of State legislatures to bring their elections in line with the Lok Sabha poll dates.
- Important questions arise:
 1. Should State governments bear this burden just to fulfil the ideal of simultaneous elections? (There is an obvious lack of political consensus on this).
 2. What happens if the government at the Centre falls?
- **The Law Commission**, in its working paper on the subject, has mooted the idea of a 'constructive vote of confidence'.
-
- That is, while expressing loss of trust in one government, members should repose confidence in an alternative regime.
- Another idea is that whenever mid-term polls are held due to loss of majority, the subsequent legislature should serve out only the remainder of the term.
- **These measures would involve far-reaching changes to the law**, including amendments to the Constitution to alter the tenure of legislatures and the provision for disqualification of members for supporting an alternative regime.
- In terms of principle, the main issue is whether getting all elections to coincide undermines representative democracy and federalism.

Looking at Parliamentary Democracy:

- In a parliamentary democracy, the executive is responsible to the legislature; and its legitimacy would be undermined by taking away the legislature's power to bring down a minority regime by mandating a fixed tenure just to have simultaneous elections.
- The interests of regional parties may take a beating, as regional issues may be subsumed by national themes in a common election.

Concluding Remarks:

- Given these challenges, there is simply no case for hastening the introduction of simultaneous elections.
- The government must accord priority to other electoral reforms.

- For instance, it should seek ways to curb spending by candidates and parties, which has reached alarmingly high levels and poses a threat to free and fair elections.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Fed's signals

What's in the news?

- Experts opine that the days of monetary policy normalisation in most advanced economies may well be over.
- In a recent development the U.S. Federal Reserve, after a two-day policy meeting, held its federal funds rate unchanged in the 2.25% to 2.50% range and simultaneously signalled its readiness to ease policy by dropping a reference to being 'patient' on borrowing costs.

Editorial Analysis:

- Fed Chairman Jerome Powell suggested that the central bank may look at cutting interest rates in the near future in order to tackle the various threats to U.S. economic growth.
- In particular, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell noted the uncertainty on the trade front and its potential to impact the U.S. and other economies.

Eyes on the G-20 Summit:

- With U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping set to meet at the G-20 summit in Japan, the Fed's decision at the conclusion of its next meeting could well hinge on the outcome of the Trump-Xi talks.
- Experts opine that the dovish stance of the Fed comes just a day after Mario Draghi, the President of the European Central Bank, hinted that the ECB may resort to rate cuts and bond purchases if inflation failed to rise.
- Whether these major central banks will back their rhetoric with action remains to be seen. However, the change in their tone is clear.
- The Federal Reserve had begun its policy normalisation process in 2015, sending several emerging market currencies into crisis. But just a few years into normalisation, and with real interest rates barely above zero, central banks are already talking about a possible cut in rates if the economy demands it.

What does the dovish turn indicate?

- This dovish turn indicates the growing threat of a global economic slowdown due to increasing trade tensions between the U.S. and China.
- It may also be a sign that central banks are yielding to increasing pressure exerted by politicians like Mr. Trump, who has been vocal in his criticism of the Fed.

- The important question, however, is not whether central banks will cut interest rates but whether the resultant rate cuts would be enough to boost the global economy.
- This is particularly so at a time when trade wars have led to increasing restrictions on the movement of goods and services.
- Furthermore, with real interest rates in advanced economies currently not far above zero, central banks may have to look beyond rate cuts and explore other unconventional policy measures to directly inject money into the economy.
- However, even that may not ensure success as the effectiveness of monetary policy has been decreasing with growing debt levels.

Concluding Remarks:

- The shift to an easing cycle internationally will of course make it easier for the Reserve Bank of India to cut rates aggressively without worrying about the effect of such reductions on the rupee.
- However, boosting growth may require a new round of structural reforms.

2. Tension in the Persian Gulf

Editorial Analysis:

- The U.S. administration's strategy to counter Iran on the nuclear front is being met with an alleged new strategy that has left the global security community baffled in more ways than one.
- Currently, it is being suggested that shipping vessels be provided naval escorts through the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, something reminiscent of World War II when most merchant ships would be provided with naval security.

A Look at recent incidents at the Strait of Hormuz:

- Two oil tankers, one belonging to the Norwegian shipping company Frontline and the other a Japanese vessel, Kokuka Courageous, were sabotaged in the Strait of Hormuz by what the American central command calls **limpet mines, apparently manufactured in Iran.**
- Speculation has been rife over who may have conducted such a sophisticated attack in a sea route through which 40% of the world's traded oil passes.
- The U.S. blames Iran for the sabotage attacks, even releasing videos and photographs of the incident in an attempt to prove Iranian involvement, something Tehran has vehemently denied.
- It is important to note that the situation in the Gulf has been brewing for a few months now and there can be multiple ways to read it.
- Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was on a state visit to Tehran, hoping to mediate between the two rivals, when the Japanese tanker was attacked.

A Look at the geopolitics at play:

- To believe either side of the story, without evidence, would be misleading.
- However, geopolitics in most instances does not come in black or white — rather, it's all grey.
- The U.S.'s decision to unilaterally pull out of the Iran nuclear deal and impose sanctions on Iran for its nuclear programme has not gone down well with Tehran.
- As a matter of fact, even the global community too has not appreciated the move.
- The American side of the story is that Iran is meeting economic and diplomatic manoeuvres with violent attacks by pulling off sophisticated sabotage on the seas.
- Iranians, on the other hand, proclaim that it is the American intelligence apparatus that is conducting such moves to escalate the situation to the brink of war, thus paving the way for yet another 'promotion of democracy' in West Asia.

Concluding Remarks:

- Iran has been at the wrong end of American sanctions for decades now, and it has learned to negotiate its way each time with creative new strategies.
- However, the recent U.S. pressure on countries such as India, Japan and Turkey to reduce their oil imports from Iran to zero has hit Tehran where it hurts most.
- And this new strategy of sabotaging oil supply routes in the Persian Gulf may be Iran's 'creative' way of dealing with American absolutism.
- It might well be Iran's way of looking at the adverse situation created by the U.S.: 'If we can't ship oil, might as well let no one else do it too.'

F. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Prelims Facts

1. Kutiyattam

- Koodiyattam also transliterated as Kutiyattam is one of India's oldest living theatrical traditions.
- It is a traditional performing art form of state of Kerala.
- Koodiyattam means combined acting.
- It is a combination of ancient Sanskrit theatre with elements of Koothu, a Tamil/Malayalam performing art which is as old as Sangam era.
- In its theatrical language, neta abhinaya (eye expression) and hasta abhinaya (the language of gestures) are prominent.
- The art form is officially recognised by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Futures and Options are types of derivatives.
2. An option gives the buyer the right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell an asset at a specific price at any time during the life of the contract.

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:

Forwards, Futures, Options and Swaps are the types of derivatives. A derivative is a financial instrument that derives its value from an underlying asset or group of assets.

- Futures are derivative financial contracts that obligate the parties to transact an asset at a predetermined future date and price.
- An option gives the buyer the right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell an asset at a specific price at any time during the life of the contract.[/su_spoiler]

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The origin of sedition law in India is linked to the Wahabi Movement of 19th century.
2. The Sedition Act was first invoked against Jogendra Chandra Bose.

Which of the statement/s given above 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: b

Explanation:

The origin of sedition law in India is linked to the Wahabi Movement of 19th century. It is accepted that the first time, the act was invoked, was against Jogendra Chandra Bose, the editor of Bangobasi, for voicing against Age of Consent Bill, 1891.[/su_spoiler]

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to Securities and Exchange Board of India

1. SEBI is a quasi-legislative, quasi-judicial and quasi-executive body.
2. It was constituted as a statutory body.

Which of the statement/s given above 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:

- SEBI was constituted in 1988 as an interim administrative body under the Finance Ministry.
- Four years later, a notification awarding statutory powers to SEBI was issued (Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992).
- It can draft regulations, conduct inquiries, pass rulings and impose penalties, thereby making it a quasi-legislative, quasi-judicial and quasi-executive body.[/su_spoiler]

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Is India falling behind the rest of the world on crop yields by resisting GM crops. Critically comment.
2. The practice of manual scavenging, officially banned since decades, continues to exist in Indian society and is the worst surviving symbol of untouchability. Discuss.

Read previous [CNA](#).