

10 July 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. 88 manual scavenging deaths in 3 years

Context:

- According to the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry data, there have been 620 reported cases of deaths of sanitation workers while cleaning septic tanks and sewers since 1993, of which 88 occurred in the last 3 years.
- This situation persists despite a ban on manual scavenging.

Details:

- While answering a question in Lok Sabha, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister of State Ramdas Athawale told that compensation had been given in 445 cases, partial settlement in 58 cases,

while 117 cases were pending.

- Of the 15 States and Union Territories that submitted details to the Ministry, Tamil Nadu had the highest number of sewer deaths with 144 cases, followed by Gujarat with 131.
- A Supreme Court order of 2014 makes it mandatory for the government to identify all those who died in sewerage work since 1993 and provide ₹10 lakh each as compensation to their families.
- Of the 88 cases reported in 2017, 2018 and 2019, till June 14, compensation was pending in 52 cases.

Concerns:

- On the data of 15 States and Union Territories, a senior official said that some States had not reported and some had reported nil, leading to the possibility of the actual deaths from manual scavenging being higher.
- A minister told the Lok Sabha that 53,598 manual scavengers had been identified from December 6, 2013 till June 30, 2019.
- While the Act says no one can employ a person for manual scavenging and lays down punishments for those who do, there have been no reports from any state/Union Territory regarding conviction in such cases.



Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013:

- The law prohibits the employment of manual scavengers, the manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective equipment and the construction of insanitary latrines.
- The Act prohibits construction and maintenance an insanitary latrine.
- Act has laid down a mechanism of monitoring its implementation through vigilance committees and monitoring committees at different levels.
- The law also provides rehabilitation of manual scavengers and alternative employment to them within the time bound manner.
- Offences under the Act are cognizable and non-bail able.

- It provides for survey of Manual Scavengers in Urban and rural areas: which should be conducted with a time bound framework.

National Commission for Safai Karmacharis:

- The NCSK was established in the year 1993 as per the provisions of the NCSK Act 1993 initially for the period upto 1997.
- Later the validity of the Act was initially extended upto 2002 and thereafter upto 2004. The NCSK Act ceased to have effect from 2004.
- After that the tenure of the NCSK has been extended as a non-statutory body from time to time.
- The tenure of the present Commission is upto 31.3.2019.
- The NCSK has been giving its recommendations to the Government regarding specific programmes for welfare of Safai Karmacharis, study and evaluate the existing welfare programmes for Safai Karmacharis, investigate cases of specific grievances etc.
- Also as per the provisions of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, the NCSK has been assigned the work to monitor the implementation of the Act, tender advice for its effective implementation to the Centre and State Governments and enquire into complaints regarding contravention/non-implementation of the provisions of the Act.
- The Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan, also works towards rehabilitation of manual scavenging

Way forward:

- Amendments are needed in Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, in order to make it mandatory for States to report the cases.
- Housing and Urban Affairs Ministries must facilitate the complete mechanisation of sewage cleaning.
- Bio-toilets need to be promoted as they are designed to convert human waste into gases and manure.
- Technologies such as 'hydro-jetting' which involves high-pressure water hoses crawling into manholes to clear stubborn blockages must be accepted and made use of.
- The government needs to actively engage with people raise awareness about proper waste disposal, convince forcibly extracting this labour and take strict steps to completely eliminate manual scavenging.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Judiciary can't direct govt. to frame laws on marital rape: HC

Context:

The Delhi High Court has declined a plea seeking direction to the Centre to frame guidelines for registration of FIR for marital rape and laws to make it a ground for divorce.

What is Marital Rape?

- Marital rape is the act of sexual intercourse with one's spouse without the spouse's consent.
- The lack of consent is the essential element and need not involve physical violence.

Concerns:

- Though many societies around the world recognise marital rape as a form of domestic violence and

sexual abuse, there is no statute or law in India that recognises it.

- Victims can only seek recourse under Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
- Since there are no legislations, there is no FIR registered by a wife against her husband, rather, it is being compromised by the police to maintain the sanctity of the marriage between the victim and her husband.

Details:

- The High Court was hearing a plea seeking clear guideline for registration of cases related to marital rape under framed guidelines and laws, so that accountability, responsibility and liability of the authorities concerned can be fixed.
- Earlier, the Supreme Court had refused to entertain the petition by the same petitioner seeking guidelines on the issue, stating “As marital rape is not a ground for a divorce in Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Muslim Personal Law [Shariat] Application Act, 1937 and Special Marriage Act, 1954, it cannot be used as a ground for divorce and cruelty against husband,” and had directed the petitioner to approach the high court.
 - The plea also cited a report of National Family Health Survey which said that nine out of every 100 men across India agreed that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she refuses to have sex with him.
 - The survey also reported that 15 out of every 100 men in India do not agree to the fact that a wife is justified in refusing to have sex with her husband when she is tired or not in the mood.
 - Five out of every 100 women in India reported that their husband had physically forced them to have sexual intercourse with him even when they didn’t want it.
- A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar have now said that the court cannot direct the government to frame laws as it is the domain of the legislature and not the judiciary.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. UN report backs India’s stand on Pak.-based militant groups

Context:

Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR) has made an update to the report on Kashmir released last year.

Details:

- Last year, the Office of UNCHR released its first-ever report on Kashmir, urging action by both countries to reduce tensions.
- The recent update claims that neither India nor Pakistan have taken any concrete steps to address the numerous concerns raised.
- While India has rejected the ‘Update’ of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report on Jammu and Kashmir, activists have urged the government not to entirely reject the human rights panel’s report. They have called on India to “engage” with the OHCHR’s findings
- The Ministry of External Affairs maintains that its objections to the OHCHR report are based on human rights violations the report has accused India of.
- The govt should engage with this process to acknowledge the violations, take steps towards accountability, and call for Pakistan to ensure and end to militant abuses, the activists opine.

New References:

- Activists point out that the OHCHR report includes certain new references to human rights violations by militant groups that should be welcomed by New Delhi.
- For example, child soldiers being used by militant groups has been taken note of in the recent update.
- It has been highlighted that Jaish-e-Mohammad, Hizbul Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Taiba had all been accused of recruiting and deploying child soldiers in Indian-Administered Kashmir.
- The report also remarks that Kashmiri groups have been charged with sedition and arrested in both Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Islamabad.
- It also mentioned strictures passed by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) against Pakistan for not curbing terror financing by these groups.
- In specific allegations against Pakistani intelligence agencies (ISI and IB) the OHCHR report blamed Pakistani intelligence officials for threatening those who criticise the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects in Gilgit Baltistan (G-B), and for “disappearances of journalists and activists in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and G-B.
- It criticised Pakistani authorities for charging 19 activists of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front with treason for organising a rally, that demanded both Pakistan and India should leave Kashmir, and for a series of cases against other students groups and journalists.

Pakistan has welcomed the report, while adding that the human rights concerns in Pakistan administered Kashmir should not be equated with the Indian side.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. India has stricter regulatory norms: Basel

Context:

The Basel Committee on Banking Supervision has said that India is compliant regarding regulation on large exposures though, in some respects, regulations are stricter than the Basel large-exposures framework.

Details:

- In a report on assessment of large exposure regulations, it said India is compliant with the highest grade of regulation.
- For example, banks' exposures to global systemically important banks are subject to stricter limits in line with the letter and spirit of the Basel Guidelines, and the scope of application of the Indian standards is wider than just the internationally active banks covered by the Basel framework.
- The Basel large exposures framework requires banks to identify third parties that may constitute an additional risk factor inherent in the structure itself rather than in underlying assets. RBI's implementation of the large exposures framework requires banks to identify such third parties (like originator, fund manager, liquidity provider and credit protection provider).
- The large exposures framework applies to all scheduled commercial banks apart from regional rural banks.
- The assessment relied on regulations, other information and explanations provided by the Indian authorities, and it ultimately reflects the view of the Basel Committee.
- The framework became partially effective since April 2019 and the same circular was modified in June 2019.
- The report says from April 2020 onwards, the obligation to assess the connectedness based on economic interdependence and the inclusion of non-centrally cleared derivatives exposures in calculation of the large exposure limits will also enter into force as per the revised circular.

Basel Committee on Banking Supervision:

- BCBS, the primary global standard setter for the prudential regulation of banks.
- It has 45 members, comprising central banks and bank supervisors from 28 jurisdictions.
- The assessment was conducted by the Regulatory Consistency Assessment Programme (RCAP), part of the Basel committee, and focused on the completeness and consistency of the domestic regulations in force on 7 June 2019, as applied to commercial banks in India, with the Basel large exposures framework.

2. Cabinet clears sops for port operators

Context:

The Maharashtra state Cabinet has cleared changes to the Maharashtra Port Policy, 2016.

Details:

- In a move that is set to benefit developers and operators of all major and minor ports in the state, the state Cabinet has modified the state's port policy to lower the port and wharfage charges.
- Wharfage charges have been reduced to half from three times.
- It also announced major concessions for private port operators.
- The concession periods for developments of greenfield ports and multipurpose jetties is also increased from 35 years to 50 years.
- The government, however, has retained the rider that 100 per cent capital investment for such developments will have to be made within the first 35 years.
- The Cabinet approved new measurement rates for the foreshore land -- a land string that margins a water body for which development charges have to be paid upfront as per the ready reckoner rates.
- The state has also introduced amendments permitting imports and exports from a multipurpose jetty.
 - With the Centre pushing for the development of waterways along the Mumbai coastline, the government has also permitted the use of jetties controlled by the Maharashtra Maritime Board to be used for running transportation services, tourism, training, and research.

Significance:

- Maharashtra has a total of 591 ports. The government also has plans to categorise 20 ports along the Raigad coast as "sensitive" to enhance the security arrangements around.
- The new Cabinet changes will reduce the current rebate given on inter- and intra-State movement in ports and jetties.
- The amendments will also address concerns around the security of the State's ports.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. CPCB pulls up 52 firms over handling of waste

Context:

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has pulled up 52 companies for not specifying a timeline or a plan to collect the plastic waste that results from their business activities.

The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016:

- The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, (which was amended in 2018) prescribed by the Union

Environment Ministry, says that companies that use plastic in their processes — packaging and production — have a responsibility to ensure that any resulting plastic waste is safely disposed of.

- Under this system — called the Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR) — companies have to specify collection targets as well as a timeline for this process within a year of the rules coming into effect on March 2016.
- The plastic waste can be collected by the company or outsourced to an intermediary.
- The Rules also mandate the responsibilities of local bodies, gram panchayats, waste generators and retailers to manage such waste.

Estimates on Plastic waste:

- According to CPCB estimates in 2015, Indian cities generate about 15,000 tonnes of plastic waste per day and about 70 per cent of the plastic produced in the country ends up as waste.
- Nearly 40 per cent of India's plastic waste is neither collected nor recycled and ends up polluting the land and water.
- Plastic packaging has been singled out as one of the key contributors to plastic waste though there isn't any number on its relative contribution.
- However, like the companies, states too have come in the CPCB's firing line.

Details:

- A notice posted on the website of the CPCB, said that these 52 companies hadn't yet registered at the online portal and disclosed their disposal plans.
- Failing to do so would invite action against the defaulters, the notice warned.
- This action can include fines or imprisonment under provisions of the Environment Protection Act.
- The companies were to have registered more than a year ago.
- In spite of these laws, India has made little progress in managing its plastic waste.
- The National Green Tribunal earlier this year hauled up 25 states and union territories for not following its orders on submitting a plan by April 30, 2019, on how they would comply with the Plastic Waste Management Rules of 2016.
- They stand to potentially pay a fine of Rs 1 crore.

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB):

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) of India is a statutory organisation under the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF).
- It was established in 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
- CPCB is also entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
- It serves as a field formation and also provides technical services to the Ministry of Environment and Forests under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- It Co-ordinates the activities of the State Pollution Control Boards by providing technical assistance and guidance and also resolves disputes among them. It is the apex organisation in the country in the field of pollution control, as a technical wing of MoEF.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

1. The malaise of malnutrition

Focus of the article:

This article focusses on malnutrition in Indian society and the need to address this issue on a priority basis.

Background:

A Brief Note on the National Nutrition Mission:

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission - NNM) aims to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies.
- Under POSHAN Abhiyaan, the Government has fixed targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
- The mission also strives to achieve reduction in Stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022 (Mission 25 by 2022).
- A single unified technical set-up, namely a National Nutrition Resource Centre – Central Project Management Unit (NNRC-CPMU) at the national level and similarly State Nutrition Resource Centre – State Project Management Unit (SNRC-SPMU) in all States/ UTs ensures regular monitoring and review of all sectoral programmes especially those directly affecting malnutrition.
- Monitoring is done under POSHAN Abhiyaan through ICDS-CAS aimed to augment system strengthening including improving the coverage and quality of nutrition services.
- The ICDS-CAS has two components, namely the mobile application which is made available to the field functionaries pre-loaded on mobile phones and a six tier monitoring dashboard for desktops. The software allows the capture of data from the field on electronic devices (mobile/tablet).
- It enables collection of information on ICDS service delivery and its impact on nutrition outcomes in beneficiaries on a regular basis.
- The ICDS-CAS dashboard facilitates Nutrition outcome oriented monitoring triggered by mapping of weight/height efficiency, height and nutrition status of children under-five years.
- The service delivery to children, pregnant women and lactating mothers can be monitored through the software application dashboard.

What's in the news?

- A new report, '**Food and Nutrition Security Analysis, India, 2019**', authored by the Government of India and the **United Nations World Food Programme**, paints a picture of hunger and malnutrition amongst children in large pockets of India.

Editorial Analysis:

- In fact, this development punctures the image of a nation marching towards prosperity.
- It is unfortunate that even after 70 years of independence, hundreds of millions of Indian citizens are vulnerable to hunger and desperation. It once again forces us to ask why despite rapid economic growth, declining levels of poverty, enough food to export, and a multiplicity of government programmes, **malnutrition amongst the poorest remains high**.

A trap of poverty, malnutrition:

- The report shows that the poorest sections of society are caught in a trap of poverty and malnutrition,

which is being passed on from generation to generation.

- Mothers who are hungry and malnourished produce children who are stunted, underweight and unlikely to develop to achieve their full human potential.
- The effects of malnourishment in a small child are not merely physical.
- As a matter of fact, a developing brain that is deprived of nutrients does not reach its full mental potential.
- A study in the Lancet notes that under-nutrition can affect cognitive development by causing direct structural damage to the brain and by impairing infant motor development.
- This, in turn, affects the child's ability to learn at school, leading to a lifetime of poverty and lack of opportunity.
- Another study in the Lancet observes that these disadvantaged children are likely to do poorly in school and subsequently have low incomes, high fertility, and provide poor care for their children, thus contributing to the intergenerational transmission of poverty.
- In other words, today's poor hungry children are likely to be tomorrow's hungry, unemployed and undereducated adults.
- The findings in the report are not new. As a matter of fact, many studies over the last five years have exposed the failure of past governments to ensure that its most vulnerable citizens are provided adequate nutrition in their early years.
- Unfortunately, India has long been home to the largest number of malnourished children in the world.

A Few Encouraging Signs:

- Some progress has been made in reducing the extent of malnutrition.
- The proportion of children with chronic malnutrition decreased from 48% percent in 2005-06 to 38.4% in 2015-16.
- The percentage of underweight children decreased from 42.5% to 35.7% over the same period.
- Anaemia in young children decreased from 69.5% to 58.5% during this period. But this progress is small.

Setting an ambitious target

- The government's National Nutrition Mission (renamed as Poshan Abhiyaan) aims to reduce stunting (a measure of malnutrition that is defined as the height that is significantly below the norm for age) by 2% a year, bringing down the proportion of stunted children in the population to 25% by 2022.
- However, some experts point out that even this modest target will require doubling the current annual rate of reduction in stunting.
- The minutes of recent meetings of the **Executive Committee of Poshan Abhiyaan** do not inspire much confidence about whether this can be achieved.
- A year after it was launched, State and Union Territory governments have only used 16% of the funds allocated to them.
- Fortified rice and milk were to be introduced in one district per State by March 2019.
- However, the minutes of a meeting in March, 2019 showed that this had not been done, and officials in charge of public distribution had not yet got their act together.

The Role of Anganwadis:

- Anganwadis are key to the distribution of services to mothers and children.
- However, in many States, including Bihar and Odisha, which have large vulnerable populations, the government is struggling to set up functioning anganwadis, and recruit staff.
- Experts point out that the key to ending the tragedy of child nutrition lies with a handful of State governments: the highest levels of stunted and underweight children are found in Jharkand, Bihar,

Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Some Important Statistics:

- Malnutrition is a reflection of age-old patterns of social and economic exclusion.
- Over 40% of children from Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are stunted.
- Close to 40% of children from the Other Backward Classes are stunted.
- The lack of nutrition in their childhood years can reduce their mental as well as physical development and condemn them to a life in the margins of society.
- Stunting and malnourishment starts not with the child, but with the mother.
- For instance, an adolescent girl who is malnourished and anaemic tends to be a mother who is malnourished and anaemic. This in turn increased the chances of her child being stunted.

Concluding Remarks:

- Amartya Sen had once noted that famines are caused not by shortages of food, but by inadequate access to food.
- For the poor and marginalised, access to food is impeded by social, administrative and economic barriers.
- In the case of children and their mothers, this could be anything from non-functioning or neglectful governments at the State, district and local levels to entrenched social attitudes that see the poor and marginalised as less than equal citizens who are meant to be an underclass and are undeserving of government efforts to provide them food and lift them out of poverty.
- Lastly, there is a large section of society, **the poorest two-fifths of the country's population**, that is still largely untouched by the modern economy which the rest of the country inhabits.
- As one part of the country lives in a 21st century economy, ordering exotic cuisines over apps, another part struggles with the most ancient of realities: finding enough to eat to tide them over till the next day.

2. Going electric

Background:

- The Government of India had proposed the mandating of electric three-wheelers and two-wheelers by 2023 and 2025, respectively. Meanwhile, the transition to BS-VI norms, set to come into play on April 1, 2020, will make three-wheelers more expensive, which is expected to work in the favour of electric three-wheelers. Also, the recently announced Union Budget made a bold move to make a transition to electric vehicles, and offered a tax incentive for the early adopters.
- Thus, the issue concerning the adoption of electric vehicles in the Indian market assumes importance and is a topic worth delving further into.

Editorial Analysis:

Move to Adopt Electric Vehicles:

- The Union Budget has announced a bold move to make a transition to electric vehicles, and offered a tax incentive for the early adopters. Experts opine that its stated vision to leapfrog into an era of electric mobility and domestic vehicle manufacturing, led by public transport and commercial vehicles, is forward-looking.
- It is also inevitable because **poor air quality and noise pollution have sharply affected the quality of life, and pose a serious public health challenge.**

Need of setting deadlines:

- In fact, as the NITI Aayog has stated, the goal of shifting to electric vehicles cannot make progress without deadlines, and that a market-driven approach sought by some sections of the automotive industry will leave India's capabilities and infrastructure for e-mobility trailing others, notably China.
- With 2030 as the outer limit, the imperative is to fix a realistic time-frame by which scooters, motorcycles, three-wheel carriages and, later, all new vehicles will be battery powered.

Moves to incentivize electric vehicles:

- An additional income tax deduction of ₹1.5 lakh is now offered on interest paid on loans to purchase electric vehicles, and the GST Council has been moved to cut the tax on e-vehicles to 5% from 12%.
- It is also important to note that **there is a significant outlay under the second iteration of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing (of Hybrid and) Electric Vehicles (FAME) plan of ₹10,000 crore**, to give a fillip to commercial vehicles and to set up charging stations.

The Adoption of Electric Vehicles:

- The budgetary measures will have an immediate impact on the pricing of electric vehicles and bring in more models, but it **will take a sustained effort by the Centre, in partnership with State governments, to enable a fast rollout of charging infrastructure.**
- The Ministry of Power issued guidelines and standards for this in December 2018, setting technical parameters for public charging stations that can enable normal and fast charging.
- With price competition, a speedy spread of electric two-wheelers can be expected, given that over **80% of conventional vehicles sold in India come under that category.**
- Next, affordable charging will make these vehicles and commercial three-wheelers attractive because **operating costs are a fraction of petrol and diesel equivalents.**
- Having said this, longer range travel will require more than a charge-at-home facility.
- This would have to be in the form of fast charging at parking lots, retrofitted fuel outlets, new public charging stations, hotels, offices and so on.
- Experts suggest that swapping the battery at convenient locations with one that is pre-charged, especially for commercial vehicles that run longer and need a quick turnaround, is worth considering.

Following the China Model?

- China is clearly the benchmark for the world right now with its government laying the framework for a carefully thought out e-mobility strategy. India has been quick to announce its intent too.
- The problem is that this option will eventually need to be affordable for those keen to buy an electric two-wheeler or car and this is where **subsidies will be the key pivot.**
- China has successfully managed this because it worked to a plan and India will need to follow a similar path.

Concluding Remarks:

- Across the world, e-mobility is the new mantra even while car-makers are grappling with the challenge of huge investments, an uncertain market and hiring the right people.
- It remains unclear if the income tax deduction of ₹1.5 lakh on the interest paid on loans to purchase electric vehicles (EV), announced in the Budget would benefit only personal buyers, or be applicable to fleet buyers as well.
- Lastly, a longer-term policy priority has to be the setting up of lithium battery production and solar

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Global problem, local solutions

Background:

A Note on Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF):

1. Introduction:

- Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP), Department of Agriculture (DoA) is implementing Andhra Pradesh 'Zero-Budget' Natural Farming (APZBNF) Programme, through Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) (corporation for farmers' empowerment).
- RySS is a not-for-profit organization established by GoAP.
- The programme has been initiated in 2015-16 with multiple objectives of enhancing farmers' welfare, consumer welfare and for the conservation of the environment.
- Zero-Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) is a holistic alternative to the present paradigm of high-cost chemical inputs-based agriculture.
- It is very effective in addressing the uncertainties of climate change.
- ZBNF principles are in harmony with the principles of Agroecology.
- Its uniqueness is that it is based on the latest scientific discoveries in agriculture, and, at the same time it is rooted in Indian tradition.

2. Aims and Objectives:

- The main aim of ZBNF is to eliminate chemical pesticides and promote good agronomic practices that are eco-friendly and less water consuming.
- Organic and natural farming techniques including Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) can improve both water use efficiency and soil fertility.
- Zero Budget Natural Farming also aims to create the human and social capital necessary for vibrant and inclusive agricultural production.
- It is believed that the success of climate-resilient, Zero Budget Natural Farming in Andhra Pradesh will not only help India in meeting its SDGs but it can also inspire and transform the lives of millions of farmers across the developing world.

Some Important Observations on India's Food Security Situation:

- Food security exists, as per the FAO, when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets the dietary needs and food preferences to ensure an active and healthy life style.
- India's food security challenges lie in the areas of low GDP per capita, sufficiency of supply, public expenditure on R&D and protein quality.
- While India ranks number 1 in nutritional standards, there is a need to further improve management of food supply.

Editorial Analysis:

The Role of Indigenous people in conserving ecosystems:

- Experts opine that the **Dongria Kondh tribe** of Niyamgiri Hills are among the best conservationists

in the world.

- Known for the spirited defence of their forested habitat against short-sighted industrialisation, **they have through millennia evolved a lifestyle that is in perfect harmony with nature.**
- Across India, there are scores of indigenous people who have managed to lead meaningful lives without wanton destruction of natural ecosystems.
- As a matter of fact, **these tribes, along with marginalised communities living on the fringes of forests and millions of smallholder farmers, are the best hope that India has to preserve biodiversity and ensure food security.**
- At a time when nature faces the threat of another mass extinction of species, their importance cannot be emphasised enough because they offer us solutions to avert an imminent meltdown.
- The first global assessment of biodiversity by a UN-backed panel, which released its report in May 2019, held **humans squarely responsible for the looming mass extinction of species.**
- It is feared that **without radical efforts towards conservation, the rate of species extinction will only gather momentum.**
- As a matter of fact, the **UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** recently said that **a loss in biodiversity simply means that plants and animals are more vulnerable to pests and diseases, and it puts food security and nutrition at risk.**

At a higher risk:

- Although biodiversity loss is a global problem, it can be countered only with local solutions.
- There's no one-size-fits-all approach.
- As a matter of fact, **a solution that has succeeded in a temperate, wealthy nation may not be suitable for a country like India.**
- India is a tropical country rich in biodiversity, but the imperatives of relentless economic growth, urbanisation, deforestation and overpopulation place it at risk more than many other places.
- Nothing can be achieved without the active participation of communities that live close to nature — farmers and forest dwellers.
- It is now obvious that **intensive agriculture, exploitative forestry and overfishing are the main threats to biodiversity in India and the world.**
- In their prognosis, **UN agencies are unanimous that the best way to correct the present course is to heed the accumulated wisdom of indigenous peoples, fishers and farmers.**
- The situation with our forests is even more dire. **Instead of evicting forest dwellers from their homes, one should be encouraging them to conserve and nurture their habitats.**
- For solutions one has to just look at the growing movement of **zero-budget natural farming** in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, or the **community-driven forest conservation initiatives** in Odisha and the Northeast, to realise that there is hope for the natural ecosystem, if only we act on the advice of local communities.

Concluding Remarks:

- There is no silver bullet to solve the problem of crop and biodiversity loss at the national level.
- The natural farming movement in Andhra Pradesh may not be suitable for, say, Punjab.
- Fortunately, India's farmers and tribes are nothing if not innovative and they do have local solutions.
- It is important to note that the **loss of biodiversity and the threat of species extinction along with the alarming changes wrought by global warming are the primary concerns of our times.**

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. The growing power of the lumpen

Editorial Analysis:

- There has been a rise in hate crimes in the country of late.
- What is also a cause for concern is that India has begun to feature prominently on a growing list of countries marked by hate crime, including hate speech in electoral campaigns.

A rising graph

- Studies of hate crimes in India show that they have steadily risen over the past five years.

Study by Amnesty International:

- Amnesty International India documented 721 such incidents between 2015 and 2018.
- In the year 2018 alone, 218 hate crimes were tracked, 142 of which were against Dalits, 50 against Muslims, 40 against women, and eight each against Christians, Adivasis, and transgenders.
- The more common hate crimes, which were found, were honour killings — that have sadly occurred for decades — and ‘cow-related violence’, that was rare earlier but has become more frequent over the past five years.

Study by Hate Crime Watch:

- According to Hate Crime Watch, crimes based on religious identity were in single digits until 2014, when they surged from nine in 2013 to 92 in 2018.
- What is also regrettable to note is that rarely, if ever, did bystanders attempt to stop the violence or police arrive on time to do so.
- Furthermore, in both studies, Uttar Pradesh topped the list of States with the largest number of hate crimes for the third year, followed by Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Bihar.

Study by NDTV:

- According to a study by NDTV there are at least 45 politicians in our newly elected union legislature who have indulged in hate speech over the past five years.

Initiative to be taken by States and Union:

- The Rajasthan administration is introducing a Bill prohibiting cow vigilantism, but that deals with only one hate crime.
- Experts point out that **an omnibus act against all hate crimes**, which includes hate speech, is required across India and should be a priority of the 17th Lok Sabha.

International Perspective:

- **Germany**, for example, **amended Section 46 of its Criminal Procedure Code**, dealing with sentencing in violent crime, to say the sentence must be based on consideration of ‘the motives and aims of the offender, particularly where they are of a racist or xenophobic nature or where they show contempt for human dignity’.
- France has a draft Bill to prohibit hate speech, and Germany has already enacted one.

Does Hate Speech encourage Hate Crime?

- Currently, in India, we have a number of sections in the Indian Penal Code that can be used to punish or even prevent hate crime, **but they are disparate and few policemen are aware of them**.
- Those that are, fear to use them in areas whose political leaders mobilise through hate speech.

- Though some Indian analysts debate whether there is a correlation between hate speech and hate crime, **worldwide data show that hate speech encourages or legitimises acts of violence and a climate of impunity.**

A Look at Court directives:

- In 2018, the Honourable Supreme Court of India directed Central and State governments to make it widely known that lynching and mob violence would ‘invite serious consequence under the law’ (Tehseen S. Poonawalla v. Union of India & Ors).
- Then Home Minister Rajnath Singh told Parliament that the government had formed a panel to suggest measures to tackle mob violence, and would enact a law if necessary.
- However, unfortunately, **the panel’s recommendations are not in the public domain, and acts of hate crime do not appear to have diminished.**

Report Published by Human Rights Watch India:

- In a May 2019 report, **Human Rights Watch India** pointed out that only some States had complied with the Supreme Court’s orders to designate a senior police officer in every district to prevent incidents of mob violence and ensure that the police take prompt action, including safety for witnesses; set up fast-track courts in such cases; and take action against policemen or officials who failed to comply.
- Those State governments that did comply, the report commented, did so only partially. In several instances, the police actually obstructed investigations, even filing charges against the victims.
- It is important to note that **whether it is political hate speech or police bias on the ground, there is little doubt that the national bar against hate crime has been lowered.**

Media Coverage of Hate Speech and Hate Crimes:

- On television these days, we see replays of hate speech and videos of lynching.
- Although the accompanying commentary is critical, **repeated iterations normalise the hateful.**
- The print media too is unfortunately failing. Several newspapers now publish triumphalist opinion articles, including comments to articles that are hate speech by any definition.

The Way Forward:

- One of the policy issues that is high on the Modi administration’s list is dealing with incitement to violence through social media.
- But the focus is on hate in relation to terrorism, and it is unclear whether government policy will extend to cover hate crime.
- Important as it is to do so, the digital media is not the only offender. In fact, there are several obvious steps which would be easier to take and yield more immediate results than regulation of the digital media.
- **Parliament could enact an omnibus act against hate crime, and the Home Minister could set benchmarks for policemen and administrators to deal with hate crime.**
- **The legislature and political parties could suspend or dismiss members who are implicated in hate crimes or practise hate speech.**
- The electronic and print media could stop showing or publishing hateful comments and threats. Priests could preach the values of tolerance and respect that are common to all religions and schools could revitalise courses on the directive principles of our Constitution.

Concluding Remarks:

- For a demographically diverse country such as India, hate crimes — including crimes of contempt —

are a disaster.

- Each of our religious and caste communities' number in the millions, and crimes that are directed against any of these groups could result in a magnitude of disaffection that impels violence, even terrorism.
- Far less diverse countries than India are already suffering the result of hate 'moving into the mainstream', as UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently highlighted.
- We can still contain its spread if we act resolutely.

F. Tidbits

1. DRDO gets clearance for missile test facility in A.P.

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has granted environment and Coastal Regulatory Zone clearances for setting up Missile Testing Facility in Andhra Pradesh.
- The Missile Test Launch Facility will be set up on the Bay of Bengal coast
- The Technical Facility will be located at Gullalamoda village in Krishna district.
- With this, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has obtained all necessary clearances to begin the construction work.

2. Honour for 'Plan Bee' that helped save jumbos

- Plan Bee, earned the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) the best innovation award in Indian Railways for the 2018-19 fiscal.
- Plan Bee is an amplifying system imitating the buzz of a swarm of honey bees to keep wild elephants away from railway
- There are 29 earmarked elephant corridors with the operating zone of NFR spread across the north-eastern states and parts of Bihar and West Bengal. Trains are required to slow down at these corridors and adhere to speed specified on signs.
- But elephants venture into the path of trains even in non-corridor areas, often leading to accidents resulting in elephant deaths.
- NFR's Rangiya Division and Forest Department field officials worked on certain deterrents and provide a solution to the problem.
- The Plan Bee device has been helpful in diverting herds of elephants, especially when trains approach and dashing becomes imminent.
- NFR officials said that a mix of Plan Bee and other measures have helped them save 1,014 elephants from 2014 to June 2019.

G. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.
2. The court is composed of 15 Judges.
3. The term of office of ICJ is 9 years.

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

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 2 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The International Court of Justice or the ICJ, is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.
- The International Court of Justice was established in 1945 by a UN Charter and it began work in 1946, as a successor to the Permanent Court of International Justice.
- It settles legal disputes between member countries and gives advisory opinions to authorized UN organs, and specialized agencies.
- The ICJ comprises a panel of 15 judges, elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council. These judges are elected for 9 year terms.
- The Court sits in the Peace Palace in the Hague, Netherlands.
- Chapter 14 of the UN Charter authorizes the UN Security Council to enforce court ruling. However, such enforcement is subject to the veto power of the 5 permanent members of the Security Council.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Basel Convention is related to Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.
2. The convention does not cover radioactive wastes.

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 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, usually known as the Basel Convention, is an international treaty that was designed to reduce the movements of hazardous waste between nations, and specifically to prevent transfer of hazardous waste from developed to less developed countries (LDCs). Basel Convention does not set legally binding destruction obligations, rather it only offers non-binding disposal guidelines. It also does not cover radioactive wastes.

Q3. "Agenda 21" is:

- a. An agreement between 21 developing countries of the world on climate change.
- b. A free trade agreement between 21 developing countries of the world.
- c. A voluntarily implemented action plan of the United Nations with regard to sustainable development.
- d. A plan to conserve the wetlands in India.

Answer: c

Explanation:

Agenda 21 is a non-binding action plan of the United Nations with regard to sustainable development. It is a product of the Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Gaj Yatra is a campaign to protect elephants.
2. It is a significant part of the Rath Yatra celebrations.

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:

Gaj Yatra, a nationwide campaign to protect elephants, was launched on the occasion of World Elephant Day in 2017. The campaign aims to cover 12 elephant range states. It is not a part of the Rath Yatra celebrations. The 15 months campaign will be led by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI).

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Highlighting some of the latest e-governance initiatives introduced by the government of India, discuss how e-governance tools can be used as instruments for rural and agricultural development. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. Criminalising Marital Rape may destabilise the institution of marriage apart from being an easy tool for harassing the husbands. Critically comment. (15 Marks, 250 Words)

