

07 Aug 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS1 Related

B. GS2 Related

POLITY

1. [Rajya Sabha Passes the Consumer Protection Bill](#)
2. [Government Agrees to Send Bills for Scrutiny](#)
3. [Women Leaders in Indian Politics](#)
4. [Uniform Civil Code in Goa](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [North Korea Opposes U.S-South Korea Exercise](#)
2. [Trump freezes all Venezuela Government assets in U.S.](#)

C. GS3 Related

ENVIRONMENT

1. [Coal Plants will have to spend ₹73,000 Cr. To Comply with the Green Norms](#)

ECONOMY

1. [New Norms for Insurance Marketing Firms \(IMFs\)](#)

D. GS4 Related

E. Editorials

POLITY

1. [UNSC Resolution 47 on Kashmir](#)
2. [Fast-Track Courts \(FTC\)](#)

HEALTH

1. [The Surrogacy \(Regulation\) Bill, 2019](#)

F. Tidbits

1. [Chandrayaan 2: Final orbit-raising manoeuvre](#)
2. [China vows to counter US deployment of midrange arms in Asia](#)

G. Prelims Facts

1. [National Investment and Infrastructure Fund \(NIIF\)](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Rajya Sabha Passes the Consumer Protection Bill

Context:

The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed the Consumer Protection Bill, 2019.

Background:

- Over twenty thousand, one lakh and three lakh cases related to consumer protection are pending at

the national, state and district levels respectively.

- In 118 out of 596 districts, the posts of the President of Consumer Commissions are not appointed and as many as 362 posts of members are lying vacant.
- The Consumer Protection Bill 2019 was already passed by Lok Sabha.
- The bill, after receiving the final assent from the President, will replace the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
- Opposition MP's demand for sending the bill to a select committee for further scrutiny was rejected by the Rajya Sabha.
- The Government had dropped healthcare from the bill as several members had objected to it.

Key Features of the Bill:

- The bill defines a consumer as a person who buys any goods or avails a service for a consideration.
 - It does not include a person who obtains a good for resale or a good or service for commercial purposes.
 - It covers transactions through all modes including offline, and online through electronic means, teleshopping, multi-level marketing or direct selling.
- Six consumer rights have been defined in the Bill:
 - Right to be protected against the marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property.
 - Right to be informed of the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services.
 - Right to be assured of access to a variety of goods or services at competitive prices
 - Right to seek redressal against unfair or restrictive trade practices.
 - Right to be heard and to be assured that consumer's interests will receive due consideration at appropriate fora.
 - Right to consumer awareness.
- Under the Bill, celebrities endorsing misleading ads are also liable for fine.
- If a product is found faulty, instead of earlier individual examination, the entire batch would be examined.

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA):

- The bill seeks to establish a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to promote, protect and enforce consumer rights.
- It can issue safety notices for goods and services, order refunds, recall goods and rule against misleading advertisements.
- The agency can also initiate class action, including enforcing recall, refund and return of products.

Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions

- Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions will be set up at the District, State and National levels for adjudicating consumer complaints.
- The compensation have been increased to Rs 1 Cr. and Rs 10 Cr. for state level commissions.
- The compensation for above Rs 10 Cr. has been kept for national commission.

Consumer Protection Councils

- The Bill establishes Consumer Protection Councils at the district, state and national levels to render advice on consumer protection.
- The State and National Councils will be headed by Ministers in-charge of Consumer Affairs.

Criticisms against the Bill:

- It is alleged that the new act will empower the central government to appoint, remove and prescribe conditions of service for members of the District, State and National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions.
- It is argued that allowing the executive to determine the appointment of the members of Commissions could affect the independent functioning of the Commissions.
- With regard to Appellate Tribunals, such as the National Tax Tribunal, the Supreme Court has held that they have similar powers and functions as that of High Courts and hence matters related to appointment and tenure must be free from executive involvement.
- The Bill does not specify whom the Consumer Protection Councils will advise. If the Councils advise the government, it is unclear in what capacity such advice will be given.

Conclusion:

- Minister of Food and Consumer Affairs, who piloted the bill, agreed that the suggestions given by members would be included in the rules framed by the Ministry under the new law.
- media and celebrities must only advertise what has been given in writing to them by manufacturers, else they will be responsible (for the misleading advertisements)

2. Government Agrees to Send Bills for Scrutiny

Context:

The Union Government has proposed to send four pieces of legislation to be scrutinized by a standing committee or a select committee.

Background:

- There has been rampant criticism the government continues to pass Bills without any scrutiny.
- The Opposition parties had demanded that the RTI Amendment Bill, the Triple Talaq Bill and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill be sent to a select committee.
- However, their motions failed because they did not have the number.

Details:

- The Bills that will be sent to committees include DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code and Dam Safety Bill.
- In addition, it has been offered that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill also will be sent to a select committee.
- The Chairman of Rajya Sabha has given a final call to all parties to send the names of their MPs, from both Houses, for eight department-related standing committees under the Rajya Sabha by August 14.

Procedure for Passing a Bill in the Parliament:

- The concerned ministry or an M.P (in case of private member bills) drafts a text of the proposed law, which is called a bill.
- The draft is revised to incorporate such inputs taken from the stakeholders and is then examined by the Law Ministry.
- It is then presented to the Cabinet for approval.
- Next step is the introduction of the bill in the Parliament.

- In Parliament, it goes through three Readings in both Houses.
- During the First Reading the Bill is introduced. The introduction of a Bill may be opposed and the matter may be put to a vote in the House.
- After a Bill has been introduced, the Bill may be referred to the concerned Departmentally Related Standing Committee for examination.
- The Standing Committee considers the broad objectives and the specific clauses of the Bill referred to it and may invite public comments on a Bill.
- It then submits its recommendations in the form of a report to Parliament.
- However, the government is not bound to accept the Committee's recommendations.
- In the Second Reading (Consideration), the Bill is scrutinized thoroughly. Each clause of the Bill is discussed and may be accepted, amended or rejected.
- The government, or any MP, may introduce amendments to the Bill.
- During the Third Reading (Passing), the House votes on the redrafted Bill.
- If the Bill is passed in one House, it is then sent to the other House, where it goes through the second and third readings.
- After both Houses of Parliament pass a Bill, it is presented to the President for assent.
- He / She has the right to seek information and clarification about the Bill, and may return it to Parliament for reconsideration. If both Houses pass the Bill again, the President has to assent.
- After the President gives assent, the Bill is notified as an Act.
- The procedure given above are applicable to ordinary bills only. For Money bills and Constitution Amendment bills, the procedure varies.

3. Women Leaders in Indian Politics

Context:

Former Union Minister Sushma Swaraj, the first woman to become the Leader of Opposition in the Parliament, passed away on Tuesday night following cardiac arrest.

Some Contributions by the former Minister:

- She was elected seven times as a Member of Parliament and three times as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.
- At 25 years of age, she became the youngest ever Cabinet Minister in the Haryana government.
- In 1998, she became the first woman Chief Minister of Delhi.
- In 2009, she was the first woman to become the Leader of Opposition in the Parliament.
- She served as the Information and Broadcasting Minister (2000-2003) and later as the External Affairs Minister (2014-2019).
- During her tenure as Foreign Minister, Sushma Swaraj had developed a reputation as an approachable minister, often helping Indians facing troubles related to passports and visas.
- She was the only woman MP to receive the 'Outstanding Parliamentarian Award'.

Women in Indian Politics:

- Women's representation has steadily increased in the Lok Sabha. In the first-ever election, only 5% of the House consisted of women. Now, that has increased to 14%.
- In Rajya Sabha, women MPs constitute only 10.8%.
- Women representation in the state legislative assemblies is also at comparable levels.
- The figures are far from satisfactory when compared to Rwanda (61% women) and the global average of 23.4%.
- In India, only one instance exists when a woman became the President. The same is applicable with the post of Prime Minister as well.
- In the Panchayati Raj governance, women enjoy 1/3 reservation of seats as provided in the

Constitution. Some states have increased it to 50%.

Challenges:

- Women politicians have seldom raised to leadership roles in Indian politics.
- A combination of factors such as gender discrimination, social conditioning, child-rearing, lack of safety and inaccessibility to higher education have resulted in much lower participation of women in Indian politics.
- Also, reserved seats in Panchayati Raj institutions are often contested by proxy woman candidates of their husbands or relatives.

Way Ahead:

- The Women's Reservation Bill or The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008, must be reintroduced so as to amend the Constitution of India to reserve 33% of all seats in the Lower House of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women.
- Political parties may consider providing intraparty reservation for women in leadership positions and election candidature.
- There is a need for a holistic development of women in terms of education, health, employment opportunities and safe environments.

4. Uniform Civil Code in Goa

Context:

The state government of Goa plans to amend the Portuguese era Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

Background:

- Goa is the only Indian state to have a UCC in the form of common family law.
- It was introduced in the year 1870 by the erstwhile Portuguese rulers.
- It was retained even after the territory was merged with India in 1961.
- Article 44, a Directive Principle of State Policy (Part 4), of the Constitution of India sets the Uniform Civil Code's implementation as a duty of the State.

Details:

- The government of Goa want to amend the UCC so as to enable non Goans to register their marriage in the state.
- At present, marriage registration in Goa has the mandatory provision of maintaining the 15-day gap between two signatures before sub-registrar—one for declaration of intent and the other for confirmation.
- Several Goans holding the Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) card, who are on a short vacation in Goa, find it difficult to register their marriages.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. North Korea Opposes U.S-South Korea Exercise

Context:

North Korea has come up with fresh threats of weapon test, effectively derailing the peace process with the

Background:

- North Korea has pursued nuclear and missile programmes for years in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions, and easing tensions with North Korea is one of the U.S. president's top foreign policy priorities.
- Trump and Kim met for the first time in Singapore in June last year, and agreed to improve relations and work towards the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.
- But the second summit in Hanoi broke down after the two sides failed to narrow differences between a US demand for North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons and a North Korean demand for sanctions relief.
- Recently, Trump visited the demilitarization zone between South and North Korea as a gesture of revival of peace talks.
- While North Korea has not recently tested a long-range missile that could reach the U.S., last month it fired off a series of short-range missiles.
- In the last few days South Korea and U.S.A resumed the military exercise.

Details:

- As the U.S. - South Korea military drill is under way, North Korea threatens with fresh weapon tests.
- The move threatens to derail negotiations between U.S and North Korea.
- North Korea insisted that the drills are in flagrant violation of the denuclearisation process.

Conclusion:

U.S must ensure that the leeway achieved in the denuclearisation process is not derailed by tit for tat actions with the North and South Korea.

2. Trump freezes all Venezuela Government assets in U.S.**Context:**

The Trump administration has frozen all Venezuelan government assets in a significant escalation of tensions.

Background:

- In recent years Venezuela's economy collapsed and shortages of food and medicines became widespread.
- There was rampant corruption present in the administration too, including an allegedly rigged Presidential election.
- US is keen to remove the incumbent Government lead by Nicholas Maduro and have recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's rightful leader.
- China and Russia have continued to back Maduro.
- Previous sanctions have targeted dozens of Venezuelan government insiders as well as the South American nation's oil industry, the source of almost all of its export earnings.

Latest Move by the U.S.A:

- All property and interests in property of the Government of Venezuela that are in the United States will be blocked.
- There will be an immediate ban on Americans doing business with Venezuela's government.

- The latest move places Washington's trade relations with the South American country on a par with Cuba, Syria, Iran and North Korea.
- Exceptions will be allowed for the delivery of food, medicine and clothing.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Coal Plants will have to spend ₹73,000 Cr. To Comply with the Green Norms

Context:

An analysis has shown that India's coal fired power plants will have to spend at least ₹73,000 Cr. to comply with the government's directive to implement clean technology in existing and new plants.

Background:

- India's installed power capacity as of March 2019 is 194,000 MW.
- Coal fired plants generate 72% of India's electricity.
- The Union Environment Ministry had extended the time limit for compliance to 2022 from an earlier deadline of 2017.
- Current rules say that coal-fired power plants have to ensure that they curtail Sulphur dioxide and Nitrous oxide emissions from their smoke stack by implementing appropriate technology.
- According to the Central Electricity Authority, 166 GW of capacity requires retrofitting with flue gas desulphurisation (to meet sulphur oxide emission norms) and 66 GW with modifications or enhancements to reduce Particulate Matter (PM) emissions.

Estimation of Cost:

- The report was prepared by the International Institute of Sustainable Development and the Council on Energy, Environment and Water.
- Coal plant units across the country producing about 177,000 MW of power, commissioned on or before June 2017, were analyzed.
- The cost will rise to ₹86000 Cr. if the plants marked for decommissioning are also to be retrofitted.

What will be the Consequences?

- If the retrofitting is not done, there will be an estimated 300,000 to 320,000 premature deaths and 5.1 Cr. hospital admission cases due to respiratory disorders between 2019 and 2030.
- The report estimates the mortality and morbidity costs attributing to PM2.5 alone to be Rs. 8, 88,038 Cr. Rs. 74,184 Cr. respectively during 2015-2030.
- The retrofitting will lead to Rs.0.32 to Rs.0.72 per kWh rise in the electricity tariff.
- Electricity bills for consumers will see an average hike of 9% to 21%.

Conclusion:

- India aims to increase its installed renewable energy capacity from 78 GW to 175 GW, including 100GW from solar power, by March 2022.
- Apart from promoting the renewable energy sector, India needs to look into reducing Green House Gas emissions from the existing sources too.

Category: ECONOMY

1. New Norms for Insurance Marketing Firms (IMFs)

Context:

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has notified changes to regulations governing Insurance Marketing Firms (IMFs), amending the 2015 regulations.

What are IMFs?

- Insurance Marketing Firm (IMF) is a new distribution channel approved by IRDAI as per the Govardhan Committee's report submitted in 2007.
- It is a new distribution channel to solicit or procure insurance products, to distribute other financial products by employing individuals licensed to market, distribute and service such other financial products.
- IMF is a great opportunity for financial professionals/entrepreneurs who aspire to provide wholesome financial protection through professionally run firms.

Objective of the new Norms:

- The amendments have been introduced for increasing insurance penetration by providing an enabling environment.

What are the Changes Introduced?

- A net worth of ₹5 lakh would suffice for IMFs applying to launch operations in only one district, which is an aspirational district as defined by NITI Aayog or an economically backward district.
- An IMF is allowed to register for three districts in a State, with at least one of them being aspirational district.
- The net worth would continue to be a minimum of ₹10 lakh for all other cases.
- Now, IMFs can engage with Agriculture Insurance Company of India and Export Credit Guarantee Corporation.
- Earlier norms allowed IMFs to solicit business for two life, two general and two health insurers only.
- IMFs can solicit business for all kinds of products sold on individual and/or retail basis, including crop insurance for non-loanee farmers and combi-products.
- Property, group personal accident, group health, GSLI and term insurance policies for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) form part of this list.
- There will be a relaxation in the work experience requirement of IMF's Principal Officer.
- The regulator had also constituted a committee that made many recommendations, including a reduction in the net worth, expansion of the area of operation of IMFs, as well as the basket of products.
- A new clause requires insurers to file with authority their policies for utilization of IMFs.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY

1. UNSC Resolution 47 on Kashmir

- It focuses on the complaint of the Government of India concerning the dispute over the State of Jammu and Kashmir that India took to the Security Council in January 1948.

Who were the UNSC members who oversaw the issue?

- The UN Security Council increased the size of the investigating council to include six members along with permanent members of the UNSC.
- Along with the five permanent members, China, France, UK, US & Russia, non-permanent members included Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Syria and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

What happened at the UNSC?

- India's position was that it was ready to hold a plebiscite, a direct vote in which an entire electorate votes on a specific proposal, to know of the people's desire and accept the results of the vote.
- Pakistan denied its involvement in the conflict and counter-accused India.
- UNSC ordered for the conflict to cease and to create conditions for a "free and impartial plebiscite" to decide whether Jammu and Kashmir would accede to India or Pakistan.

What did the UNSC order Pakistan to do?

- The UNSC ordered that Pakistan was to **withdraw its tribesmen and Pakistan nationals** who had entered "the State for the purpose of fighting" and to prevent future intrusions and to prevent "furnishing of material aid to those fighting in the State".
- The UNSC also stated that it gave "full freedom to all subjects of the State, regardless of creed, caste or party, to express their views" and the freedom to vote on the issue of the accession of the State.
- It was also ordered **Pakistan to cooperate with maintaining peace and order**.

What did the UNSC order India to do?

- The UNSC **had a more comprehensive set of orders for India**. It said that after the Pakistani army and tribesmen had withdrawn from the State and the fighting had ceased, India was to submit a plan to the Commission for withdrawing forces from Jammu and Kashmir and to reduce them over a period of time to the minimum strength required for civil maintenance of law and order.
- India was ordered to appraise the Commission of the stages at which steps had been taken to reduce military presence to the minimum strength and to arrange remaining troops after consultations with the Commission.
- Among other instructions, India was ordered to agree that till the time the Plebiscite Administration found it necessary to exercise the powers of direction and supervision over the State forces and police, these forces would be held in areas to be agreed upon with the Plebiscite Administrator.
- It also directed India to recruit local personnel for law and order and to safeguard the rights of minorities.

How did India & Pakistan react to the UNSC Resolution 47?

Both countries rejected Resolution 47.

- India's contention** was that the **resolution ignored the military invasion by Pakistan** and placing both nations on an equal diplomatic ground was a dismissal of Pakistan's aggression and the fact that

the Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh had signed the Instrument of Accession.

- India also objected to the Resolution's requirement that did not allow India to retain military presence which it believed it needed for defence.
- The Resolution's order to form a coalition government, would also put Sheikh Abdullah, the Prime Minister of the Princely State of Jammu & Kashmir, in a difficult position.
- India also believed that the **powers conferred on the Plebiscite Administrator undermined the state's sovereignty**.
- India also wanted Pakistan to be excluded from the operations of the plebiscite.
- **Pakistan** on the other hand, objected to even the minimum presence of Indian forces in Kashmir, as allowed by the resolution.
 - It also wanted an **equal representation in the state government for the Muslim Conference**, which was the dominant party in Pakistani-held Kashmir.
 - Despite their differences with the provisions of Resolution 47, both India and Pakistan welcomed the UN Commission and agreed to work with it.

2. Fast-Track Courts (FTC)

Background

- FTC's are set up with the major objective of enabling quick and efficient disposal of cases.
 - They are established to expeditiously dispose of long pending cases in the Sessions Courts and long pending cases of Undertrial prisoners.
- The term of scheme on the Fast Track Courts were **recommended by the Eleventh Finance Commission**
- They were actualized through an executive scheme (as opposed to a statute of the legislature)
- Fast-track courts (FTCs) have been around for a long time, with the **first ones being established in the year 2000**.

Context

- Smriti Irani, Minister for Women and Child Development, informed the Rajya Sabha that the government has proposed to set up 1,023 fast-track courts to clear the cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act

Stats

- To quote the Ministry of Law and Justice, at the end of March, there were 581 FTCs operational in the country, with approximately 5.9 lakh pending cases, **Uttar Pradesh having the most number of cases**.
- However, 56% of the States and Union Territories, including Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, **had no FTCs**.
- In terms of money, ₹870 crore was released by the Centre between 2000-2001 and 2010-2011 towards these FTCs.

Views of Legal luminaries

- **Former Supreme Court chief justice KG Balakrishnan** has said the fast track courts were quite successful in reducing the backlog of cases
- **Leading lawyer and rights activist Colin Gonsalves** says fast-track courts have not turned out to be a "very satisfactory system of delivering justice".
- **India's Law Commission** sums up the paradox: "Justice delayed is justice denied and at the same time justice hurried is justice buried."

Allocation of cases varies from state to state

- In a survey of FTCs conducted by National Law University Delhi, it was observed that there is a huge variation in the kinds of cases handled by these courts across States, with certain **States primarily allocating rape** and sexual offence cases to them and **other States allocating various other matters**.
 - **FTCs in Delhi** mostly deal with cases of rape with and without murder, sexual assault against women, and cases involving vulnerable victims.
 - But in **West Bengal**, the FTCs presently deal with all types of cases

Has increase in Judges led to reduction in Pendency of cases?

While the Centre is promising to set up FTCs across the country, the moot question is: will a mere increase in the number of judges lead to a direct reduction in pendency of cases?

- Data collated from the Supreme Court's 'Court News' between 2010 and 2017 show otherwise. For instance, in Karnataka, the number of working judges increased between 2012 and 2017 (with occasional dips in certain years) but **pendency did not reduce**.
- Similarly in other States, such as Maharashtra, Kerala, Delhi and West Bengal, **increase or decrease in the number of judges did not affect pendency of cases**.

Hence, there are several other factors that have an impact on disposal of cases.

Why FTC have not met intended objective?

- The original concept of fast-track courts envisaged the hiring of additional judges and new infrastructure, including courtrooms, technological facilities and libraries, this has not happened and fast-track courts now function with existing infrastructure and no additional judges.
- Several FTCs **lacked technological resources to conduct audio and video recordings** of the victims
 - **Designated Vulnerable Victims Deposition Complexes**, where testimonies can be conducted, are set up only in few court complexes. Since a different level of sensitivity is required to hear and handle such cases, such designated rooms provide a conducive atmosphere and great comfort to vulnerable victims to share their thoughts in a free manner.
 - It is of utmost concern that witnesses are sometimes threatened by the system and so do not appear before the courts. This shows that the way the system treats victims who seek legal redress has to be readdressed.
- Inadequate staff and IT infrastructure, frivolous adjournments and **over-listing of cases** in the cause list are some of the variables.
 - In addition, designated staff working solely in a FTC is not always present. Sometimes, **staff from other (regular) courts end up working in FTCs** as well. Staff working in some FTCs are on contractual appointments; so they can leave at any time
- **In the police part of the system**, there are no designated investigating **officers who only investigate cases filed in FTCs**.
 - Investigating officers also do normal policing duties, so their time is shared. Additionally, if an accused is in custody (rather than on bail), then police tend to work faster.
 - Further, if offences take place in different parts of the country, then also it takes more time.
- **The forensic science laboratories**, which are crucial to the working of FTCs, are highly understaffed and not well-equipped.
 - They deal with reports relating to both regular courts and FTCs.
 - This leads to delay in submitting expert reports to courts.
- Furthermore, given the vacancies in subordinate courts across the country, it also needs to be seen whether States will hire additional judges or appoint FTCs from the current pool of judges. For

instance, in the case of commercial courts, **several States designate special judges from the current pool of judges.**

- Such a move could prove to be problematic as it would increase substantially the workload of the remaining judges.

Steps to be taken by the Govt

For the FTCs to become successful, States will need to take stock of the issues at the ground level.

- It is important that States engage with the **principal and senior district judges** to get a sense of issues the courts are facing in various districts. Equal attention must be paid to both the metropolitan and far-flung non-metropolitan areas.
- Critical issues such as inadequate court staff, improper physical and IT infrastructure and understaffed forensic labs, which affect the day-to-day functioning of the FTCs, must be comprehensively addressed.
- For wholesome effectiveness, even the corresponding parts of the system, such as the investigation, filing of charge sheet, the forensic reports and appeals must also be fast-tracked.

Conclusion

- Merely increasing the number of FTCs to overcome their shortage is not the answer. The need is to **revamp the system based on micro-level studies** with the stakeholders.
- The FTCs cannot be allowed to routinely function like ordinary courts. Further both internal, as well as external factors affecting FTCs, should be considered while deciding the issue of delay in justice.

Category: HEALTH

1. The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019

Definition

The Bill defines surrogacy as a practice where a woman gives birth to a child for an intending couple with the intention to hand over the child after birth to the intending couple.

Regulation of surrogacy:

The Bill prohibits commercial surrogacy, but allows altruistic surrogacy.

- **Altruistic surrogacy** involves no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother other than the medical expenses and insurance coverage during the pregnancy.
- **Commercial surrogacy** includes surrogacy or its related procedures undertaken for a monetary benefit or reward (in cash or kind) exceeding the basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.

Purposes for which surrogacy is permitted:

Surrogacy is permitted when it is:

- for intending couples who suffer from proven infertility;
- altruistic;
- not for commercial purposes;
- not for producing children for sale, prostitution or other forms of exploitation; and

- For any condition or disease specified through regulations.

Eligibility criteria for intending couple:

The intending couple should have a 'certificate of essentiality' and a 'certificate of eligibility' issued by the appropriate authority.

- A **certificate of essentiality** will be issued upon fulfilment of the following conditions:
- a **certificate of proven infertility** of one or both members of the intending couple from a District Medical Board;
- an order of parentage and custody of the surrogate child passed by a Magistrate's court; and
- **Insurance coverage** for a period of 16 months covering postpartum delivery complications for the surrogate.
- The **certificate of eligibility** to the intending couple is issued upon fulfilment of the following conditions:
- the couple being **Indian citizens** and married for at least five years;
- between 23 to 50 years old (wife) and 26 to 55 years old (husband);
- **they do not have any surviving child** (biological, adopted or surrogate); this would not include a child who is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from life threatening disorder or fatal illness; and
- Other conditions that may be specified by regulations.

Eligibility criteria for surrogate mother:

To obtain a certificate of eligibility from the appropriate authority, the surrogate mother has to be:

- a close relative of the intending couple;
- a married woman having a child of her own;
- 25 to 35 years old;
- a surrogate only once in her lifetime;
- Possess a certificate of medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy. Further, the surrogate mother cannot provide her own gametes for surrogacy.

National and State Surrogacy Boards:

The central and the state governments shall constitute the National Surrogacy Board (NSB) and the **State Surrogacy Boards (SSB)**, respectively. Functions of the NSB include,

- **advising** the central government on policy matters relating to surrogacy;
- laying down the **code of conduct of surrogacy clinics**; and
- Supervising the functioning of SSBs.

Offences and penalties:

- undertaking or advertising commercial surrogacy;
- exploiting the surrogate mother;
- abandoning, exploiting or disowning a surrogate child; and
- Selling or importing human embryo or gametes for surrogacy.
- The penalty for such offences is imprisonment up to 10 years and a fine up to 10 lakh rupees. The Bill specifies a range of offences and penalties for other contraventions of the provisions of the Bill.

F. Tidbits

1. Chandrayaan 2: Final orbit-raising manoeuvre

- Final Earth-bound raising manoeuvre of the spacecraft was performed as planned.
- It was performed using the onboard propulsion system making the orbit slung further towards the moon at 1.42 lakh km from the earth.
- Next manoeuvre, the Trans Lunar Insertion, is scheduled on August 14.
- A Trans Lunar Injection is a propulsion used to set a spacecraft on a trajectory that will cause it to arrive at the Moon.

2. China vows to counter US deployment of midrange arms in Asia

- Days after the U.S warned about deployment of intermediate range, ground based missiles in Asia, China issued a statement on counter measures.
- The statement also warned U.S. allies of repercussions if they allow such weapons on their territory.
- The U.S. pulled out last week from the Intermediate range Nuclear Forces Treaty, a 1987 pact with the former Soviet Union.
- The pact banned ground launched nuclear and conventional ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500-5,000 km.
- The withdrawal also allows the U.S to develop new weapons to counter China.
- Deployment of missiles will also threaten the strategic advantages of India in the region.

G. Prelims Facts

1. National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)

- NIIF has been set up as a fund of funds and is registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India.
- It is a Category II-Alternate Investment Fund.
- The fund invests in equity capital of core infrastructure sectors in India with a focus on transportation, energy and urban infrastructure.
- Australian Super and Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan have each signed agreements with NIIF for investments of up to \$1 billion each in NIIF's Master Fund in the third round of funding.
- The Master Fund has a tenure of 15 years and is denominated in Indian rupees to suit the requirements of the infrastructure sector.
- Domestic investors such as HDFC Life and Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance have further committed ₹600 million in the third round.
- After the third round, NIIF Master Fund has become the largest infrastructure fund in India with assets under management of over \$1.8 billion and a co-investment pool of \$2.5 billion.
- Their significant investments demonstrate the international interest in Indian infrastructure.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the statements about Reserve Bank of India:

1. The Reserve Bank of India was established in the year 1857.
2. The Central Office of the Reserve Bank was initially established in Calcutta but was permanently moved to Mumbai.
3. Though originally privately owned, since nationalization in 1949, the Reserve Bank is fully owned

Which of the statements given above is/are **NOT** correct?

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

Ans: a

Explanation:

The Reserve Bank of India was established on April 1, 1935 in accordance with the provisions of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. The other two statements are correct.

Q2. Which of the following sites in India have been recognized as Wetlands of International Importance by the Ramsar convention?

- 1. Bhitakarnika
- 2. Rudrasagar
- 3. Sundarban

Options:

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

Ans: c

Explanation: The Indian side of the Sunderbans became the latest entry to the list of Ramsar sites in India. Now India has 27 Ramsar sites.

Q3. Which of the following states in India shares boundary with only one more Indian state?

- 1. Sikkim
- 2. Tripura
- 3. Meghalaya

Options:

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

Ans: d

Explanation:

The only state that shares its border with Sikkim is West Bengal. Similarly, Meghalaya shares its border with Assam only. Tripura shares a border with two Indian states; Assam and Mizoram.

Q4. What is the similarity shared by between Ammu Swaminathan, Sucheta Kriplani and Hansa Mehta?

- a) Presidents of the Indian National Congress
- b) Members of the Constituent Assembly
- c) Delegates of the Round Table Conferences.
- d) Signatories to the Lahore Pact

Ans: b

Explanation:

There were 15 women members in the Constituent Assembly of India:

Ammu Swaminathan, Dakshayani Velayudhan, Begum Aizaz Rasul, Durgabai Deshmukh, Hansa Mehta, Kamla Chaudhary, Leela Roy, Malati Choudhury, Purnima Banerjee, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Renuka Ray, Sarojini Naidu, Sucheta Kriplani, Vijalakshami Pandit and Annie Mascarene.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The social structure of India does not permit women to rise to leadership roles, particularly in the field of Politics. Discuss. (250 words, 15 marks)
2. India's hope for a permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council can be realised only by recognizing itself as a champion of the demands of the global south. Discuss. (250 words, 15 marks)