

29 Aug 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Common code of conduct proposed for legislative bodies

Context:

- The Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla has said that, a common code of conduct would be framed for legislative bodies to check interruptions.
- The statement was released after presiding over the meetings of the executive committee of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) India Region and Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India

Details:

- The speaker said that a committee of presiding officers will be formed, which, after due consultations with Speakers of Legislative Assemblies and the Chairmen of Legislative Councils, will present a report.
- The Speaker added that the presiding officers were of the unanimous view that Parliament and State Legislatures, the representative institutions, are accountable to the people and matters concerning different regions need to be constructively discussed and debated in the House.
- It was highlighted that there was a consensus among the presiding officers to increase the number of sittings of the State Legislatures and also to increase the productivity of legislative work.
- There was also consensus on the need to have extensive and healthy debates in the Legislatures for passing the laws and the House needs to function without any interruptions.
- He also highlighted that the use of technology needs to be uniform in Lok Sabha and all the State Legislatures and in sync with the concept of 'Ek Bharat'.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association:

- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), previously known as the Empire Parliamentary Association, is an organisation which works to support good governance, democracy and human rights.
- India is a member of the CPA.
- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) currently has approximately 180 branches and is divided into nine regions – Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Canada; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; India; Pacific, and South-East Asia.
- The CPA Headquarters Secretariat is based in London.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Cabinet eases rules for FDI in retail, media

Context:

The Union Cabinet has announced a number of decisions designed to attract increased foreign direct investment into the country.

Details:

- The government approved foreign investment in digital media up to stakes of 26%.
- It has allowed 100% foreign investment for **coal mining** and contract manufacturing under automatic route.
 - It has been decided to permit 100% FDI under automatic route for sale of coal, for coal mining activities including associated processing infrastructure subject to provisions of Coal Mines (special provisions) Act, 2015 and the Mines and Minerals (development and regulation) Act, 1957 as amended from time to time, and other relevant acts on the subject.
- Sourcing norms for single-brand retailers has also been eased.
- On FDI in **single brand retailing**, the Cabinet has expanded the definition of mandatory 30% domestic sourcing norm. It also allowed single brand retailers to start online sales, waiving the previous condition of setting up a mandatory brick-and-mortar store.
 - Single-brand retail trading refers to a business/franchisee/entity that sells goods to individual customers and not to other businesses and all such goods are sold under the same brand.

- Currently, the FDI policy says that a single-brand retail company with more than 51% FDI needs to source 30% of its goods from within India.
- The new decision says that this 30% can be calculated over the first five years of operation.
- Further, all procurements made from India by the SBRT entity for that single brand shall be counted towards local sourcing, irrespective of whether the goods procured are sold in India or exported.
- It has been decided that 'sourcing of goods from India for global operations' can be done directly by the entity undertaking SBRT or its group companies (resident or non-resident), or indirectly by them through a third party under a legally tenable agreement.
- Online sales will lead to creation of jobs in logistics, digital payments, customer care, training and product skilling.
- The current FDI policy provides for 100% FDI under the automatic route in the **manufacturing sector**.
 - There was no specific provision for contract manufacturing in the policy.
 - It has now decided to allow 100% FDI under the automatic route in contract manufacturing in India as well.

2. Nod for sugar export subsidy

Context:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved sugar export policy for evacuation of surplus stocks during sugar season 2019-20.

Issues:

- The surplus stocks and crashing prices has left sugar mills with a liquidity crisis.
- The 2019-20 marketing season is expected to start with an opening stock of 142 lakh tonnes, and end with a closing stock of 162 lakh tonnes.
- This surplus will only be partially mitigated by previously announced government measures to create a buffer stock and incentivise diversion of cane for the production of ethanol.
- Global sugar prices are more than 10/kg lower than domestic prices.

Details:

- At a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, the Centre has decided to offer a Rs.10.45 per kg subsidy to incentivise mills to export their surplus stocks.
- The export subsidy package will cost the exchequer Rs. 6,268 crore.
- The lump sum export subsidy will be provided for expenses on marketing costs including handling, upgrading and other processing costs, costs of international and internal transport and freight charges, the statement said.
- The subsidy is in conformity with WTO agreements.
- The subsidy would be directly credited into farmers' account on behalf of mills against cane price dues and subsequent balance, if any, would be credited to mills' account

Significance:

- The government subsidy is announced to sweeten the deal and persuade mills to export their surplus.
- The subsidy package will facilitate the export of up to 60 lakh tonnes in the 2019-20 marketing season.
- The export subsidy would help reduce the surplus sugar inventory.
- It is opined that the move also result in an additional cash flow of Rs.18,000 crore in the sector, including subsidy amount.

- It will benefit millions of farmers in U.P., Maharashtra and Karnataka, as well as other states.

3. China eases drug import restrictions

Context:

In a humanitarian gesture, China has decided not to impose heavy penalties on the import of unapproved but cheaper generic drugs, which are needed to treat critically ill patients, from countries such as India.

Why is it significant for China?

- Official figures show a surge in cancer among Chinese, with 4.3 million cases of the disease diagnosed in 2015.
- In a country where smoking is rampant, chronic lung disease, heart disease diabetes and stroke have been the cause of 80% per cent deaths, according to an earlier World Bank report.
- Cancer diagnoses in China are soaring, and survival rates are low.
- For years, Chinese patients and their relatives risked the threat of heavy criminal penalties in their hunt for affordable drugs in a country increasingly suffering from chronic diseases like cancer.
- In the most desperate of cases, relatives of these patients have resorted to making their own cancer drugs at home using raw pharmaceutical ingredients that they have found online.
- Even the rich in China contend that red tape and stringent regulatory rules prevent them from getting access to new drugs that are approved in the United States, and many say they are forced to fly overseas for treatment.
- The decision effectively giving poor and critically ill patients the green light to get cheaper generic pharmaceuticals from other countries.

Details:

- Prior to the latest decision, drugs not approved by the National Medical Products Administration (NMPA) of China were considered “fake.”
- Companies and individuals caught selling such drugs could face heavy fines or even imprisonment up to three years.
- The announcement gives hope especially to less-affluent patients who have struggled to get affordable medicines to treat chronic diseases such as cancer.
- Bulk imports of unapproved medicines would continue to face hurdles as businesses are not allowed to import drugs without approval, according to the law.
- However, the latest decision allows individuals, especially for patients whose lives are at stake to try unapproved drugs to save lives, by making the legal regulation less stringent.

Issues:

- Despite being generally welcomed, the new law is short on details.
- A statement by NMPA of China said that parties importing unapproved generic drugs may be exempted from punishment, if the medicines cause no harm or do not delay treatment.
- “Lighter penalties” may follow if circumstances for import are “relatively minor” and only “small amount” of medicines are imported.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Star tortoise, otters get higher protection at CITES

Context:

India's proposal to upgrade the protection of star tortoises, the smooth-coated otter and small-clawed otters in CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species on Wild Fauna and Flora) have been approved.

Details:

- These species have been listed under Appendix I of CITES and will now enjoy the highest degree of protection.
- A complete international ban will be enforced on their trade as part of efforts to boost numbers.
- The upgradation was approved at the Conference of the Parties (COP18) held at Geneva.

CITES:

- CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, also known as the Washington Convention) is a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals. It was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild, and it accords varying degrees of protection to more than 35,000 species of animals and plants.
- CITES is one of the largest and oldest conservation and sustainable use agreements in existence. Participation is voluntary, and countries that have agreed to be bound by the Convention are known as Parties. Although CITES is legally binding on the Parties, it does not take the place of national laws. Rather it provides a framework respected by each Party, which must adopt their own domestic legislation to implement CITES at the national level.
- **Appendix I** of CITES lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants.
 - They are threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial, for instance for scientific research.
- **Appendix II**, are species that are not necessarily threatened with extinction, but may become so unless trade in specimens of such species is subject to strict regulation in order to avoid utilization incompatible with the survival of the species in the wild.
 - In addition, Appendix II can include species similar in appearance to species already listed in the Appendices.
 - International trade in specimens of Appendix II species may be authorized by the granting of an export permit or re-export certificate.
- **Appendix III**, are species that are listed after one member country has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling trade in a species.
 - The species are not necessarily threatened with extinction globally.
 - In all member countries, trade in these species is only permitted with an appropriate export permit and a certificate of origin from the state of the member country who has listed the species.

Star tortoise:

- The Indian star tortoise (*Geochelone elegans*) is a threatened species of tortoise found in dry areas and scrub forest in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- 90% of trade of star tortoises occurs as part of the international pet market.
- A decline greater than 30% was predicted by 2025 if the exploitation continued or expanded.

- The species is categorized as '**vulnerable**' by the International Union of Conservation of Nature.

Smooth Coated Otter:

- The smooth-coated otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) is an otter species occurring in most of the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, with a disjunct population in Iraq.
- As its name indicates, the fur of this species is smoother and shorter than that of other otter species.
- It occurs in areas where fresh water is plentiful — wetlands and seasonal swamps, rivers, lakes, and rice paddies.
- The species is categorized as '**vulnerable**' by the International Union of Conservation of Nature.
- **Small-clawed Otters** (*Aonyx cinereus*) species is also categorized as '**vulnerable**' by the International Union of Conservation of Nature.

2. Mega dam plan leads to fury on Assam border

Context:

The National Green Tribunal's go-ahead for restarting construction of the 2,000 MW Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project at Gerukamukh on the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border has triggered a string of protests.

Background:

- Work on the mega project across river Subansiri was started in 2006.
- The project has been undertaken by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC).
- The Subansiri Lower Dam, officially named Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project (SLHEP), is an under construction gravity dam on the Subansiri River in North Eastern India.
- Described as a run-of-the-river project by NHPC Limited, the Project is expected to supply 2,000 MW of power when completed.
- It was halted in 2011 owing to various local issues, including submersion fears in the downstream areas.
- NHPC officials said 65% of the work was done at the time and the remaining work would take less than four years.

Details:

- The hydropower major has been losing an estimated 10 crore per day on the project, estimated to cost Rs.20,000 crore on completion.
- It is stated that the project ignores the flood control aspect.
- Tribal organisations in Assam have stepped up their anti-mega dam movement with hydropower major NHPC planning to begin work.
- The organisations in a joint statement have said that their prime concern is people's safety. And that unless the government takes adequate measures to ensure safety and livelihood of the affected people, along with protection of biodiversity, there is no question of restarting construction.
- It is believed that the impacts will include ecosystem damage and loss of land.

River Subansiri:

- The Subansiri River is a tributary of the Brahmaputra River in the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China.
- The Subansiri is the largest tributary of the Brahmaputra.
- The Subansiri River originates in the Himalayas, in China.
- It flows east and southeast into India, then south to the Assam Valley, where it joins the Brahmaputra

River in Lakhimpur district.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Honor Killing in Kerala

- Honour killing is defined as the killing of a relative, especially a girl or woman, who is perceived to have brought dishonour on the family.
 - It is the murder of a woman or girl by male family members.
- The term 'honour killing' is also being used widely to describe the class of murders that family members commit while seeking to **impose on young couples their medieval view that all marriages should be within their community.**

Existing Laws

Existing Penalties under Indian Penal Code:

- Sections 299-304: Penalises any person guilty of murder and culpable homicide not amounting to murder. The punishment for murder is life sentence or death and fine. The punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder is life imprisonment or imprisonment for upto 10 years and fine.
- Section 307: Penalises attempt to murder with imprisonment for upto 10 years and a fine. If a person is hurt, the penalty can extend to life imprisonment.
- Section 308: Penalises attempt to commit culpable homicide by imprisonment for upto 3 years or with fine or with both. If it causes hurt, the person shall be imprisoned for upto 7 years or fined or both.
- Section 120A and B: Penalises any person who is a party to a criminal conspiracy.
- Sections 107-116: Penalises persons for abetment of offences including murder and culpable homicide.
- Section 34 and 35: Penalises criminal acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention.

Supreme Court Judgements

The Supreme Court, which has been intervening repeatedly to preserve the freedom of marital choice of individuals, once remarked that **there is no 'honour' in 'honour killing'**. Various judgments have highlighted the need to come down on such crimes, as well as the social structures that keep such a communal outlook alive.

- Supreme Court ruling in **Lata Singh v. State of U.P. (2006)** ordering "stern action" against all those threatening or carrying out threats against couples. The Supreme Court reiterated the fact that **inter-caste marriages are not banned as per Hindu Marriage Act** and is in national interest. It is illegal to stop them in any way.
- In fact, the apex court, in **Bhagwan Dass v. Delhi in May 2011**, deemed honor killings in the "**rarest of rare**" category of crimes that deserve the death penalty.
- In **Armugam Servai vs. State of Tamil Nadu**, Supreme Court said that Khaps are illegal and must

be rooted / stamped out.

- Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, speaking against honour killings has said “Two adults are free to marry and no third party has a right to harass or cause harm to them”

Context

- The Principal Sessions Court, Kottayam, Kerala, has passed a judgment awarding life imprisonment to 10 men involved in the **abduction and murder of Kevin Joseph, a 23-year-old Dalit Christian**

Background

- Kevin was abducted by a group led by **Shyanu Chacko, the principal accused** and brother of Neenu
- The court ruled that it was an ‘honour killing’ based on **Neenu’s testimony that her family was vehemently against the marriage** as Kevin was a Dalit.

Court’s Judgment

- The court rightly **chose not to award the death penalty**. Instead it handed down two separate life terms, one each for kidnapping with intention to threaten the victim with death, and for murder.
- Even though there is a Supreme Court judgment allowing trial courts to deem ‘honour killings’ as those that fall under the ‘rarest of rare cases’ category, **the trial judge chose to take note of the fact that the accused were young and had no previous criminal background**.

Issue Area

- Discrimination against Dalits is not limited to Hindu communities listed as Scheduled Castes, but extends to those who have converted to other religions too.

Conclusion

- At a time when caste groups have become politically organised and caste associations attract the young and the educated, **there is a need for a redoubled effort to eliminate the evils of a stratified society**.
- In particular, administrators must give full **effect to the various preventive, remedial and punitive measures recommended by the Supreme Court**.
- The Centre may also **examine the need for a comprehensive law to curb killings** in the name of honour and prohibit interference in matrimonial choice of individuals.

Category: SECURITY

1. How the forces protect VIPs?

Context

- The Government has recently downgraded the security cover of former PM Manmohan Singh, from Special Protection Group (SPG) to Z plus of the CRPF.

How does the government decide the level of protection an individual needs?

- The Home Ministry takes the decision based on **inputs from intelligence agencies, which include the Intelligence Bureau and the Research and Analysis Wing**.

- They largely give a **subjective measure of threat to life or injury to a person from terrorists** or any other group, based on information from their sources.
- Certain individuals, by dint of their position in government, are automatically entitled to security cover. These include the Prime Minister and his immediate family.
- The **Home Minister and officials such as the National Security Adviser** too generally get security cover on the basis of their position.

A defined structure to whom security cover has to be provided is the need

- Since **none of the intelligence agencies in India is accountable to any statutory body**, barring the internal oversight of the Home and External Affairs Ministries, VIP security is sometimes seen as open to manipulation.
- A number of protectees, it has been alleged, **are under security cover for political reasons and not necessarily due to any real threat**.

What are the various protection levels?

There are largely six types of security covers: X, Y, Y plus, Z, Z plus and SPG.

- While **SPG** is meant only for the PM and his immediate family, other categories can be provided to anyone about whom the Centre or state governments have inputs about facing a threat.
- The **X category** on an average entails just one gunman protecting the individual;
- **Y** has one gunman for mobile security and one (plus four on rotation) for static security;
- **Y plus** has two policemen on rotation for security and one (plus four on rotation) for residence security;
- **Z** has six gunmen for mobile security and two (plus eight) for residence security;
- **Z plus** has 10 security personnel for mobile security and two (plus eight) for residence security.

How does it work?

- There are various kinds of cover within these levels. These include security of **residence, mobile security, office security and inter-state security**.
- Different VIPs are given different kinds of cover depending on threat perception.
- For example, if the Chhattisgarh CM is assessed to be facing a threat from Maoists only in his state, the Centre may choose to give him residence and mobile security only in his state, and appropriate security by the concerned state police when he travels out. Similarly, some may have a threat only when they travel, so they are given an escort force.
- Then, **different forces may be engaged for residence and mobile security**. Many protectees get residence security from state police and mobile security from a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF)

Who are SPG? Whom do they protect?

- The SPG is a force raised specifically for the protection of the **PM, former PMs and their immediate family**.
 - The force is currently 3,000 strong and protects only four people —PM Narendra Modi, Congress president Sonia Gandhi, her son Rahul Gandhi and her daughter Priyanka Gandhi.
- The elite force is highly trained in physical efficiency, marksmanship, combat and proximate protection tactics and is assisted by all central and state agencies to ensure foolproof security.
- SPG Special Agents assigned to the PM security detail wear black, Western-style formal business suits, with sunglasses, and carry a two-way encrypted communication earpiece, and concealed handguns.

Why was SPG Created?

- The SPG was **raised in 1985 in the wake of the killing of PM Indira Gandhi** in 1984.
- Earlier, Delhi police (before 1981) and Special Task Force (raised by the Intelligence Bureau in 1981) provided residence and proximate security to the PM.
- Following Indira Gandhi's killing, a review committee of secretaries recommended formation of a special group under a designated officer and for STF to provide immediate security cover both in New Delhi and outside as a short-term measure.
- In **1985, the Birbal Nath Committee set up by the Home Ministry** recommended raising a Special Protection Unit (SPU), and 819 posts were created under the Cabinet Secretariat.
- The SPU was then re-christened SPG and the post of Inspector General of Police was re-designated as director.

SPG Act

- For three years, SPG functioned under executive orders. In 1988, Parliament passed the SPG Act. Then, the Act did not include former prime ministers.
- When **V P Singh came to power in 1989**, his government withdrew SPG protection given to his predecessor Rajiv Gandhi.
 - After Rajiv's assassination in 1991, Singh faced much criticism and the SPG Act was amended to offer protection to all former PMs and **their families for at least 10 years**.
- In **2003, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government** again amended the **SPG Act to bring the period of automatic protection down from 10 years to "a period of one year** from the date on which the former prime minister ceased to hold office" and beyond one year based on the level of threat as decided by the government

How do these protection levels compare with VIP protection in other countries?

- In the **US, the security of the President and his family is handled by the Secret Service**, which also looks after the safety of the vice president, his immediate family, former presidents, their spouses, and their minor children under age 16.
 - It also provides security to major presidential and vice presidential candidates and their spouses, and foreign heads of state; security for the White House, the Treasury Department building, the vice president's residence, and foreign diplomatic missions in Washington, DC.
- In the **UK, VIP security**, including of the PM, is handled by the **Protection Command under London's Metropolitan Police Service**.
 - It has two branches: Royalty and Specialist Protection (RaSP), providing protection to the Royal Family, the PM and government officials, and Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection (PaDP), providing security to government buildings, officials and diplomats.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. What will happen if Pakistan closes its airspace to India?

Context

- After opening its airspace to all civilian traffic, Pakistan has threatened to close it again to flights taking off from India, apparently to punish New Delhi for removing the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Pakistan had closed its airspace on February 26 after Indian Air Force war jets hit a terrorist camp in Balakot, and opened up to all civilian aircraft only on July 16.

- **Longer flights:** Flight times for aircraft to and from India that normally use Pakistani airspace for transit are likely to increase by at least 70-80 minutes on average.
 - If Pakistan were to shut down its airspace again, westbound flights taking off from airports in northern India, such as Delhi, Lucknow, Jaipur, Chandigarh, and Amritsar, will be worst affected.
 - These flights will have to fly south towards Gujarat or Maharashtra, and then turn right over the Arabian Sea on their way to destinations in Europe, North America, or West Asia.
- **Refueling, cancellations:** The last time, Air India's non-stop flights from Delhi to Chicago had a planned stoppage in Europe for refuelling. IndiGo's flight from Delhi to Istanbul, which is the first non-stop flight on this route by an Indian carrier, was forced to make a refuelling stop at Doha.
 - SpiceJet, which was the only Indian airline flying the Delhi-Kabul route, had cancelled the flight.
- **Losses for airlines, costlier tickets**
 - Indian carriers will suffer losses as flight times increase and more fuel is burnt. The last time around, Indian carriers lost a total of around Rs 700 crore due to the Pakistani action. The largest chunk of losses was suffered by flag carrier Air India.
 - For passengers, tickets could get more expensive, as airlines will look to pass on at least some of the increased costs to fliers.

Impact on Pakistan

- But more than anyone else, it is Pakistan itself that will suffer. The last time it shut its airspace, the Pakistani Civil Aviation Authority took a blow of almost \$50 million in revenue.
 - This is a sum that Pakistan can hardly afford, given the precarious state of its economy.
- Its **fiscal deficit** was 8.9% of gross domestic product in June 2019, compared with 6.6% a year earlier. The deficit is now at its highest in nearly three decades, the report said.
- The **International Monetary Fund's** first quarterly review of a bailout programme for Pakistan is looming. Pakistan must increase government revenue by more than 40% in the fiscal year that beginning in July 2019, as part of the conditions for the \$6 billion loan. The loan from the IMF could be in jeopardy if the government continues to miss its revenue targets.
- In this situation, voluntarily taking a hit by closing its airspace to India makes very little sense.

F. Tidbits

1. Matriliney, border row may keep some Garos out of NRC

- A sizeable number of people belonging to the Garo tribe are expected to be excluded from Assam's updated National Register of Citizens to be published on August 31.
- The reasons: their matrilineal culture and Assam-Meghalaya boundary dispute.
- Most of matrilineal Garos inhabit the western half of Meghalaya.
- Some inhabit two districts of western Assam — Goalpara and Kamrup — in villages along the border with Meghalaya.
- In their society, the men come to live with their in-laws after marriage. Some men from Meghalaya wedded into families in Assam could not get pre-1971 documents from the government or the nokmas [village chieftains]. They are expected to miss out on the NRC.
- Many Garos resent being left out of Meghalaya at the time of the creation of the State because of lack of development and alleged neglect by the local authorities in Assam.

2. Spanish kids get 'werewolf syndrome' in medicine mix-up

- At least 17 children developed the so-called “werewolf syndrome” in a major medicine mixup in Spain.
- They are suffering from the rare condition known as hypertrichosis.
- Hypertrichosis causes abnormal hair growth.
- The alert was given after parents started noticing their children, some of them babies were growing hair all over their body after taking what they thought was omeprazole, a drug that helps with gastric reflux.
- After investigating, authorities discovered the drugs they took actually contained minoxidil, a medication used for the treatment of hair loss.

3. New Rs.9.3 crore study to check antibiotic resistance in Ganga

- The government has commissioned a Rs.9.3 crore study to assess the microbial diversity along the entire length of the Ganga.
- The study has been commissioned to test if stretches of the 2,500 km long river contain microbes that may promote antibiotic resistance.
- The project, is to be undertaken by scientists at the Motilal Nehru Institute of Technology, Allahabad; the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur; Sardar Patel Institute of Science & Technology, Gorakhpur, as well as start-up companies, Phixgen and Xcelris Labs.
- Phixgen and Xcelris Labs provide genome sequencing services, which in this case will involve mapping the genomes of the microbes sampled.

Aims of the project:

- The aims of the research project, according to a note by the National Mission for Clean Ganga under the Jal Shakti Ministry is
 - To indicate the type of contamination in the river
 - To identify threat to human health (antibiotic resistance surge),
 - Identifying sources of Eschericia coli, a type of bacteria that lives in the gut of animals and humans. Eschericia coli, while are largely harmless, some species have been linked to intestinal disease as well as aggravating antibiotic resistance.

A 2017 report commissioned by the Union Department of Biotechnology and the U.K. Research Council underlined that India had some of the highest antibiotic resistance rates among bacteria that commonly cause infections.

G. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. IUCN Red List of Threatened species lists the Grizzled Giant Squirrel under which of the following category?

- a. Near Threatened
- b. Endangered
- c. Critically Endangered
- d. Least Concern

Answer: a

Explanation:

The grizzled giant squirrel is usually known to nest in the Western Ghats in Southern India ranging from Chinnar Wildlife sanctuary in Kerala to Anamalai Tiger Reserve and Palani hills in Tamil Nadu. Owing to habitat loss and poaching, the Grizzled Giant Squirrel has been categorised as near threatened by the Red List and listed under Schedule II of CITES.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Gooty Tarantulas are biological pest controllers.
2. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has categorised it as Critically Endangered.

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:

Peacock Parachute Spider or Gooty Tarantula belongs to the genus Poecilotheria and is known to be endemic to India. It is the only blue species of the genus Poecilotheria. Tarantulas are biological pest controllers and there is a huge demand for them by collectors in the pet trade. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has categorised it as Critically Endangered.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. TRAFFIC is a wildlife trade monitoring network.
2. It is a joint program of WWF and IUCN.
3. TRAFFIC censures that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

All three statements are correct.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Ain-i-Akbari was written by Abul Fazl in the Persian language.

2. It is a detailed document about the life and ancestors of the Mughal emperor Akbar.

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:

Abul Fazl wrote a three volume history of Akbar's reign titled, Akbar Nama. The first volume deals with Akbar's ancestors. The second records the events of Akbar's reign. Ain-i Akbari is the third volume. It deals with Akbar's administration, household, army, the revenues and geography of his empire. It provides rich details about the traditions and culture of the people living in India. It also has statistical details about crops, yields, prices, wages and revenues. It was written in Persian.

I. UPSC Mains Practise Questions

1. Discuss the need for a comprehensive law in India, prohibiting interference in matrimonial choice of individuals and to curb killings in the name of honour. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. In Indian society, that is highly diverse, yet unequal, society, with multitude of regional variations, ensuring social justice has proven to be an unsurmountable challenge. The social justice project in India needs to transform and move beyond reservations. Comment. (15 Marks, 250 Words)