

25 Aug 2019: Comprehensive News Analysis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS1 Related

B. GS2 Related

POLITY

1. [IAS Officer Resigns Over 'Lack of Freedom of Expression'](#)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Prime Minister's Visit to the UAE](#)

SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. [NCTE to Shut Down Bad Colleges](#)

C. GS3 Related

ENVIRONMENT

1. [Seven New Species of Insects Discovered](#)
2. [Appropriate Mechanism over Industry Expansion](#)
3. [Fencing the Sea to Save a Temple](#)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Humanoid Robot Fails to Dock at ISS](#)

ECONOMY

1. [Power Sector Woes](#)
2. [Surcharge Still Apply to AIFs](#)

D. GS4 Related

E. Editorials

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [A New Battlefield in the WTO](#)
2. [Will India Change its 'No First Use' Policy?](#)

F. Tidbits

1. [One-Third Killed by Elephants in North Bengal Were Drunk](#)
2. [26 Candidates with Criminal Cases Won in Odisha](#)
3. [Public Libraries in Karnataka to provide e-books](#)
4. [U.S Consulate in Greenland](#)

G. Prelims Facts

1. [Polypill](#)
2. [Clouded Leopards](#)
3. [Kalvi Tholaikkaatchi](#)

H. UPSC Prelims Practise Questions

I. UPSC Mains Practise Questions

A. GS1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. IAS Officer Resigns Over 'Lack of Freedom of Expression'

<https://byjus.com>

Context:

- IAS officer Kannan Gopinathan has resigned from service because he wanted his freedom of expression back.

Background:

- The officer, who joined the service in 2012, has been serving as the secretary of the power, urban development and town and country planning departments of the union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli.
- He became popular for his anonymous participation in the flood relief efforts in Kerala last year.

Reasons behind the Resignation:

- The officer stated that over the past few days, he had been really perturbed by what is happening in the country.
- He pointed to the issue that a large section of our population have had their fundamental rights suspended and there has been a lack of response to it.
- He was worried about the fact that there has been no response even from within the service against the detaining of former civil servant Shah Faesal, who was the first Kashmiri to secure first in the civil services examination.
- He explained that he got into the service thinking that he could provide voice to people.
- But then he found himself with his voice being taken away.
- In a democracy, if the Government takes a decision, that is their right. But the response to that decision is the people's right, he added.

Civil Servants and Freedom of Speech:

- Under Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution, all citizens have freedom of speech and expression.
- But these rights are subject to certain restrictions.
- Under Article 19(2), the right of free speech and expression is subject to reasonable restrictions in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
- Most often, the rule forbidding a government servant is justified on the ground that it is a reasonable restriction in the interest of public order.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Prime Minister's Visit to the UAE

Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed ways to improve trade and cultural ties between India and the UAE with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Background:

- India and the UAE enjoy warm, close and multi-faceted relations underpinned by cultural, religious and economic linkages.

- During the Prime Minister's previous visit to the UAE in August 2015, the relationship got elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership.
- A 3.3 million-strong Indian community in the UAE nourishes the vibrant people-to-people contacts between the two friendly countries.

Details:

- The crown prince expressed gratitude by addressing the Prime Minister as a 'brother' visiting his 'second home'.
- The leaders spoke about multiple subjects including ways to improve trade and people-to-people relations between India and UAE.
- Spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry, said that there was a "new energy" in the relationship between the two leaders.
- Indian Prime Minister said that India has found a 'valuable partner' in the UAE to achieve its dream of becoming a \$5-trillion economy by 2024-25.

Bilateral Investments:

- The UAE is India's third-largest trade partner.
- There is a robust flow of bilateral investments and an annual bilateral trade of about \$60 billion.
- It is also the fourth-largest exporter of crude oil to India.
- There has been an increasing interest in investments in India in sectors such as renewable energy, food, ports, airports and defence manufacturing.
- The UAE's investments in infrastructure and housing are also being enhanced.
- Both countries are working closely to implement the commitment of \$75 billion investment by the UAE in India.

Order of Zayed:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was honoured with the 'Order of Zayed', the UAE's highest civilian award as a mark of appreciation for his efforts to boost bilateral ties between the two nations.
- The award has earlier been bestowed on several world leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Queen Elizabeth II and Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- The award is named after Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father of the UAE.
- The recognition acquires special significance as it was awarded to Prime Minister Modi in the year of the birth centenary of Sheikh Zayed.

PM Urges NRIs to Invest in J&K:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that political stability and predictable policy framework have made India an attractive investment destination.
- He urged the Indian business leaders in the UAE to invest in Jammu and Kashmir, which he said could emerge as the country's growth engine.
- Several herbal and organic products are scattered across J&K and Ladakh. If they are identified and marketed in the global market, then it will greatly benefit the people and farmers of these regions.

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. NCTE to Shut Down Bad Colleges

Context:

The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) is conducting the first-ever performance appraisals of the 19,000 institutions under its regulation.

Background:

- The teacher education institutions potentially produce 19 lakh graduates per year.
- The 26 Cr. Students of India need only 90 lakh teachers overall, at the recommended teacher-student ratio of 1:27.
- If each teacher serves about 30 years, the annual turnover is only about three lakh.
- The NCTE is undergoing a re-evaluation of its mission and functioning in its silver jubilee year.
- Its original objectives were to craft the syllabus and curriculum of teacher training and regulate institutions under its jurisdiction.

Reasons behind the Move:

- The procedure is aimed to weed out and shut down poor quality teacher education institutions, which have six times more capacity than needed.
- The B.Ed has become a degree for marriage and social status rather than for teaching.
- There are simply too many graduates seeking too few jobs.
- In addition, there are spurious, fly-by-night institutions and graduates who obtain B.Ed degrees without attending any class and with no intention of ever becoming a teachers.
- Even if we close down 10,000 institutions, we would still be oversubscribed by three times.
- This oversupply is the main reason for derogation of the teaching profession.
- Hence, they get away with paying ₹2,000-3,000 per month for a teacher who is supposed to be a leader, a motivator, a counsellor to a generation of children.

Target:

- The NCTE hopes to complete its performance appraisal process and weed out the worst institutions before the next academic year.
- The Council also plans to start aspirational new initiatives, including 700 model institutions (at least one per district), a new leadership training programme for principals and head teachers and an experimental international teaching qualification.
- This would cater to the international school market and also potentially prepare teachers who want to take their skills abroad.

National Council for Teacher Education

- The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action thereunder, envisaged a National Council for Teacher Education with statutory status and necessary resources as a first step for overhauling the system of teacher education.
- The NCTE came into existence as a statutory body under the National Council for Teacher Education Act, 1993.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Seven New Species of Insects Discovered

Context:

Scientists of the Zoological Survey of India has discovered seven species of water treaders, semi-aquatic insects that can walk or run on the surface of the water.

Details:

- The newly described species belong to the genus *Mesovelia* whose size ranges from 1.5 mm to 4.5 mm.
- The new discoveries are made from Andaman Islands, Meghalaya and Tamil Nadu.
- These bugs are 'hemimetabolous' insects without a larval stage (they go from egg to nymph to adult).
- They are found in freshwater bodies such as ponds, lakes, pools, streams, rocks with moss and sometimes on estuaries.

Ecological Importance:

- They are equipped with hydrophobic setae (bristles) on their legs.
- The combination of hydrophobic setae and water surface tension prevents them from sinking.
- The insects are pale green with silver-white wings with black veins on the basal half which make them stand out over the green colour of aquatic weeds.
- These bugs serve as predators (feed on midges, water fleas) and scavengers (feed on dead and dying mosquitoes).
- They remove organic waste and also providing a natural sanitation service.
- The females of *Mesovelia* are larger than males and dig several holes on plants and insert eggs in plant tissues with a specially adapted long serrated ovipositor.
- There are 12 species of genus *Mesovelia* found in the country.

2. Appropriate Mechanism over Industry Expansion

Context:

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Union Environment Ministry to devise an 'appropriate mechanism' to ensure that new industries or their expansion takes place only after 'due precautions' in areas where the pollution level is already high.

Background:

- In December 2018, NGT had directed all the State pollution control boards and pollution control committees to finalise the time-bound action plans to bring all polluted industrial clusters within the safe parameters under the provisions of relevant Acts.
- The pollution control boards were also directed to recover compensation for damages from polluting industries and adopt precautionary measures.
- A review plea was moved by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) seeking clarifications to a previous order passed by the tribunal pertaining to air pollution resulting from industries.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) made submissions related to the finalisation and implementation of the Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI).

Details:

- The Bench reiterated that if any unit is compliant with the norms, such unit will not be affected.
- The Bench also clarified that in no case, compensation may have to be paid twice.
- The provisions of various environmental Acts are to be enforced not only against the industrial units but also against every polluting activity whether the same has already been set up or is yet to be set up.
- The Bench observed that pendency of such steps can't be the justification for not enforcing the existing pollution norms.

3. Fencing the Sea to Save a Temple

Context:

- The Kapil Muni temple on Sagar Island in the Sunderbans is facing the threat of rising seas and will be submerged in the next few years.

Kapil Muni Temple:

- A large number of devotees gather at the island every year during the Gangasagar fair.
- The temple is located 400 metres from the sea.
- It is believed that King Bhagirath brought the Ganga down from the Himalayas to liberate his ancestors who were burnt to ashes in front of the Kapil Muni temple on Sagar Island.
- The deity in the temple was installed in 1437 by Swami Ramanand.
- It is also believed that the temple is located at the point where the river meets the sea.
- Human habitation on the island started in 1811.

Sea Wall Project:

- The sea is advancing at the rate of 15 metres a year.
- The West Bengal government is taking steps to prevent further erosion of the coast.
- The Finance Department has given in principle approval for the construction of sea walls using offshore submerged geotubes (sand-like material filled into geo-textile tube).
- The design is being made by IIT-Madras and the project will be implemented by Mackintosh Burn.
- The project involves a comprehensive plan for beach protection and coastal erosion protection for 2,300 metres along the stretch of the Kapil Muni temple and the Gangasagar mela ground.
- This is not the first time that the temple is facing the problem of rising seas.
- It is believed that the existing temple, built in 1973, is the seventh at the site, after six structures built earlier went into the sea.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Humanoid Robot Fails to Dock at ISS

Context:

A Russian Soyuz spacecraft carrying a humanoid robot failed to dock with the International Space Station (ISS) on Saturday.

Details:

- The FEDOR (Final Experimental Demonstration Object Research) robot was on its way to the ISS on a planned two-week mission to support the crew and test its skills.
- The docking process failed due to issues related to the automatic docking system.
- The spacecraft is currently 96 metres away from the station and officials plan to attempt docking again.
- The ISS is a joint project of the space agencies of the United States, Russia, Europe, Japan and Canada.

Robots in the Space:

- The Skybot F-850 is the first humanoid robot sent to space by Russia.
- NASA sent humanoid robot Robonaut 2 to space in 2011 to work in hazardous environments.
- FEDOR is the size of a human adult and can emulate movements of the human body.

Category: ECONOMY**1. Power Sector Woes****Context:**

The government is working on a new scheme involving reforms, incentive and investment support for the power sector.

Background:

- The sector has distressed assets worth 65,000 MW to 75,000 MW and it is worth over ₹4 lakh Cr.
- The stress cannot be easily resolved under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) process.
- The Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY) was introduced to make sure that power is being paid for.
- Even after (UDAY), some entities started delaying payment and ₹40,000 Cr. bills are unpaid.

Earlier Attempts:

- Banks are trying to resolve the crisis in different ways:
- Some have gone to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) route.
- But, if you resolve through NCLT, nothing will survive, except the plant.
- The power purchase agreement (PPA) and the fuel supply agreement (FSA) goes away.

Way Forward:

- The government is planning for reviving the sector.
- New schemes are planned, where reforms can be brought in backed by incentive and investment support by the government.
- The key in power sector is that power needs to be paid for.
- Union Finance Secretary advocated the involvement of Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) for resolving stress in the power sector instead of resolving under the provisions of existing bankruptcy laws.
- ARCs and the industry need to come together and bid.
- External Commercial Borrowing (ECB) norms have been amended to allow foreign funds to be brought in to repay debts.

- There is the need for new industry players besides existing ones to bid for these assets.

2. Surcharge Still Apply to AIFs

Context:

- Finance Minister announced that the surcharge (that was announced in the Union Budget) would not be applicable on foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) but made no mention of Alternate Investment Funds (AIFs).

Details:

- The announcement was aimed at reviving foreign investors' interest in the Indian capital markets.
- Industry players had met policymakers after the Budget to put across their concerns related to higher taxes.
- As per data from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), there were a total of 599 registered AIFs in the country as on July 31.
- There were close to 9,400 registered FPIs as on July 31.

Challenges:

- AIF (Category III) has been left out from the announcement.
- AIF Category III entities, perceived as hot money, include long, short or hedge funds with many such funds dealing significantly in derivatives as well.
- Hence, domestic funds are disincentive against foreign funds.
- Added tax liability would only make the business environment more difficult.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. A New Battlefield in the WTO

Context:

U.S. President **Donald Trump** recently attacked the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** for allowing countries such as India and China to engage in unfair trade practices that affect American economic interests.

World Trade Organization (WTO):

- The WTO was envisaged as an international trade body to help foster more trading in **goods and services** between nations.
- It tries to achieve the goals by lowering various barriers to trade such as **tariffs, subsidies and quotas**.
- Several **trade agreements** have been ratified over the years under the WTO.

U.S' Allegations:

- Trump strongly opposed the “**developing country**” status enjoyed by **India and China** at the WTO.
- He argued that these countries are **grown economies** that do not deserve any preferential trade treatment over developed countries.

'Developing Country' Status:

- The status allows a member of the WTO to seek **temporary exception from the commitments** under various multilateral trade agreements ratified by the organization.
- It was introduced as a mechanism to offer some **relief to poor countries** while they try to adjust to a new global trade order marked by lower barriers to trade.
- As many as **two-thirds of the 164 members** of the WTO have classified themselves as developing countries.
- India, China, etc. have argued that their **economic backwardness** should be considered when it comes to the timeline of implementation of WTO agreements.
- : Over the issue of **farm subsidies**, rich and poor countries have had major disagreements.

Benefits from the Special Status:

- Developing countries can seek to **delay the implementation of the WTO agreements**.
- They can continue to **impose tariffs and quotas** on goods and services in order to limit imports (that are lower in price or better in quality) and promote domestic producers.
- : India gives subsidies in agriculture in the name of **food security and protection of farmers**.

Challenges:

- The **WTO does not formally classify** any of its members as a developing country.
 - Individual countries are allowed to **unilaterally classify themselves** as developing economies.
 - Even many developed economies such as **Singapore and Hong Kong** (which have per capita income levels higher than the U.S.) have made use of the provision to classify themselves as growing economies.
 - Countries such as China justify that while their **per capita income** level has increased over the last few decades, these are still far below that of high income levels in countries such as the U.S.
- While local producers may be protected by **protectionist barriers** such as tariffs, consumers in India and China will have limited access to foreign goods.
- Mr. Trump may have a prima facie case in urging the WTO to address the issue of how countries arbitrarily classify themselves as ‘developing’.

Other Issues in the WTO:

- Developed countries have tried to force poorer countries to impose stringent **labor safety and other regulations**.
 - These regulations can make the developing countries uncompetitive by increasing the cost of production.

- Further, the introduction of labor issues into trade agreements is viewed as beyond the scope of the WTO.
- Many economists oppose the argument of poorer countries that low per capita income levels justify their decision to raise **trade barriers**.
 - According to them, **free trade benefits all countries** irrespective of their income levels.
 - They also argue that protectionist trade barriers obstruct the transition of developing economies to higher income levels.
- The **dispute resolution mechanism** of the WTO lacks the powers to enforce the judgments, as the enforcement is left to individual member states.
- The WTO has now deteriorated into a forum where competing governments fiercely try to protect their **narrow interests**, even though it was initially envisaged as a global body to promote free trade.

What Lies Ahead?

- Trump's criticism may be the opening of a new front in his **trade war against China**.
 - Earlier, the U.S. President had termed China as a '**currency manipulator**' for allowing the **Yuan** to depreciate against the dollar.
 - China and the U.S. have also been placing **steep tariffs on imports** from each other.
- **Global trade rules** are unlikely to experience any huge reform any time soon, since that goes against their economic interests.
- The inability of the WTO has raised questions about its
 - Global tariff rates over the years have dropped more due to **bilateral trade agreements** rather than due to multilateral trade agreements brokered at the WTO.
- The **ministerial** level talks of the WTO scheduled to be held in **Kazakhstan** next year will be crucial for the continuation of the relevance of the organization.

2. Will India Change its 'No First Use' Policy?

Context:

Recently, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh stated that in the future, **India's 'No First Use' (NFU) promise depends on circumstances**.

History:

- India initiated nuclear weapons development after its **war with China in 1962**.
- **China** carried out nuclear tests in **1964** and subsequent years.
- In **1974**, **India** conducted its first nuclear tests at **Pokhran**, dubbed as a '**peaceful nuclear explosion**'.
- **International pressure** to make India abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons remained for more than two decades.
- In **1998**, India conducted its **second nuclear tests at Pokhran**, involving a **fission device, a low-yield device, and a thermonuclear device**.
- Thus, India proved the ability to introduce **nuclear warheads** into its fast-developing missile programme.
- After the Pokhran-II tests, **Pakistan** also carried out similar tests.

No First Use:

- In **1999**, India came out with an explicit **nuclear doctrine** that committed to NFU:
 - It would never carry out a nuclear first-strike.

- The doctrine also emphasized on **minimal deterrence** and **non-use against non-nuclear weapon states**.
- The NFU promise thus went together with credible minimum deterrence.

Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD):

- Credible minimum deterrence **does not imply indefinite expansion** of the nuclear arsenal.
- The CMD is **what the “enemy” believes** deterrence to be, and their belief is manifested in their actions.
- It is built on an assured **second-strike capability**.
 - In the event of another nation carrying out a first nuclear strike against India, India’s nuclear forces shall be so deployed as to ensure **survivability of the attack** and the capability to carry out a massive, punitive nuclear retaliation aimed at inflicting damage that the aggressor will find ‘unacceptable’.
- CMD also requires:
 - A robust **command and control system**.
 - Effective **intelligence and early warning**
 - Comprehensive **planning**.
 - **Training** for operations in line with the strategy.
 - **The will** to employ nuclear forces and weapons.

Nuclear Command Authority

- Currently, the Nuclear Command Authority is responsible for command, control and operational decisions on nuclear weapons.
- Specifically, the **Cabinet Committee on Security** and ultimately the office of the **Prime Minister** is responsible for the decision to carry out a nuclear attack.

Will India Change its ‘No First Use’ Policy?

- Regional **geopolitical** realities influence India’s NFU commitment significantly.
- The CMD was established in the sense that in the following decade neither India nor Pakistan felt inclined to instigate all-out war.
 - Including the tensed periods after the **attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001** and the **Mumbai terror attacks in 2008**.
- However, since that time, the deterrent effect of India’s arsenal seemed to have less effect in one significant aspect:
 - **Pakistan** started development of tactical nuclear weapons, or “**theatre nukes**”, which had a lower yield but could still inflict enough damage to blunt a conventional attack.
 - It might have emerged as a counter to speculation that India might have developed the “**Cold Start**” doctrine.
 - This is a classified doctrine for a conventional military attack by Indian forces on Pakistani soil as a response to a state-sponsored terror attack, etc.
- In 2013, Shyam Saran, convener of the **National Security Advisory Board**, said that India will not be the first to use nuclear weapons, but if it is attacked with such weapons, it would engage in nuclear retaliation which will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage on its adversary.
- He added that the label on a nuclear weapon used for attacking India, strategic or tactical, is irrelevant from the Indian perspective.

Challenges:

- There may be some concerns based on Indian forces operating on Pakistani soil, against it.

- This strategy would take both countries back into the old-world deterrence model of “**mutually assured destruction**”.
- Any surviving forces in Pakistan after India’s retaliation would surely launch a devastating attack against targets across India.
- India may have more to gain by **pre-emptive action**.

Alternate Models:

- One option under consideration could be for “**a hard counterforce strike** against Pakistan’s relatively small number of strategic nuclear assets to eliminate its ability to destroy Indian strategic targets and cities.
- **Remaining silent** on this subject might be calculated as a strategic advantage for India as the country would be assuming deliberate nuclear ambiguity.
- However, it might compel Pakistan to adjust its nuclear posture accordingly, based on a calculation that India might be willing to carry out a counterforce attack and thereby eliminate the Pakistani nuclear threat entirely.
- This in turn **may fuel an arms race** or more unstable nuclear weapons deployment patterns in Pakistan.

Future Prospects:

- It is **unlikely** that India’s nuclear doctrine will change.
- India’s adoption of potentially pre-emptive “**counterforce options**” (to eliminate Pakistan’s strategic nuclear weapons when it deems the risk of a Pakistani first-strike to have crossed a critical threshold) may require no explicit shifts in its declared nuclear doctrine.

Conclusion:

The **Balakot strikes** that followed the **Pulwama attack** demonstrate that India is not shy of taking **cross-border military action**. If another terror attack occurs on Indian soil, these theories will likely be tested. To **what extent the countries will escalate** is yet to be seen.

F. Tidbits

1. One-Third Killed by Elephants in North Bengal Were Drunk

- One-third of the people killed by elephants in north Bengal between 2006 and 2016 happened to be drunk and chasing the animal, a study has found.
- A total of 476 persons died and 1646 injured in elephant attacks, during the period, in the four districts of the region: Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, and Cooch Behar.
- The study analysed the age, profession and identity of the victims and found that 36% were drunk (on local rice beer called handia) and were chasing away elephants from their fields or the vicinity of their homes.
- The study also found that 74% of the elephant attack victims were males, 30% were farmers, 19% were daily labours and 17% were tea workers.
- The frequency of the conflict increased during the rainy season, which also coincides with the harvest of major agricultural crops such as wheat, maize and paddy.

- The study also found that forest cover and area under human settlement increased while the area under agriculture and tea gardens declined.
- The researchers also pointed out that elephants need access to water and thus encroachment of riverine patches should be regulated immediately.
- The increase in the area of human settlements should also be regulated, particularly along major elephant corridors such as Jaldapara, Buxa, Gorumara and Mahananda sanctuaries.

2. 26 Candidates with Criminal Cases Won in Odisha

- An analysis by Association of Democratic Reforms and Odisha Election Watch has found that 26 out of 67 candidates with declared criminal cases won the last election to the Odisha Legislative Assembly.
- They had won against candidates with a clean background
- Among the 146 seats analysed in the report, there were 38 winners with a clean background who defeated a candidate with declared criminal cases.
- As many as 45 candidates won with 50% and above of the total votes polled in their constituencies, while 101 candidates won with less than 50% of the total votes polled.
- A total of 37 out of 95 'crorepati' candidates won against 'non-crorepati' runners-up.
- 22 'non-crorepati' winners defeated 'crorepati' runners-up.

3. Public Libraries in Karnataka to provide e-books

- The State Department of Public Libraries has decided to take up an initiative of digitising books.
- A number of people prefer to consume information online over buying hard copies.
- A company that will use digital rights management software, will be selected for execution of the project.
- Once a member of any of the public libraries in the State requests for a digital format, they will approach the writer and the publisher to seek permission.
- Apart from fiction and non-fiction books, they will also stock up on reference books that students need to prepare for competitive examinations.
- Readers will have to pay a separate amount if they want to access the e-books.

4. U.S Consulate in Greenland

- The U.S administration is planning to open a U.S. consulate in Greenland for the first time in decades.
- There is an increased strategic and economic interest in the territory of Denmark.
- Greenland is situated in a geographically important region and holds a potential treasure trove of natural gas and rare earth minerals.
- Re-establishing a consulate in Nuuk, the capital of Greenland is part of a broader plan to increase the U.S. presence in the Arctic.
- Earlier, President Donald Trump sparked a diplomatic dispute with Denmark after he proposed that the U.S. buy Greenland and the Danish government rejected the idea.
- The U.S. opened a consulate in Greenland in 1940 after the Nazi occupation of Denmark. It was closed in 1953.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Polypill

- Polypill is a cheap, once-a-day pill combining aspirin with drugs that lower blood pressure and cholesterol.
- It can cut cardiovascular disease as a whole by a third, and heart attacks by more than half.
- In clinical trials, the Polypill was especially effective among people with no history of cardiovascular disease, reducing the number of severe events by 40%.
- For those with a history of heart problems and strokes, the drug combo was only half as effective.
- Currently, patients are typically prescribed one or more drugs to lower blood pressure along with a statin, which holds lipids such as fatty acids in check.
- Aspirin, an analgesic, has blood thinning properties.
- The Polypill is not an alternative to a healthy lifestyle and should be combined with physical activity, a healthy diet, and staying away from smoking.

2. Clouded Leopards

- Clouded leopards are named after the cloud-shaped patterns on its skin.
- It is listed as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List.
- These are typical rain-forest dwellers but can also be found in the drier forests of Southeast Asia.
- A research paper has been published by over 20 researchers from across the globe to help understand their habitats, migration corridors and conservation strategies.
- The research was done at nine countries (Bhutan, Nepal, India, Peninsular Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar).
- In India, the Dampa tiger reserve in Mizoram was chosen as the study site.
- Dampa is one of the tiger reserves where tigers were estimated to be zero as part of the latest all India tiger estimation exercise.
- However, it is an area that supports a very high diversity and numbers of almost every other species expected in this ecosystem.
- In 2018, India added clouded leopards to its Recovery Programme for Critically Endangered Species to aid more research and strengthen conservation efforts.
- When the closed-canopy forest cover declined by just 35%, the clouded leopard detection dropped by 25%.
- Deforestation and reduction in rainfall patterns as a result of climate change may negatively influence clouded leopard distributions.

3. Kalvi Tholaikkaatchi

- Kalvi tholaikkaatchi (Education TV) will be launched as a television channel by the State Government of Tamil Nadu.
- Programmes will be telecast on the channel from 6 a.m. to 9.30 p.m.
- A majority of them will be targeted at school children on a variety of subjects.
- The TV station will also feature programmes on employment opportunities, self-employment, and a daily telecast of employment-related news.
- The television channel would be made available through mobile applications as well.

- Over the past few months, the School Education Department has been taking steps to make cable connections available in all government schools so that children can watch the channel.

H. UPSC Prelims Practise Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) :

1. NCTE is a statutory body.
2. NCTE has decided to conduct the first-ever performance appraisals of the 19,000 teacher education institutions.

Which of the 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 NCTE came into existence as a statutory body under the National Council for Teacher Education Act, 1993.

Q2. Consider the following statements about Clouded Leopard:

1. Clouded leopard is an endemic species of India.
2. It is listed as 'Critically Endangered' on the IUCN Red List.
3. They are found in the Dampa tiger reserve in Mizoram.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

Clouded leopards are found in many South Asian and South East Asian countries. It is listed as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List.

Q3. What is the importance of 'Robonaut 2' programme?

- a) It is a child friendly interactive robot for teaching fundamental school subjects.
- b) It is a model developed for fire fighting and other rescue operations.

- c) It is a humanoid robot sent to the space by NASA.
- d) None of the above are correct.

Answer: c

Explanation:

NASA sent humanoid robot Robonaut 2 to space in 2011 to work in hazardous environments

Q4. In the interest of which of the following, the Constitution of India provides for a reasonable restriction against the right to freedom of Speech and expression?

1. Friendly relations with foreign States.
2. Public order.
3. Sovereignty and integrity of India.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

According to Article 19 (2), restrictions can be placed against the right to freedom of Speech and expression on the following grounds: the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

I. UPSC Mains Practise Questions

1. Diversification of jobs from agriculture to other sectors is inevitable for the stability of rural economy in India. Discuss. (250 words, 15 marks)
2. Quality of teachers play a huge role in reducing the rate of dropouts from schools. Suggest measures to reform the teacher education sector in India. (250 words, 15 marks)