

13 Sep 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Supreme Court continues its stay on eviction of lakhs of forest dwellers

Context:

The Supreme Court has continued its stay on the eviction of lakhs of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers whose claims for forest land rights have been rejected under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of

2006.

Background:

- On February 13 2019, the Supreme Court ordered state governments to evict lakhs of forest-dwelling people.
- The affected families had filed claims to forest land under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, which were rejected.
- The court's decision was believed to hurt some of India's most vulnerable communities.
- The February 13 eviction order was stayed on February 28 after the Centre moved the apex court to modify the former order.
- The Supreme Court on 28th February 2019 suspended the implementation of its controversial February 13, 2019, order after the tribal affairs ministry pointed out that process of settling their claims and rights left a lot to be desired.

Details:

- The Bench referred to how resorts and illegal structures have encroached on forest lands and led to the depletion of the green cover.
- More than 11 lakh people from the STs and OTFDs across 16 States faced the brunt of the apex court's February 13, 2019 eviction order.
- The court wanted to know whether tribals and OTFDs were ousted from forest lands on the basis of sketchy, incomplete information and data.
- While issuing the stay order on eviction earlier, the court had acknowledged the need to further delve into whether due process was followed by gram sabhas and States' authorities under the FRA before the claims for forest rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDSTs) and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs) were finally rejected.
- The apex court gave the States further time to file affidavits responding to complaints that there was a high rate of rejection of claims, non-communication of rejection orders, unrealistic timelines in deciding claims, irregular holding of State Level Monitoring Committee meetings, lack of support from the district administrations concerned in providing revenue or forest maps, rejection of claims despite incomplete or insufficient evidence, etc.

Forest Rights Act 2006:

- In the colonial era, the British diverted abundant forest wealth of the nation to meet their economic needs. While procedure for settlement of rights was provided under statutes such as the Indian Forest Act, 1927, these were hardly followed.
- As a result, tribal and forest-dwelling communities, who had been living within the forests in harmony with the environment and the ecosystem, continued to live inside the forests in tenurial insecurity, a situation which continued even after independence as they were marginalised.
- The symbiotic relationship between forests and forest-dwelling communities found recognition in the National Forest Policy, 1988.
- The policy called for the need to associate tribal people in the protection, regeneration and development of forests.
- The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, also known as the Forest Rights Act was enacted to protect the marginalised socio-economic class of citizens and balance the right to environment with their right to life and livelihood.
- Land and its management fall under the exclusive legislative and administrative jurisdiction of States as provided under the Constitution of India. The land reforms are monitored by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and Department of Land Resources (DoLR) which is the nodal Ministry at the Centre.
- FRA was also aimed at recognizing the forest rights and occupation in forest land by forest-dwelling

Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose right could not be recorded.

2. Modi launches pension scheme for farmers, shopkeepers

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was in the Jharkhand capital, launched ambitious pension schemes for farmers, shopkeepers and self-employed persons.

Details:

- Modi also inaugurated a new building of the Assembly and a multi-modal cargo terminal, which is expected to ease transportation in the region.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana:**
 - The 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana' will help small and marginal farmers.
 - It is aimed at providing a minimum pension of 3,000 per month, on attaining the age of 60.
 - Farmers who are currently between 18 and 40 years of age can apply for the scheme.
- **Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan Dhan Yojana:**
 - Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan Dhan Yojana is a pension scheme for shopkeepers and retail traders.
 - Under the scheme beneficiaries between 18 and 40 years will get Rs. 3,000 per month after completing 60 years of age.
- **Swarajgar Pension Scheme**
 - Swarajgar pension scheme is a scheme for the self-employed.
 - Under this scheme, similar to Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan Dhan Yojana, the beneficiaries between 18 and 40 years will get Rs 3,000 per month after completing 60 years of age.
- Modi also laid the foundation stone online for 462 Eklavya Model Schools across the country, of which 69 will be established in 13 of Jharkhand's 24 districts.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. All 16 nations set for final RCEP deal: Australian negotiator

Context:

Amidst conflicting signals from the government over whether India will join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) this year, Australia's lead negotiator for the 16-nation free trade agreement (FTA) says all countries have committed to completing talks in time for the RCEP summit on November 1, 2019.

Details:

- The negotiating teams and diplomats from all 16 RCEP countries which include the 10 ASEAN states, and six ASEAN-FTA partners China, India, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea, will meet for a "Track 1.5" round table on "Global and Regional Trade and Economic Integration Issues".
- RCEP negotiations are now in the home-stretch with only a small number of critical issues outstanding between the 16 countries, say officials involved in the discussions.
- India is seeking a mechanism to 'cap' imports as a safeguard measure in case its withdrawal of tariffs under RCEP leads to a sudden surge in goods flooding the Indian market.

- Other sticking points have been over a dual tariff mechanism for countries India doesn't have an FTA with like China, and the rest, as well as the need for freedom of movement for services from India to the other countries.
- With Australia and New Zealand in particular, India has been negotiating on agricultural and dairy imports.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP):

- RCEP is a mega trade deal currently being negotiated between 16 countries, including the 10-member countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan, South Korea, Australia New Zealand and India.
- RCEP is an attempt to integrate ASEAN countries and the bloc's FTA partners — India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand — in a free trade zone.
- Initially posed as an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), RCEP has gained a new dimension after the US pulled out of the TPP and subsequently initiated a trade war, largely against China.
- If completed, RCEP will be the world's biggest FTA, comprising countries that make up 45% of the world's population with 33% of its GDP, and at least 28% of all trade in the world today, which are projected to form half the world's GDP by 2050.
- While several labour groups and industry bodies have lobbied against the agreement and argued for more protection, several economists have pointed out that not joining the RCEP will cut India out of the world's biggest trade bloc.

What are India's concerns?

- India currently has a trade deficit with several RCEP members.
 - For instance, despite its free trade pact with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members, its deficit with Indonesia is around \$10.6 billion, Thailand around \$3 billion and Singapore around \$4.7 billion.
- Trade gaps with ASEAN, South Korea and Japan have been increasing.
- While ASEAN members agreed to review their FTA in goods with India, India has also requested RCEP countries like Japan and Korea to review their FTAs since it has been many years since these agreements were first signed and the trade situation between the countries have changed.
- India's trade deficit with Japan is around \$7.9 billion and South Korea, \$12 billion.
- India's experience with FTAs has not been encouraging, except for the FTA with Sri Lanka. India has requested those two countries to review these FTAs as soon as possible
- Major concerns have been raised by several domestic industries on China's presence in the RCEP blocs.
- India currently has \$53.6 billion trade deficit with China, and segments of the country's domestic industry have in the past raised fears that agreeing to the mega trade deal would lead to cheaper Chinese products "flooding" the Indian market.
- It is also opined that China would be looking to compensate for the export loss in the US turf, and RCEP provides the country a viable platform for this purpose. That is why it is believed that, joining the pact will be detrimental to India's interests.

Conclusion:

Various estimates show that RCEP's share in the world GDP may touch 50 per cent by 2050. The fear that India may be left out if it decides not to join the group is real. But given the economic clout of China and other economies, India may find it very difficult to grab a significant share of the RCEP cake. India should also do well to make realistic attempts to seize larger shares of smaller pies in regional trade cooperation such as BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), for

example.

2. Face-off between India, China soldiers in Ladakh ends after meeting: Army sources

Context:

Army sources said that the soldiers of India and China were engaged in a face-off near Pangong Tso lake in eastern Ladakh, which ended after a local delegation-level meeting.

Background:

- Bilateral relations between India and China have been tense after New Delhi revoked special privileges to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370.
- Beijing had specifically objected to the conversion of Ladakh into a Union Territory.
- It also supported Pakistan's diplomatic moves at the United Nations.

Details:

- A delegation-level meeting was immediately called at the Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) point in Chusul, after which the issue was resolved.
- China holds a large part of Pangong Tso, which has seen face-offs in the past both over land and on the water as both sides patrol on speed boats.
- There has been an overall reduction in face-offs between the two armies.
- However, transgressions are a common feature along the unsettled Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the two sides have instituted several mechanisms to resolve such issues.
- BPMs by local commanders at designated points along the LAC are called by either side.
- While the LAC has remained largely peaceful, there has been a pattern of stand-offs ahead of major bilateral visits between the two countries.
 - This incident comes close to the proposed visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to India for the second informal summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in October, 2019.

Pangong Tso:

- Pangong Tso is a long narrow, deep, endorheic (landlocked) lake situated at a height of more than 14,000 ft in the Ladakh Himalayas.
- The western end of Pangong Tso lies 54 km to the southeast of Leh.
- The brackish water lake freezes over in winter, and becomes ideal for ice skating and polo.
- The legendary 19th century Dogra general Zorawar Singh is said to have trained his soldiers and horses on the frozen Pangong lake before invading Tibet.

Strategic significance

- The LAC cuts through the lake, but India and China do not agree on its exact location.
- As things stand, a 45 km-long western portion of the lake is in Indian control, while the rest is under China's control.
- Most of the clashes between the two armies occur in the disputed portion of the lake.
- By itself, the lake does not have major tactical significance. But it lies in the path of the Chushul approach, one of the main approaches that China can use for an offensive into Indian-held territory.
- Over the years, the Chinese have built motorable roads along their banks of the Pangong Tso.
- It points to the importance accorded by the Chinese to the area.

The dispute in the area:

- The difference in perception over where the LAC lies on the northern bank of the lake, makes this contested terrain.
- In 1999, when the Army unit from the area was moved to Kargil for Operation Vijay, China took the opportunity to build 5 km of road inside Indian territory along the lake's bank.
- A skirmish took place in this area in August 2017.
- The 1999 road added to the extensive network of roads built by the Chinese in the area, which connect with each other and to the G219 Karakoram Highway.
- From one of these roads, Chinese positions physically overlook Indian positions on the northern tip of the Pangong lake.

C. GS3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Water found for first time on potentially habitable planet, says astronomers

Context:

Astronomers have for the first time discovered water in the atmosphere of an exoplanet with Earth-like temperatures that could support life.

Details:

- K2-18b is the only planet orbiting a star outside the Solar System known to have both water and temperatures that could be potentially habitable.
- It is known to have both water and temperatures that could be potentially habitable,.
- The discovery is the first successful atmospheric detection for an exoplanet orbiting in its star's 'habitable zone', at a distance where water can exist in liquid form, they said.
- The team used archive data from 2016 and 2017 captured by the ESA/NASA Hubble Space Telescope and developed open-source algorithms to analyse the starlight filtered through K2-18b's atmosphere.
- The results revealed the molecular signature of water vapour, also indicating the presence of hydrogen and helium in the planet's atmosphere.
- K2-18b's size and surface gravity are much larger than Earth's. Its radiation environment, too, maybe hostile.
- They believe that other molecules including nitrogen and methane may be present but, with current observations, they remain undetectable.

K2-18b:

- K2-18b was discovered in 2015 and is one of hundreds of super-Earths -- planets with a mass between Earth and Neptune -- found by NASA's Kepler spacecraft.
- Exoplanet K2-18b is eight times the mass of Earth.
- The planet orbits the cool dwarf star K2-18, which is about 110 light years from Earth in the Leo constellation.

Conclusion:

- However, the researchers said, "K2-18b is not 'Earth 2.0' as it is significantly heavier and has a different atmospheric composition.
- They also said that further studies are required to estimate cloud coverage and the percentage of

Category: SECURITY

1. NATGRID wants to link social media accounts to central database

Context:

The ambitious National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) project wants to link social media accounts to the huge database of records related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details among others.

Concerns:

- The proposal has received resistance from the intelligence agencies, whose officials fear that linking the social media accounts to sensitive government data could expose the system to “trojan attacks.”
- Intelligence agencies had also earlier opposed the NATGRID itself amid fears that it would impinge on their territory and possibly result in leaks on the leads they were working on to other agencies.

Details:

- The project, initially started in 2009 with a budget of 2,800 crore, is an online database for collating scattered pieces of information and putting them on one platform.
- It was first proposed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on Mumbai in 2008.
- NATGRID links intelligence and investigation agencies.
- At least 10 central agencies like Intelligence Bureau (IB), Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and others will have access to the data on a secured platform.
- The 10 user agencies will be linked independently with certain databases that would be procured from 21 providing organisations and include telecom, tax records, bank, immigration, etc. to enable the generation of intelligence inputs.
- An expression of interest (EOI) issued by NATGRID in 2017 had said “NATGRID is intending to set up an Entity Extraction, Visualization and Analytics (EVA) system that would collect and analyse information available from various data sources.”
- In January 2019, NATGRID revived its EOI to select a System Integrator (SI) to provide a software solution, recommend hardware specification for running the solution and integrating and implementing the composite EVA solution.
- The project, a brain child of P Chidambaram, has failed to take off even after 11 years of its initial launch. But Home Minister Amit Shah is keen to have the project up and running by 2019 year-end.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. How world is losing fertile land?

Context

- India is hosting UN Convention to Combat Desertification

- The UNCCD meeting **takes place every two years** and the ongoing one in Greater Noida is the 14th such meeting.

What is it?

- It is a major global agreement on issues related to land, the convention (UNCCD) seeks to address the phenomenon of desertification, the process through which fertile and productive land becomes degraded and unfit for useful activities like agriculture.

Why is desertification a concern?

- A variety of factors, both natural and human-induced, are known to be **affecting the productivity of land, and making them desert-like**.
- **Increasing populations** and the resultant rise in demand for food and water, feed for cattle, and a wide variety of ecosystem services these offer, have prompted human beings to clear forests, use chemicals, cultivate multiple crops, and over-exploit groundwater. This has affected both the health and productivity of land.
- **Natural processes such as rising global temperatures** increase the frequency and intensity of droughts, and changing weather patterns have put further pressure on the land.
- A recent report by the **International Resources Panel**, a scientific body hosted by the UN Environment Programme, said that about **25 per cent of world's land area has been degraded**.
- Another report, by the **Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform** on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, said that nearly **40 per cent of world's population** was being impacted negatively because of land degradation.
- The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** too came out with a special report on land, in which it said that the rate of **soil erosion in many areas of the world** was up to 100 times faster than the rate of soil formation.
 - It also said the annual area of drylands in drought had been increasing at more than 1 per cent every year in the last 50 years, and that nearly 500 million people lived in areas that have experienced desertification after the 1980s.
- Desertification has implications for food and water security, livelihoods, migration, conflicts and even international security.

Combating desertification refers to activities that prevent or reduce land degradation, and restore partially or fully degraded land.

What is the Convention to Combat Desertification?

The UNCCD is one of three Conventions that have **come out of the historic 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro**. It is, however, possibly the least known of the three.

- The Rio summit gave rise to the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** under which countries have agreed to restrict the emissions of greenhouse gases, first through the Kyoto Protocol of 1997 and now through the Paris Agreement that was finalised in 2015 and becomes operational in 2020.
- It also gave rise to the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** which too has delivered an international arrangement to protect and use biodiversity.
- The **UNCCD** has not yet resulted in any international treaty or protocol to fight desertification.
- The UNFCCC holds its general meetings every year, while CBD and CCD meet every two years.

Why was the need felt for such a convention?

- At the time the UNCCD was born in Rio, **degradation of land was mostly viewed as a localised**

problem, one that was mainly affecting countries in Africa. In fact, it was on the demand of the African countries that CCD came into being.

- The Convention repeatedly makes a **mention of the special needs of Africa** in fighting desertification.
- Over the years, it has become increasingly clear that **land degradation was impacting the global network** of food and commodity supply chains and was getting impacted in return.
- The crops being grown and the quantities in which they were being grown were **dictated not by local needs but by global demands**. Changes in food habits and international trade have altered cropping patterns in many areas.
- Large-scale migration to urban centres and industrial hubs has seen a heavy **concentration of populations in small areas**, putting unsustainable pressure on land and water resources.
- As an issue, therefore, land degradation of land is, therefore, much more complex than it appears.

To what extent does land degradation fit into the context of climate change?

Land has always been an important conversation in the **climate change debate**.

- Forests, trees and vegetation cover are important **sinks of carbon dioxide**.
- Land degradation, therefore, **reduces the amount of carbon dioxide** that is absorbed, and consequently leads to a rise in emissions.
- At the same time, **agriculture and activities such as cattle rearing** contribute to emissions and are a major source of methane which is a much stronger greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.
- Restoration of degraded land can, therefore, have major co-benefits for climate change objectives.
- According to the report by the **International Resources Panel** referred to earlier, restoring 350 million hectares of degraded landscape by 2030 would take out between 13 to 26 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere. This would more than offset the emissions from activities like agriculture and cattle-rearing.
- The IPCC report had estimated that such activities **contribute about 25 per cent of annual greenhouse gas emissions, or about 12 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent**.

What change can be expected on the basis of a CCD meeting?

- The discussions at the CCD have so far remained academic and technical, mainly focusing on the kinds of activities that can be undertaken to restore degraded lands.
- Working on a recent mandate of the CCD, countries are making efforts towards achieving what is called **Land Degradation Neutrality, or LDN**, within their territories, and trying to ensure that the amount and quality of land necessary to support ecosystem services and strengthen food security remains stable or increases within time periods targeted by them.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Futile fines: On traffic violation penalties

Introduction

- The steep penalties for violation of road rules that came into force under the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 have produced a backlash, with **several State governments opting to reduce the quantum of fines**, or even to reject the new provisions.
 - Gujarat has announced a substantial reduction in the fines,
 - West Bengal has refused to adopt the higher penalties,
 - Karnataka and Kerala are studying the prospects to make the provisions less stringent, and others are proceeding with caution.

- Motorists have reacted with outrage at the imposition of fines by the police, obviously upset at State governments **pursuing enforcement without upgrading road infrastructure** and making administrative arrangements for issue of transport documents.

Why was this decision take by the central Govt?

- India has some of the deadliest roads in the world, and 1,47,913 people died in road accidents only during 2017.
- Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari has reiterated that it is **left to the States to choose the quantum of fines**, since it is their responsibility to bring **about deterrence and protect the lives of citizens**.
- Gadkari's argument is valid, and the intent behind amending the Motor Vehicles Act cannot be faulted. After all, the question that has arisen is **whether enhanced fines can radically change this record** when other determinants, beginning with administrative reform, remain untouched.

Section 198

- It directs **designated authorities, contractors, consultants, and/or concessionaires** responsible for the design, construction, or maintenance of **road safety standards to adhere to prescribed standards** laid down by the Central government.
- In case the designated authority, contractor, consultant, or concessionaire are found to have not properly discharged their responsibilities and it **results in disability or death, they will be liable to pay a fine of ₹1 lakh**.
- It can be enforced through litigation by road users in all States. Since the standards are laid down, compliance should be ensured without waiting for a road accident to prove it.

Way forward

- State governments also cannot escape responsibility for failing to reform their Regional Transport Authorities, since these offices are generally steeped in corruption.
- The Transport Ministry could well have made electronic delivery of RTO services mandatory
- Gadkari should lose no time in forming the National Road Safety Board to recommend important changes to infrastructure and to enable professional accident investigation.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. John Bolton goes: On the sacking of U.S. National Security Advisor

Context

- President Donald Trump announced that he had fired John Bolton, his third national security adviser, amid fundamental disagreements over how to handle major foreign policy challenges like Iran, North Korea and most recently Afghanistan.

His term in office was marked by ultra-hawkish positions

- He pursued hostilities with Iran,
- sanctions with Russia,
- brinkmanship on trade with China,
- opposed talks on Afghanistan, and with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, and
- Pushed for regime change in Venezuela.
- Bolton inflicted the greatest damage on multilateral institutions and agreements, as he advocated the

- U.S.'s exit from the Human Rights Council and UNESCO,
- He presided over the cancellation of the multi-party nuclear deal with Iran
- He informed Moscow that the U.S. was pulling out of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

India will heave a sigh of relief

- His final act, one that is regarded with relief in India, was to ensure that the **S. deal with the Pakistan-backed Taliban was scuttled.**
- The **relief, however, may be temporary**, given that Mr. Trump has publicly criticised his outgoing NSA, and may reverse many of the positions the U.S. had taken with Mr. Bolton at the helm.

What should India do?

- New Delhi must continue to keep a **keen eye on all the changes in the White House and Cabinet**, it is clear that investing too much in any one adviser, or expecting consistency in American policy as a result, would be a folly.
- Trump has run a revolving door for recruitments and retrenchments, and is now on his fourth NSA, third Secretary of Defense and second Secretary of State.
- India would **do well to not allow its bilateral relationship with the U.S. or other relationships to be determined by such a fluid dynamic.**

Way forward

- A case in point is ties with Iran, where **New Delhi may have been better off not acceding to the tough Bolton line**, and instead, like China, Russia, Iraq and Turkey, **keeping its own counsel on the issue of oil sanctions.**
- On the bilateral front, India must **build its strategic and economic relationship with the U.S.** with a keener eye on the transactional thinking that now prevails in Washington.

2. UK's new work visa offer

Context

- To attract more international students, the UK government has announced a **new two-year post-study work visa route from 2020.**

Details

- Under the new graduate visa route, students from anywhere including India **would be able to work or even look for work at any skill level.**
- After the two years, they will be able to switch onto the skilled work visa if they find a job which meets the skill requirement of the route.
- The proposed rules also do not place any restriction on the type of jobs that students could look for.
- There is also no cap on the number of students who could avail the work visa
- The route is non-extendable and does not count towards settlement.

How does it work now?

- Currently, most international students pursuing bachelors and master's degrees can stay and work for only four months and those at 27 universities on a pilot scheme get six months.

Background

- The UK had the post-study work **visa scheme till 2012** when the then home secretary Theresa May scrapped it.
- In 2012, then Home Secretary Theresa May had introduced a highly restrictive visa regime, known in the UK as the “hostile environment” policy. Under that policy, May had **reduced the duration for students to seek work in the UK from two years to four months**.

F. Tidbits

1. IRCTC plans a slew of goodies for Tejas Express

- The Delhi-Lucknow Tejas Express will be the first train that will not be operated by the Railways.
- The Ministry of Railways plans to allow private players to operate certain trains.
- As part of its 100-day agenda, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has been asked to run two trains.
- The second, the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Tejas Express, is also likely to start operations.
- This is for the first time that IRCTC will be fully in charge of the train services.
- To make the travel attractive, on offer are:
 - Free travel insurance worth 25 lakh
 - On-board infotainment services
 - Doorstep baggage collection
 - Local food
 - No tatkal quota.
- The Tejas Express will have aircraft-like personalised LCD entertainment-cum-information screens, on-board Wi-Fi facility, comfortable seats, mobile charging points, personalised reading lights, modular bio-toilets and sensor tap fittings.
- IRCTC, a public sector undertaking, will pay the Railways lease and haulage charges for running these trains.
- However, the loco-pilots, guards and station masters will be from the Railways.

2. Science Ministry to go on a Hindi Wikipedia blitz

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is planning to translate scores of articles into Hindi.
 - DST is the nodal agency that funds civilian science research.
- The translations would be made via a combination of artificial intelligence-based software, translators and scientists.
- The Wikipedia project will first involve translating a large number of science-based wikis and eventually move on to creating original content in Indian languages.
- The concern is that there isn't sufficient representation of scientific topics on Wikipedia in Indian languages other than English.
 - There are about 50 lakh Wikipedia articles in English and only 125,000 comparable ones in Hindi, according to DST.

3. No second consular access planned for Jadhav: Pakistan

- Pakistan has said that it has no plan to grant India consular access for the second time to death row convict Kulbhushan Jadhav.
- Jadhav, 49, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of “espionage and terrorism” in April 2017.
- Subsequently, India had moved the International Court of Justice (ICJ), seeking a stay on the

sentence and further remedies.

- Pakistan claims that its security forces arrested Mr. Jadhav from the restive Balochistan province on March 3, 2016 after he reportedly entered from Iran.
- However, India says he was kidnapped from Iran where he had business interests after retiring from the Navy.
- In July 2019, the International Court of Justice gave a directive to Pakistan to give consular access to the retired Navy officer.
- Charge d'Affaires at the High Commission in Islamabad met Mr. Jadhav on September 2, 2019 for two hours after Pakistan granted consular access following the ICJ directive.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Consumer Price Index (CPI)

- The Consumer Price Index(CPI) is a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services, such as transportation, food, and medical care.
- It is calculated by taking price changes for each item in the predetermined basket of goods and averaging them.
- In India, the index which shows the inflation rate at retail level is known as Consumer Price Index (CPI).

2. Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

- The Wholesale Price Index(WPI) is the price of a representative basket of wholesale goods.
- WPI measures the changes in the prices of goods sold and traded in bulk by wholesale businesses to other businesses.
- The WPI tracks prices at the factory gate before the retail level.
- An upward surge in the WPI print indicates inflationary pressure in the economy and vice versa.
- The quantum of rise in the WPI month-after-month is used to measure the level of wholesale inflation in the economy.
- While WPI keeps track of the wholesale price of goods, the CPI measures the average price that households pay for a basket of different goods and services.

3. Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an index which shows the growth rates in different industry groups of the economy in a stipulated period of time.
- The IIP index is computed and published by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO).
- IIP is a composite indicator that measures the growth rate of industry groups classified under:
 1. Broad sectors, namely, Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity.
 2. Use-based sectors, namely Basic Goods, Capital Goods and Intermediate Goods.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Pangong Tso is an endorheic lake.
2. It is a brackish water lake.

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:

Pangong Tso is a long narrow, deep, endorheic (landlocked) lake situated in the Ladakh Himalayas. It is a brackish water lake, that freezes over in winter, and becomes ideal for ice skating and polo.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Earth's mass is 8 times the mass of the exoplanet K2-18b.
2. K2-18b planet orbits the cool dwarf star K2-18.
3. K2-18b was discovered by NASA's Kepler spacecraft.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

Exoplanet K2-18b is eight times the mass of Earth. The planet orbits the cool dwarf star K2-18, which is about 110 light years from Earth in the Leo constellation. K2-18b was discovered in 2015 by NASA's Kepler spacecraft.

Q3. Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is:

- a. An index which shows the growth rates in different industry groups of the economy in a stipulated period of time.
- b. An index which shows the price of a representative basket of wholesale goods.
- c. An index which shows the inflation rate at retail level.
- d. None of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an index which shows the growth rates in different industry groups of the economy in a stipulated period of time. The IIP index is computed and published by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO).

Q4. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is a demarcation line that separates

- a. Indian-controlled territory from Pakistan-controlled
- b. Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory
- c. Indian-controlled territory from Bangladesh-controlled territory

d. None of the above

Answer: b

Explanation: Self-explanatory

I. UPSC Mains Practise Questions

1. Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is considered a mega trade deal currently being negotiated. What are India's concerns with respect to joining the RCEP trade deal? (10 Marks, 150 Words)
2. What is Line of Actual Control (LAC)? Write a note on its strategic significance. (10 Marks, 150 Words)