

17 Sep 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS1 Related

Category: INDIAN HERITAGE AND CULTURE

1. HC sets aside demolition of Errum Manzil

Context:

The Telangana High Court has set aside the decision of the State Cabinet to demolish heritage structure Errum Manzil and build a new Assembly building there.

Errum Manzil:

- Errum Manzil or Iram Manzil is an expansive palace standing in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- It was built by Nawab Safdar Jung Musheer-ud-daula Fakhru'l Mulk, a nobleman of Hyderabad state.
- It was built around the year 1870.

Details:

- The decision of Telangana Cabinet taken in June 2019, was challenged by different parties in HC in the form of eight Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petitions.
- The HC in its verdict observed the decision was arbitrary and that the protection given to Errum Manzil is that of a “protected heritage building”.
- The division bench said the State had ignored various essential provisions of the law while deciding to demolish Errum Manzil.
- The Cabinet had also overlooked important factors and ignored the procedures established by law, the verdict said.
- Preservation of heritage was incorporated to be part of “life” enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution, the bench noted.
- The World Heritage Convention-1972 makes it imperative for the State to preserve heritage buildings which contribute to the sense of culture and identity of the State.
- Also, in 2016, the HC had passed an order in a PIL plea directing the government to seek its permission before modifying, demolishing, or altering any structure declared as heritage under Regulation 13.
- The State cannot afford the luxury of forgetting that the destruction of heritage building will rob its people of the essence of their identity and the city of its sense of uniqueness,” the verdict said.

World Heritage Convention, 1972:

- It is a convention introduced by UNESCO, concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.
- The primary mission of the convention is to identify and protect the world’s natural and cultural heritage considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value.
- It is governed by — World Heritage Committee supported by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (Established in 1992)
- By signing the Convention, each country pledges to conserve not only the World Heritage sites situated on its territory, but also to protect its national heritage.
- It explains how the World Heritage Fund is to be used and managed and under what conditions international financial assistance may be provided.
- IUCN is the Advisory Body on natural heritage.
- It recognizes the way in which people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Farooq Abdullah detained under Public Safety Act

Context:

Farooq, the chairman of Jammu & Kashmir National Conference who has also served as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir on several occasions since 1982, has been detained for 12 days under Jammu and Kashmir’s Public Safety Act.

Details:

- This is the first time that a former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir has been booked under the PSA.

- The charges against Abdullah were framed on a day the Supreme Court heard a petition challenging his illegal detention.

What is Jammu and Kashmir's Public Safety Act?

- The Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978 is a preventive detention law.
- Under the Act, a person is taken into custody to prevent him or her from acting in any manner that is prejudicial to “the security of the state or the maintenance of the public order”.
- It is very similar to the National Security Act that is used by other state governments for preventive detention.
- By definition, preventive detention is meant to be preventive, not punitive.
- It comes into force by an administrative order passed either by Divisional Commissioner or by the District Magistrate and not by a detention order by police based on specific allegations or for specific violation of laws.
- In 2015 new rules were notified and some authority was given to the Home Department to issue such orders that were earlier done by the Divisional Commissioner or District Magistrate.

Why is it considered draconian?

- The PSA allows for detention of a person without a formal charge and without trial.
- It can be slapped on a person already in police custody; on someone immediately after being granted bail by a court; or even on a person acquitted by the court.
- Detention can be up to two years.
- Unlike in police custody, a person who is detained under the PSA need not be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours of the detention.
- The detained person does not have the right to move a bail application before a criminal court, and cannot engage any lawyer to represent him or her before the detaining authority.
- The only way this administrative preventive detention order can be challenged is through a habeas corpus petition filed by relatives of the detained person.
- The High Court and the Supreme Court have the jurisdiction to hear such petitions and pass a final order seeking quashing of the PSA.
- However, if the order is quashed, there is no bar on the government passing another detention order under the PSA and detaining the person again.
- The District Magistrate who has passed the detention order has protection under the Act, which states that the order is considered “done in good faith”. Therefore, there can be no prosecution or any legal proceeding against the official who has passed the order.
- Also, a recent amendment by the Governor, persons detained under the PSA in Jammu & Kashmir can now be detained in jails outside the state.
- As per the latest order, the issuing authority cannot mention the period of detention in the order, which earlier used to be six month- one year.
- The default is 12 days detention now, after that the Home department has to ratify the notification and present the case before the Advisory Board.
- If the department concurs he could be released after 12 days or can be kept in detention for minimum three months. Beyond that, the department will have to seek the permission of the advisory board.

What happens once the PSA is slapped?

- Generally, when a person is detained under the PSA, the DM communicates to the person within five days (ten days in exceptional circumstances), in writing, the reason for the detention.
- This communication is important because it is on the basis of it that the detained person gets an opportunity of making a representation against the order.
- However, the DM also has the discretion not to disclose all the facts on the basis of which the detention is ordered, if he or she thinks that these facts are against “public interest”.

- The DM has to place the detention order within four weeks before an advisory board, consisting of three members including a chairperson who is a former judge of the High Court.
- The DM also has to place the representation made by the detained person. The detained person too can make a representation before this advisory board.
- Within eight week from the date of detention, the board submits its report to the government, which will determine if the detention is in public interest.
- This report is binding on the government.

What constitutional safeguards are guaranteed to a person so detained?

- Article 22(a) of the Constitution states that no person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, of the grounds for such arrest, nor shall he be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by, a legal practitioner of his choice.
- Article 22(b) states that every person arrested and detained shall be produced before the nearest magistrate within a period of 24 hours (excluding the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court) and no such person shall be detained beyond this period without the authority of a magistrate.
- However, Article 22(3)(b) allows for preventive detention and restriction on personal liberty for reasons of state security and public order.
- The Supreme Court has held that in order to prevent “misuse of this potentially dangerous power, the law of preventive detention has to be strictly construed and meticulous compliance with the procedural safeguards is mandatory and vital”.
- Therefore, the DM has to show that the detention order follows the procedure established by law; any violation of these procedural safeguards is to be termed violation of constitutional rights.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. 6,00,000 Rohingya still in Myanmar at ‘serious risk of genocide’: UN

Context:

UN investigators have said that the Rohingya Muslims remaining in Myanmar still face a serious risk of genocide, warning the repatriation of a million already driven from the country by the army remains impossible.

Who are the Rohingya?

- The Rohingya are an ethnic group, largely comprising Muslims, who predominantly live in the Western Myanmar province of Rakhine.
- They speak a dialect of Bengali, as opposed to the commonly spoken Burmese language.
- Though they have been living in the South East Asian country for generations, Myanmar considers them as persons who migrated to their land during the Colonial rule.
- Hence, it has not granted Rohingyas full citizenship.
- According the 1982 Burmese citizenship law, a Rohingya (or any ethnic minority) is eligible for citizenship only if he/she provides proof that his/her ancestors have lived in the country prior to 1823. Else, they are classified as “resident foreigners” or as “associate citizens” (even if one of the parent is a citizen of Myanmar).
- Myanmar state, which was ruled by the military junta until 2011, has been accused of ethnic cleansing in Rakhine by the United Nations.
- It deported thousands of Rohingya to Bangladesh in the seventies and the citizenship law was also enacted by the junta.
- Sectarian violence between Rohingyas and Rakhine’s Buddhist natives began flaring up in June

2012, following the rape and murder of a Rakhine woman in a Rohingya-dominated locality. The riots, which were triggered as a result, went on for almost a month with casualties on both the sides.

- According to the United Nations, over 7,45,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Myanmar's Rakhine state into Bangladesh following serious human rights abuses.
- However, Myanmar denies the

Details:

- The fact-finding mission to Myanmar, set up by the Human Rights Council, last year branded the army operations in 2017 as genocide and called for the prosecution of top generals, including Army Chief Min Aung Hlaing.
- Some 7,40,000 Rohingya fled burning villages, bringing accounts of murder, rape and torture over the border to sprawling refugee camps in Bangladesh, where survivors of previous waves of persecution already languish.

Findings of the report:

- The UN team said the 6,00,000 Rohingya still inside Myanmar's Rakhine State remain in deteriorating and deplorable conditions.
- Myanmar continues to harbour genocidal intent and the Rohingya remain under serious risk of genocide, the investigators said.
- The country is denying wrongdoing, destroying evidence, refusing to conduct effective investigations and clearing, razing, confiscating and building on land from which it displaced Rohingya, it said.
- Rohingya were living in "inhumane" conditions, the report continued, adding over 40,000 structures had been destroyed in the crackdown.

War crimes:

- The mission reiterated calls for the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC) or to set up a tribunal, like for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.
- It said it had a confidential list of over 100 names, including officials, suspected of being involved in genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, in addition to the six generals named publicly in 2018.
- The report also repeated calls for foreign governments and companies to sever all business ties with the military, calling for a moratorium on investment and development assistance in Rakhine State.
- The maligned Muslim community has long been subjected to tight movement restrictions, making it difficult or impossible for many to access healthcare, work and education.
- The Rohingya are denied citizenship in Buddhist-majority Myanmar and are accused of being illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh.
- The army justified the crackdown as a means of rooting out Rohingya insurgents.
- Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation deal, but virtually no refugees have returned to date.
- The area has once again become embroiled in conflict as the military wages war on the Arakan Army (AA), rebels fighting for the rights of ethnic Rakhine Buddhists.
- The UN probe accused the military of "war crimes", including forced labour and torture and said the AA was also guilty of abuses on a smaller scale.
- Myanmar military spokesman Zaw Min Tun, however, rejected the team's findings, calling them "one-sided" and also asserted that the ground realities are different from the findings of the report.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Digital certificate of origin system unveiled

Context:

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal launched the common digital platform for the issuance of certificates of origin and a steel import monitoring system (SIMS). The Minister also provided more details about the enhanced export credit insurance scheme for banks that lend working capital to exporters.

Steel import monitoring system (SIMS):

- SIMS will provide advance information about steel import to government and other stakeholders, including producers and consumers, to have effective policy interventions.
- In this system, the importers of specified steel products will register in advance on the web portal of SIMS, providing necessary information.
- The information about the steel imports provided by the importers on SIMS will be monitored by the Steel Ministry.
- The mechanism, through which importers of steel will have to register their import between 60 days and 15 days before it arrives in the country, is only meant to collect information about the steel imports in the country.

Common digital platform for the issuance of certificates of origin:

- Digital platform for the issuance of certificates of origin will be a single access point for all exporters, for all Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)/ Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) and for all agencies concerned.
- At present preferential Certificate of Origin is issued from the various notified agencies around the country through manual processes.
- A new common digital platform for issuance of electronic preferential CoOs has been conceptualized to address various challenges in the current process.
- Certificate of Origin will be issued electronically which can be in paperless format if agreed to by the partner countries.
- Authorities of partner countries will be able to verify the authenticity of certificates from the website.
- Further, it provides administrative access to Department of Commerce for reporting and monitoring purposes.
- These certificates are issued by designated agencies in India after vetting of the rules of origin criteria as per the respective FTA/PTA.
- Some designated agencies for CoO issuance are EIC, Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDM, Textile Committee and Tobacco Board.

Nirvik:

- The new export credit insurance scheme (ECIS) called 'Nirvik' was introduced through the through Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC).
- It is aimed at enhancing loan availability and easing the lending process.
- At the moment, the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) gives a cover of 60% of the loss to banks.
- The new scheme will give 90% coverage of the principal and interest of the loan for pre- and post-shipment credit, and half of this will be provided in 30 days.
- He said claim inspection would be waived for up to 10 crore. For claims higher than this amount, inspection of bank documents and records by ECGC officials will be mandatory. The previous limit

for document inspection was Rs.1 crore.

- It was said that the existing premium rate would be lowered, and loans categorised into two broad categories of those below Rs.80 crore and those above that amount.
- Loans above 80 crore will be further divided into those that are not for gold, jewellery or diamonds, and those that are.
 - The benefit to banks from this increased cover is that this is in effect a credit enhancement scheme.
 - The rating for the bank loans to exporters becomes AA due to this enhanced insurance cover.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY

1. Undesirable and divisive

Context:

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah made a controversial statement about the need for promoting Hindi as a unifying language.
- It might well have been a customary pitch for the greater use of Hindi in official work on the occasion of 'Hindi Diwas', which is observed on the 14th of September every year.
- However, his statements this year have raised the hackles of regional political parties in the non-Hindi speaking states.

Why is the imposition of Hindi opposed?

- The most likely reason for the pushback from the leaders of the regional political parties is that he went beyond the usual general remarks on promoting the official usage of Hindi, and made sweeping claims that Hindi alone could bring the country together, and it was the language which should become India's global "identity".
- He even highlighted how the Prime Minister and other cabinet ministers are using Hindi at diplomatic events in the place of English, in order to promote its identity at international forums.
- He even spoke about the increased usage of Hindi under the Modi government for official transactions of Union Ministries.
- While the above mentioned promotion of Hindi for official purposes is justified and in line with Article 343 and 344, it is the sweeping statement that 'Hindi alone can unite the country', that has created a controversy in the non-Hindi speaking states.

The Response of non-Hindi speaking states:

- Shah's claim that Hindi was a unifying force was dismissed as absurd by the Chief Minister of Kerala and he even saw this as an attempt to trigger a controversy and to divert attention from the economic mess that the government has created.
- Former Karnataka Chief Ministers Siddaramaiah and H.D. Kumaraswamy and DMK president M.K. Stalin questioned Mr. Shah's remarks and saw this as an attempt to impose Hindi on other States.

Why language imposition is a bad idea:

- There are numerous examples in our neighbourhood and across the world to indicate that imposing a majoritarian language on the unwilling minorities does not unite the people and instead it could end up dividing them on linguistic lines.
- Moreover, national identity is something that transcends linguistic and regional differences. Hence it cannot be linked to any one language.

Way Forward:

- The Centre needs to realise that the reorganisation of States on linguistic lines has already obviated the need for a campaign against a “foreign language” allegedly fostering a slave mentality.
- There is no question of English gaining priority over regional languages as argued by Mr. Shah.
- Because regional languages have become the official languages of the States, and the continued usage of English is only for utilitarian and practical purposes.
- While the development and promotion of Hindi is no doubt a constitutional mandate which cannot be ignored by the Centre, but the manner in which it is implemented should not give the impression to the States that there is a creeping and unilateral imposition of Hindi.
- Just a few months ago, the draft New Education Policy generated a major controversy after it indicated that teaching Hindi should be made mandatory. The controversy was defused only after these references were removed by the Centre.
- The precedents set by the ruling BJP has projected it as a ‘Hindi-Hindu’ only party that encourages unbridled homogenisation of the diverse Indian society on the lines of language and religion in order to impose its majoritarian ideology on the rest.
- This perception which is of its own making, also works against it whenever such controversies emerge.
- The call for a ‘one nation, one language’ and projecting Hindi as the only language that could unite the country could spell disaster for India’s famed diversity and threaten the very core foundation of the Indian society.
- While Mr. Shah did also speak about the need to increase the usage of one’s mother tongue and promote native languages, but detractors would only see it as an attempt to sugar-coat the imposition of Hindi and the side-lining of English.
- If Hindi is imposed just because it is the “most-spoken” language, then it is nothing but cultural hegemony of the majority just for the sake of promoting homogenisation of a diverse and plural society.
- Any such attempt would be construed as grave injustice to the diverse population and plural ethos of the country. Not only would such attempts be resisted and opposed by the non-Hindi speaking states but it could also weaken the unity and integrity of the nation.

Category: ECONOMY

1. The slow climb to the trillion economy peak

Context:

- During the Independence Day celebrations, the Prime Minister expressed confidence that India would soon be a \$5 trillion economy by 2024 and this line has been picked up by the rest of the government to paint a rosy picture of the Indian economy.
- But it is quite surprising that they seem to forget that development of a country is truly measured by the impact of its economic growth on major development goals and not just by GDP numbers.
- This socio-economic impact evaluation of growth is dependent on the nature and composition of growth.

- For example, GDP growth must translate into desired improvement in education, health and overall human development/human capital formation; expansion in productive employment for all and environmentally sustainable development, etc.

Concentration of Wealth in India:

- India's economic rise in the past three decades has shown that growth has had an adverse impact on all these developmental goals.
- Studies have shown that in the last five years, India's top 1% of the wealthiest have increased their wealth by many times which is significantly disproportionate to the increase in wealth of the rest of the population.
- India's growth trajectory has consistently promoted the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, which is contrary to the mandate of the directive principles of state policy in the Indian constitution, which calls for equitable distribution of wealth.
- So going by past trends we can say that India's wealthiest will take away the lion's share of the \$5 trillion incomes if and when we reach the target of \$5 trillion economy.

Gaps in education, health

- Our past experience so far shows that the rate of growth of employment has decreased with increasing economic growth.
- We are now at a stage where the economy is suffering from the highest ever unemployment rate.
- With rising population and a rising demand for jobs, India will soon experience a demographic disaster rather than experiencing a demographic dividend.
- India's performance in health and nutrition is no different. The literacy rate has not caught up with economic growth and according to the UN, India's literacy rate was at 71.1% in 2015 which is far behind many African countries such as Rwanda, Morocco and Congo.
- The need of the hour is to significantly increase public expenditure on education in order to fill the gaps in infrastructure, training and retraining of teachers and to focus on the quality of education.
- But it is disappointing to note that, India spends around 4% of its GDP on education while the global norm is to spend at least 6% of GDP on education.
- It is the same when it comes to the healthcare sector, where the decline in malnutrition, particularly among women and children is very slow.
- Despite such alarming statistics, India spends just around 1.5% of its GDP on health against the global norm of 3% of GDP.
- Finally, India's growth story has resulted in severe depletion and degradation of environmental resources.
- A recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned India of the seriousness of climate change and its severe adverse impact on the environment and the livelihood of the vulnerable.

India's economic slowdown:

- Another major concern about reaching the target of a \$5trillion economy is that at present the economy is experiencing a severe slowdown.
- It would be very difficult to raise the rate of growth to reach \$5 trillion by 2024 unless we focus on human capital formation and address the real factors that are responsible for the slowdown.
- NITI Aayog recently pointed out that the present crisis is the worst crisis India is facing since Independence. With GDP growth fallen to 5%, the rate of economic growth has been the lowest in the last few years.
- This decline can be seen across the board and the rates of savings, investments, exports and total credit have all fallen.
- Among major industries, the automobile sector is experiencing an unprecedented slowdown, which

has resulted in the loss of 3.5 lakh jobs.

- Apart from the ancillaries of the automobile industry, many other industries are declining fairly rapidly too — examples are diamond cutting and polishing, textiles and garments, and several Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

Crisis in agriculture

- India's agriculture is in crisis today due to rising input costs and low prices of produces, and low public investments in this sector.
- Again, agricultural real wages are in decline and nonfarm wages have remained constant if not declining.
- The urgent need is for the government to increase public expenditure by investing in agriculture — in infrastructure, inputs, extension, marketing and storage and training — and in providing profitable prices to farmers.
- It should follow a Keynesian approach and raise funds for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in order to push up demand.

Human Capital Formation:

- The government has to increase public employment by filling all vacancies at the Centre and the States.
- Providing additional jobs will also increase public spending and will ensure access to basic health and good quality education which in turn will result in skill formation.
- Human capital formation will give a big push to start-ups and MSMEs. Finally, the government should focus on promoting labour intensive sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles etc.

Conclusion:

- So the biggest concern is the declining public expenditure, which has gone down continuously in the last few years.
- Recent steps such as rolling back some controversial budgeted tax proposals, providing a stimulus package to industries, raising foreign direct investment flows, reducing Goods and Services Tax to help industries are not likely to increase much aggregate demand in the economy.
- Also, reduction in repo rate by the RBI and asking banks to pass on reduced rates to customers, recapitalisation of banks by ₹70,000 crore to raise liquidity in the economy and other steps to ease credit flows to the economy are all supply side measures; the real problem is a crash in the aggregate demand.
- If the government hopes to revive demand then it needs to significantly increase public expenditure in critical areas.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Israel, Pakistan ties a bridge too far?

Context:

- Recently, foreign policy experts have speculated over the possibility of the Israel and Pakistan establishing diplomatic ties.
- This is an indication of the changing geo-political dynamics in the region and Israel's growing diplomatic reach and success.

Israel's struggle for diplomatic recognition:

- Ever since Israel declared Independence in 1948, it has repeatedly tried to overcome its regional isolation and enhance its diplomatic relations with as many countries as possible.
- The only states in the region that have recognised Israel are - Turkey (1949), Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994).
- On the other hand, Israel has been routinely cornered by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for its occupation of Palestinian lands in violation of the UN resolution.
- Off late, the OIC has expressed concern about the possible re-election of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the likelihood of him annexing the Jordan Valley in the West Bank and the northern Dead Sea.
- Despite the constant and scathing criticism by the Islamic world, Israel has successfully cultivated diplomatic ties and enhanced its influence in its immediate neighbourhood.
- In fact, Israel has established diplomatic relations with a majority of the 193 UN member states.

India-Israel links

- India officially established full diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992. But both had maintained a covert relationship since the 1960's owing to mutual security concerns.
- There are many factors that brought these two democracies together, but it is a fact that both have dealt with a long history of state centric threats.
- Israel has overcome the threat posed by the combined Arab opposition in 1948, 1967 and in 1973.
- Whereas, India has trumped an acutely hostile neighbour such as Pakistan in every conflict since Partition.
- Both Israel and India have been victims of asymmetric warfare such as terrorism that has been sponsored by state actors. So naturally both have collaborated in the field of counter-terrorism.
- Due to the dynamism infused in India's foreign policy by the Prime Minister Modi, India's interactions with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have improved significantly in recent times, and today it encompasses economic and security ties.
- The hallmark of the Narendra Modi government has been the high-level political engagement with the West Asian region.
- There is no doubt that mutual concerns about Iran have brought Israel and the Sunni Arab states together.
- But Israel continues to look beyond its immediate neighbourhood for the sake of greater economic and diplomatic leverage and the Indo-Pacific region in particular has emerged as an area of interest for its endeavours.
- While Israel established diplomatic ties with China at the same time as with India, their relations are largely limited to the economic domain due to the embargo placed by the United States on selling sophisticated weapons systems to China.
- On the other hand, Israel is expanding its sale of weapons and defence equipment to India and other countries in Southeast Asia.
- Israel is also looking to increase its diplomatic influence in South Asia by forging closer ties with populous Asian Muslim countries such as Bangladesh and Indonesia. Because this would help Israel gain greater legitimacy in the Islamic world.

Investment in the Arab world

- However, Israel's proposed ties with Pakistan will carry a different set of geo-political dynamics.
- Pakistan's national interests would better be fulfilled by having relations with Israel, especially because Israel exercises diplomatic leverage in Washington and could perhaps mediate on recurring tensions between U.S and Pakistan.
- Their mutual concerns regarding Iran can also be a major point of convergence.

- However, any hopes of rapprochement between Israel and Pakistan appears to be far-fetched. The fact is that Pakistan is seen as the “sword-arm” of the Sunni world.
- Pakistan has contributed considerably to the security of the Gulf monarchies, including in Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Pakistani has even stationed its military units in these countries to promote internal stability.
- Pakistani leaders such as Nawaz Sharif have sought and received refuge in the Arab countries.
- Pakistan has exploited the platform provided by the OIC to whip up support for its position on the Kashmir conflict, just as the OIC has done for the Palestinian cause.
- If Pakistan were to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, it would erode its Islamic credentials and lead to a reduced support base within the OIC on the Kashmir issue.
- The deep state of Pakistan would also face tremendous pressure from its many domestic fundamentalist Islamist groups, if it seeks to establish ties with Israel.

The Iran Factor:

- Iran is considered as a potent threat by Israel and the Shia-Sunni divide within Pakistan is frequently a point of friction between Iran and Pakistan.
- However, Israel cannot expect Pakistan to be used against neighbouring Iran and risk the dangers of escalation in sectarian conflict, given that more than 20% of Pakistan’s population is Shia.
- Pakistan is unlikely to take any adverse steps that could destabilise its relations with Iran.
- In April 2015, Pakistan’s Parliament had rejected Riyadh’s request to join a Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen’s civil war to fight the Houthi rebels who are backed by Iran.
- India has successfully balanced its ties between Israel and Palestine, and Israel may hope to do the same between India and Pakistan.
- However, it is not in Israel’s interest to seek diplomatic ties with a state that is considered as a sponsor of terrorism and a hotbed of extremism.
- While Israel has the sovereign right to decide on its foreign policy, but for the time being it is unlikely to pursue any ties with Pakistan.

Category: MODERN HISTORY

1. The preventable Bengal famine

Context:

- In India there is hardly a voice, let alone a movement, to hold the British accountable for the greatest tragedy that befell the country in the 20th century under their watch — the Bengal famine, which was at its worst through 1943. The famine took half as many lives as the Holocaust did.
- Sadly, it continues to be perceived as a tragic occurrence and not an atrocity. Unlike Jallianwala Bagh, it doesn’t have a remembrance day or a noteworthy memorial.

Food grains were available but diverted:

- It is justified to hold the U.K. Prime Minister Winston Churchill solely responsible for the occurrence of the famine while ignoring the fact that enough food was available within India to have prevented its occurrence.
- As the Earl of Huntington observed, in a parliamentary debate in the House of Lords on October 20, 1943, while loss of the Burma rice and the cyclone of 1942 were strong “contributory factors” to the famine, the fact remained that “these losses were largely made good by the exceptional crop in Northern India in the spring of 1943”.
- Voluminous official records from that period available in the India Office Records section of the British Library also establish that the famine was not the outcome of a lack of food grain.

- Rather, political machinations, greed, hoarding and bureaucratic bungling on a massive scale stymied efforts to procure and transport grain from where it was available — Punjab and the United Provinces — to starving Bengal in quick time.
- Even the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, acknowledged this in his letter of September 27, 1943 to the prevaricating Governor of Punjab Sir Bertrand Glancy.
- He demanded that Glancy act decisively to procure and move grain, charging “that the Punjab ministers and the Punjab cultivators are engaged in blackmailing the starving peasants of Bengal so as to make inordinate profits at a time when they have already made very substantial profits indeed”.
- Even as the famine began to abate in 1944, the Intelligence Bureau was alerting government of the possibility of its recurrence, if adequate measures were not taken “to prevent hoarding, enforce the orders relating to the maximum prices of foodstuffs and introduce rationing in the larger towns”.

F. Tidbits

1. Turkish award for activist who survived assault by coal mafia

- Meghalaya-based rights activist **Agnes Kharshiing**, received the 11th International **Hrant Dink Award** along with Turkish activist against male violence Nebahat Akkoç.
- An year ago, Agnes Kharshiing had survived an assault by the coal mafia, when she along with her companion had gone to East Jiantia Hills to follow up a case relating to detection of five coal laden trucks parked in a locality in Shillong.
- The award committee said Ms. Kharshiing, was chosen for defending the rights of the poor, women, children and disadvantaged groups where she lives as well as for environmental rights.
- The award commemorates the memory of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was killed in 2007, in Istanbul.
- Since 2009, the Hrant Dink Award is presented every year to individuals, organisations or groups that work for a world free from discrimination, racism and violence, and who take personal risks for achieving those ideals, break the stereotypes and use the language of peace and by doing so give inspiration and hope to others.

2. Solomon Islands Ends Diplomatic Ties with Taiwan, Stands by China

- In a new blow to President Tsai Ing-wen, who is seeking re-election in January, 2020 amid rising tension with China, the Solomon Islands’ government has cut official ties with Taiwan.
- Taiwan now has formal relations with only 16 countries worldwide.
- China claims Taiwan as its territory and says it has no right to formal ties with any nation.
- The move came after the Solomon Islands’ months-long review of the pros and cons of a switch to Beijing, which was offering \$8.5 million in development fund.
- Taiwan’s Foreign Minister Joseph Wu told reporters in Taipei that it would immediately close down its embassy in the Solomon Islands.
- Wu said China was aiming to meddle with Taiwan’s elections in January with “dollar diplomacy”.
- Solomon Islands is the sixth country Taiwan will lose as a diplomatic-ally since Tsai came to office in 2016 — following Burkina Faso, the Dominican Republic, Sao Tome and Principe, Panama and El Salvador.

3. NGOs must not be ‘guilty of conversion’

- A notification from the Home Ministry has said that, for NGOs to receive foreign funds, all their employees and officials have to declare to the government that they were not prosecuted or convicted for religious conversions.
- It has been made mandatory for NGO office-bearers, key functionaries, and members to certify that they have not been prosecuted or convicted for “conversion” from one faith to another and for

creating communal tension and disharmony.

- Also, from now, not just the applicant but every member of the NGO must pledge that they have never been involved in diverting foreign funds or propagating sedition or advocating violent means.
- Earlier, as per the FCRA 2010, only the applicants such as directors who were seeking permission to receive foreign contributions were required to make such a declaration.
- A government notification also announced changes to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules 2011, which include that individuals need not declare personal gifts worth up to Rs. 1 lakh anymore.
- Earlier, gifts valued at more than Rs. 25,000 had to be declared.
- Over the past five years, the government has tightened rules and procedures for NGOs receiving foreign funds.
- Permission to receive foreign contribution was taken away from nearly 18,000 NGOs for allegedly violating rules.

G. Prelims Facts

1. Flash floods

- A flash flood is a rapid flooding of low-lying areas: washes, rivers, dry lakes and basins. It may be caused by heavy rain associated with a severe thunderstorm, hurricane, tropical storm, or melt water from ice or snow flowing over ice sheets or snowfields.
- Flash floods may occur after the collapse of a natural ice or debris dam, or a human structure such as a man-made dam.
- Flash floods are distinguished from regular floods by having a timescale of fewer than six hours between rainfall and the onset of flooding.
- Flash floods can occur under several types of conditions. Flash flooding occurs when it rains rapidly on saturated soil or dry soil that has poor absorption ability. The runoff collects in gullies and streams and, as they join to form larger volumes, often forms a fast flowing front of water and debris.
- They most often occur in normally dry areas that have recently received precipitation, but they may be seen anywhere downstream from the source of the precipitation, even many miles from the source.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Rohingya Muslims are an ethnic minority that live mainly in the Myanmar's Rakhine State.
2. They have been facing persecution in the Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

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:

Both the statements are correct. The Rohingya are an ethnic group, largely comprising Muslims, who predominantly live in the Western Myanmar province of Rakhine. They speak a dialect of Bengali, as

opposed to the commonly spoken Burmese language.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 32 provides the right to Constitutional remedies.
2. Article 32 in the Indian constitution describes the power of High Courts to issue writs.

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:

Article 32 provides the right to Constitutional remedies which means that a person has right to move to Supreme Court (and high courts also) for getting his fundamental rights protected. While Supreme Court has power to issue writs under article 32, High Courts have been given same powers under article 226. The Article 226 empowers High Courts to issue directions, orders or writs in the nature of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto and certiorari.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Habeas corpus is a judicial mandate to a prison official ordering that an inmate be brought to the court.
2. It is a procedure for challenging why a person has been imprisoned.
3. This writ can be issued against a public authority only.

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

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

The writ "Habeas corpus" can be issued against a public authority or any particular individual.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Solomon Islands is a sovereign state.
2. It lies to the east of Papua New Guinea.

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:

Both the statements are correct.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. In a diverse country like India, with multilingual characteristic of India, it is important to have “one language” as an official and link language for all the administrative purposes. Critically analyse. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
2. India’s biggest concern is the declining public expenditure. In order to revive demand and put the economy back on a growth trajectory, the government has to increase public expenditure in critical areas. Discuss. (15 Marks, 250 Words).