

# 09 Sep 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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## A. GS1 Related

### Category: SOCIETY

#### 1. Study sheds more light on killing of American by Sentinels

##### Context:

A recent publication by the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) throws more light on the alleged killing of American national John Allen Chau by the Sentinelese on the North Sentinel Island of Andaman and Nicobar islands, and also the ways of one of the most isolated tribes in the world.

##### Background:

- On November 14 2018, American national John Allen Chau left Port Blair and reached the North Sentinel Island at night.
- He spent the entire day of November 15 with the Sentinelese and on the night when he met the fishermen who had transported him to the island, he gave them the diary in which he had recorded

his experience of the day.

- Some bits of Mr. Chau's diary, written in illegible handwriting, are in the public domain.
- It not only records his experiences with the Sentinelese, but also contains some sketches he had done of their huts.
- Chau was eventually killed by the Sentinelese.

### **Who are Sentinelese?**

- The Sentinelese, a negrito tribe who live on the North Sentinel Island of the Andamans, have not faced incursions and remain hostile to outsiders.
- The inhabitants are connected to the Jarawa on the basis of physical, as well as linguistic similarities, researchers say.
- Based on carbon dating of kitchen middens by the Anthropological Survey of India, Sentinelese presence was confirmed in the islands to 2,000 years ago.
- Genome studies indicate that the Andaman tribes could have been on the islands even 30,000 years ago.

### **How are they protected?**

- The Govt. of India issued the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 to declare the traditional areas occupied by the tribes as reserves, and prohibited entry of all persons except those with authorisation.
- Photographing or filming the tribe members is also an offence.
- The rules were amended later to enhance penalties.
- But restricted area permits have been relaxed for some islands.

### **Have they made contact?**

- The Sentinelese have been fiercely hostile to outside contact.
- But in 1991 they accepted some coconuts from a team of Indian anthropologists and administrators.
- Some researchers argue that the Sentinelese have been mostly left alone even from colonial times, unlike other tribes such as the Onges, Jarawas and Great Andamanese, because the land they occupy has little commercial attraction.

### **How many are there?**

- From 1901 to 1921 they were estimated to be 117 people.
- In 1931, the number dropped to 50, a figure used for the 1961 Census too.
- In 1991 their headcount was put at 23. Census 2001 counted 39 inhabitants.

### **Details:**

- Titled The Sentinelese of the North Sentinel Island: A reprisal of Tribal Scenario in an Andaman Island in context of Killing of an American Preacher, the paper published in the journal of AnSI discusses in detail the “mission” of the American national, the possibility of retrieval of the dead body and also the charge of murder which the police in the Andamans have pressed against unknown tribal members of Sentinelese Community.
- Chau’s journal is an extremely important anthropological document as he is the only person to have spent an entire day on the island, and to have seen the tribesmen from very close proximity.
- Chau’s death was not the first of its kind in North Sentinel Island.
  - In March 1896, three convicts escaped from Andamans and drifted to the North Sentinel Island where they tried to escape in a raft made of bamboo. While two of them drowned, the third person was speared to death by the tribal people.

- The second incident took place in January 2006, when two fishermen, were reportedly killed by the Sentinelese when the latter were illegally collecting mud crabs in the protected area.
- The publication states that there were attempts to reach out to the Sentinelese in the 1970s, which turned out to be futile.
- On one occasion the contact party had released some pigs on the island, in the hope that the tribesmen would accept them. However, the pigs were immediately killed and buried in the sand.
- The chain of incidents, including the latest, clearly shows Sentinelese attitude towards the outsiders, that the so-called ‘civilized’ are no more welcome to their island.
- Another interesting aspect that the paper looks into is the repeal of the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) in August 2018, when the Home Ministry dropped the restrictions for visiting the 29 inhabited Islands, including the North Sentinel Island.

### Way forward:

- The paper emphasises on the “Hands off, Eyes on” approach of the administration towards the Sentinelese.
- It is recommended that circumnavigation of the island should be carried out to keep a vigil to ward off and report on any attempt by outsiders to stray into the territory.
- It is opined that it is important, to make systematic observations of the Sentinelese and their territory from a distance.
- A rigorous conscientisation programme among the fishermen of Wandoor, Chidiyatapur and Port Blain areas is also essential.

## Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

### 1. Amid acute poverty, Saharia children battle malnutrition

#### Context:

Acute malnutrition among Saharia tribes is continuing to take away lives.

#### Saharia Tribes:

- Saharias are a particularly vulnerable tribal group.
- The Saharia are an ethnic group in the state of Madhya Pradesh, India.
- They are also found in Baran district of Rajasthan.
- The tribe members believe in Folk Hinduism's gods and goddess that they worship.
- The Sahariya tribe health is very poor. There is a prevalence of malnutrition and pulmonary tuberculosis.

#### Details:

- Acute malnutrition among Saharia tribes is continuing to take away lives, due to crushing poverty, delayed breastfeeding, premature pregnancies and seasonal migrations.
- India, in the 2018 Global Hunger Index, ranked an abysmal 103 out of 119 countries, consistently showing a downward trend on wasting and undernourishment parameters.
- There is prevalence of superstitious beliefs among the tribe, such as a newborn has to be fed jaggery syrup or honey, as the first milk is impure because it is extracted from breasts after nine long months.
- According to the National Family Health Survey 2014-2015, just 43.2% of children under three were breastfed within the first hour of their birth in rural parts of Sheopur district.
- Seasonal migration also affects children, especially girls, as parents mostly take them along with

them to fields where they are neglected, wander under the sun, don't get food, and contract diseases easily during the monsoon.

- An Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) study revealed that, among Saharias, TB prevalence is an alarming 1,995 per 1,00,000 persons.
- RNTCP-DOTS programme is working effectively to change this condition.
- It is opined that higher incidence of tuberculosis among Saharias is linked to the high malnutrition level among them and vice versa.

## B. GS2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. Taliban says more Americans will lose lives after Trump announcement

##### Context:

President Donald Trump has announced that he has cancelled a secret meeting at Camp David with Taliban leaders and the president of Afghanistan and has called off months-long negotiations that had appeared to be nearing a peace agreement.

##### What was this deal, and how had it been negotiated?

- While no details of the draft agreement had been made public, the US Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad had told the Afghan media organisation TOLO that the two sides had reached an agreement “in principle” that the United States would withdraw some 5,000 troops within 135 days or five months starting from the signing of the agreement.
- The top US diplomat, an Afghan American, who led the talks which began in January 2019, had said, however, that President Trump would still have to sign off on the agreement.
- The draft agreement, which was reached after nine rounds of talks between Khalilzad and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, was for the US troops to withdraw from five bases in Afghanistan in this period.
- No timeline was finalised for the US to pull out its 14,000 troops in Afghanistan, but a period of 14 months had been mentioned in the past.
- Trump himself had said at one point that some 8,000 troops would remain.
- In return, the Taliban were said to have committed to not allow “enemies of the US” namely Daesh/ISIS and Al Qaeda — to set up base in Afghanistan.
- The Taliban were also said by some to have agreed to not attack the withdrawing American troops.

##### Details:

- American diplomats have been talking with Taliban representatives for months seeking to agree to a plan to withdraw thousands of American troops in exchange for security guarantees by the Taliban.
- The recent announcement has plunged into crisis what had appeared to be a done deal, and appeared to acknowledge that the planned full withdrawal from America's 18-year-old.
- Almost 4,000 Afghan civilians were killed or wounded in the first half of 2019 in the war against militant groups, including a big increase in the number of casualties caused by government and foreign forces, according to the United Nations
- It had been expected at one point that the US would get the Taliban to agree to a ceasefire. But that did not work out.
- Finally, the only real expectation was for a reduction in violence in some parts of Afghanistan.
- India feared US bid could plunge Afghanistan back into a civil war and enable Pakistan to move jihadis towards India.

- The deal was seen in New Delhi as a withdrawal agreement rather than a peace deal.
- This sentiment was echoed by many in the region — the Afghan government itself and almost all of the Central Asian republics.
- It is opined that India's decision to strip Article 370 in J&K, while always on the Modi government's agenda, was triggered by the prospect of increased regional instability once the Pakistan-Taliban-US deal came into being.
- The US attempt to whitewash the Taliban as it headed for the exit would do two things —
  - Plunge Afghanistan back into a civil war and
  - Enable Pakistan to move its jihadis towards India, particularly Kashmir.
- Indian government also feared that a post Soviet situation could return to Afghanistan, and spill over into Kashmir.
- That the impending "peace" deal was in trouble was clear when US secretary of state Mike Pompeo declared he would not sign it, despite saying in June that September 1, 2019 was a deadline.

### What happens now?

- Since January 2019, there has been a steady spike in attacks as the Taliban have leveraged violence to buttress their bargaining position, and tried to take control of as much territory as they could before the agreement with the US was finalised.
- President Ashraf Ghani's government was not included in the US-Taliban talks. This was the Taliban precondition for the talks. The Taliban consider the elected Afghan government a "puppet" or "proxy" of the US.
- But even at that time, it was unclear if the Taliban had committed to participate in those talks as part of their agreement with Khalilzad, the special U.S. envoy for peace in Afghanistan.
- A full peace agreement to end more than 18 years of war would depend on "intra-Afghan" talks involving officials and civil society leaders as well as further agreement on issues including the remainder of the roughly 14,000-strong U.S. forces as well as thousands of other NATO troops.
- Now, with even the deal with the US cancelling the peace talks, all bets are off.

## C. GS3 Related

### Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

#### 1. Nilgiri tahr's population up by 27% in three years

##### Context:

Nilgiri tahr's sightings in the Mukurthi National Park have risen from 568 in 2018 to 612 this year(2019).

##### Details:

- Officials have said that this is the second consecutive year that an increase in the population of the animal had been recorded in the park.
- The population of the Nilgiri tahr, has risen by 132 since 2016.
- There was a decrease in tahr numbers in 2017, when a population of only 438 was recorded, down from 480 in 2016.
- According to officials, the almost 8% increase in its population follows a similarly significant increase in its population in 2018.
- Preliminary findings pointed to a healthy sex ratio, slightly skewed in favour of does (female goats).
- Efforts were being made to ensure that the 78-sq.km reserve, closed to tourists, remained relatively free of some of the species of invasive plants that had begun their incursion into other habitats, such as Scotch broom and gorse in Avalanche.



- Almost no spread of invasive plants, means that the tahr have plenty of food and more room for the population to grow.
- The area is also free from poaching.
- Conservation efforts have helped in bringing the desired results in terms of maintaining a healthy population of the tahr.

### **Mukurthi National Park:**

- Mukurthi National Park (MNP) is a protected area located in the western corner of the Nilgiris Plateau west of Ootacamund hill station in the northwest corner of Tamil Nadu state in the Western Ghats mountain range of South India.
- The park was created to protect its keystone species, the Nilgiri tahr.
- It is home to an array of endangered wildlife, including royal Bengal tiger and Asian elephant.
- The park was previously known as Nilgiri Tahr National Park.
- The park is a part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, India's first International Biosphere Reserve.
- As part of the Western Ghats, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1 July 2012.

### **Nilgiri Tahr:**

- Nilgiri Tahr is also known as the Nilgiri ibex.
- It is endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- It is the State animal of Tamil Nadu.
- It is classified as “Endangered” as per the IUCN Red List.

## **Category: SECURITY**

### **1. Chinese trawlers in southern Indian Ocean worry India**

#### **Context:**

There has been a huge increase in Chinese deep-sea fishing trawlers in the southern Indian Ocean far from the Chinese coast which has raised concerns in the government and the security establishment.

#### **Details:**

- In the last four years, on an average at least 500 Chinese trawlers were present in the region and around 32,250 incidents per year were recorded.
- The trawlers were, however, not in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) but beyond.
- This includes trawlers from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.
- There were 1,100 occurrences near Somalia and 1,500 occurrences near the Coast of Oman.
- Occurrences are recordings of the Automatic Identification System (AIS) aboard trawlers and ships recorded when they are activated.
- A trawler can be recorded multiple times based on its AIS signature.
  - The maritime movements in the region are tracked at the Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) at Gurugram, which is the single-point centre interlinking all the coastal radar chains and other inputs along the coastline.
  - The AIS information comprises name, MMSI number, position, course, speed, last port visited, destination and so on.
  - This information can be picked up through various AIS sensors including coastal AIS chains and satellite based receivers.
- Chinese trawlers have institutional backing and have processing facilities with them which are sold

in the vicinity.

- While India has good inland fishing, the ocean fishing capacity is way below capacity.
- There have been recommendations for the need to boost domestic deep-sea fishing.

#### Way forward:

- To address the issue, the National Maritime Domain Awareness initiative aims to integrate fishing, ports, customs so that the database is available to everyone.
- Currently, the States have their databases. As part of this evolving mechanism, the National Committee for Strengthening Maritime and Coastal Security is scheduled to meet to discuss the implementation.
- There has been a national effort to install AIS systems on ships under 20m for which a pilot study has been carried out.
- AIS works through satellite and the ISRO has already delivered 1000 transponders for trails in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

#### Exclusive Economic Zone:

- An Exclusive Economic Zone or EEZ is a zone in the sea approved by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- Over this zone, a nation-state has exclusive special rights for exploring and using the marine resources.
- This right is also extended to the production of energy from wind and water.
- It extends from the baseline to two hundred nautical miles from the coast of the concerned country.
- In colloquial practice, the term can also contain the continental shelf.
- Generally, a state's exclusive right extends up to 200 nautical miles but there are exceptions to this rule such as whenever exclusive economic zones overlap, i.e., the baselines of the state coasts are under 400 nautical miles apart.
- The continental shelf or the territorial sea over 200 nautical miles is not included in this term.
- In a territorial sea, the state has complete sovereignty or authority over it.
- But in case of EEZ, a "sovereign right" is conferred to the state's rights below sea waters. The surface waters are international waters.

## D. GS4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Throttled at the grass roots

##### Concerns:

- Over 25 years after the 73rd and 74th constitutional very little and actual progress has been made.
- Local governments remain hamstrung and ineffective; mere agents to do the bidding of higher-level governments.

##### 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments:

- 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments were passed by Parliament in December, 1992.
- Through these amendments local self-governance was introduced in rural and urban India.
- It was meant to provide constitutional sanction to establish "democracy at the grassroots level as it is at the state level or national level".
- Establishment of panchayats and municipalities as elected local governments, devolving a range of powers and responsibilities, made them accountable to the people for their implementation.

#### Details:

- The Constitution mandates that panchayats and municipalities shall be elected every five years and enjoins States to devolve functions and responsibilities to them through law.
- Given diverse habitation patterns, political and social history, it makes sense to mandate States to assign functions to local governments.
- A study for the Fourteenth Finance Commission by the Centre for Policy Research, shows that all States have formally devolved powers with respect to five core functions of water supply, sanitation, roads and communication, streetlight provision and the management of community assets to the gram panchayats.

#### Issues:

- Democracy has not been enhanced in spite of about 32 lakh peoples' representatives being elected to them every five years, with great expectation and fanfare.
- Devolution, envisioned by the Constitution, is not mere delegation. It implies that precisely defined governance functions are formally assigned by law to local governments, backed by adequate transfer of a basket of financial grants and tax handles, and they are given staff so that they have the necessary wherewithal to carry out their responsibilities.
- Above all, local governments are to report primarily to their voters, and not so much to higher level departments. Yet, none of this has happened.
- The constraint lies in the design of funding streams that transfer money to local governments.
  - The volume of money set apart for them is inadequate to meet their basic requirements.
  - Much of the money given is inflexible; even in the case of untied grants mandated by the Union and State Finance Commissions, their use is constrained through the imposition of several conditions.
  - There is little investment in enabling and strengthening local governments to raise their own taxes and user charges.
- Local governments do not have the staff to perform even basic tasks. As most staff are hired by higher level departments and placed with local governments on deputation, they do not feel responsible to the latter; they function as part of a vertically integrated departmental system.
- In violation of the constitutional mandate of five-yearly elections to local governments, States have often postponed them.
  - In 2005, a Supreme Court constitutional bench held that under no circumstances can such postponements be allowed.
  - Supreme Court rejected alibis for election postponement, such as delays in determining the seat reservation matrix, or fresh delimitation of local government boundaries.
  - Yet, in Tamil Nadu, panchayat elections have not been held for over two years now, resulting in the State losing finance commission grants from the Union government.
- The current Union government has further centralised service delivery by using technology, and panchayats are nothing more than front offices for several Union government programmes.
- The 'Smart City' programme does not devolve its funds to the municipalities; States have been forced to constitute 'special purpose vehicles' to ring fence these grants lest they are tainted by mixing them up with municipality budgets.



### **Corruption in panchayats and municipalities:**

- Criminal elements and contractors are attracted to local government elections, tempted by the large sums of money now flowing to them. They win elections through bribing voters and striking deals with different groups.
- A market chain of corruption operates, involving a partnership between elected representatives and officials at all levels.
- Yet, there is no evidence to show that corruption has increased due to decentralisation.

### **Way forward:**

- The gram sabhas and wards committees in urban areas have to be revitalised.
- Cosmetic reforms of the gram sabha by videography of their meetings, does little for democracy. Consultations with the grama sabha could be organised through smaller discussions where everybody can really participate.
- Even new systems of Short Message Services, or social media groups could be used for facilitating discussions between members of a grama sabha.
- Local government organisational structures have to be strengthened. Panchayats are burdened with a huge amount of work that other departments thrust on them, without being compensated for the extra administrative costs.
- Local governments must be enabled to hold State departments accountable and to provide quality, corruption free service to them, through service-level agreements.
- Local governments are reluctant to collect property taxes and user charges fully. The connection between tax payment and higher accountability is well known. These lessons must not be ignored.

### **Conclusion:**

India's efforts in decentralisation represent one of the largest experiments in deepening democracy. Decentralisation is always a messy form of democracy, but it is far better than the operation of criminal politicians at the higher level who appropriate huge sums of tax-payer money, without any of us having a clue. Life must be given to this structure, through the practice of a robust democratic culture. It is important for us to hold our local governments to account.

## **2. An arbitrary transfer, a graceful resignation**

### **Context:**

Chief Justice Vijaya K. Tahilramani was transferred from one of the bigger High Courts (Madras) to (Meghalaya) one of the smallest High Courts in the country in an obvious case of downgrading, amounting to public humiliation of the highest judicial officer in a State. Her response to this humiliation has been graceful but firm — resignation.

### **Details:**

- The Supreme Court derives its power to select, appoint and transfer judges from its verdicts in Three Judges Cases.
- After a spate of “punishment transfers” of upright judges by the Central government during the Emergency in 1975, the judiciary arrogated to itself the power in order to preserve judicial independence.
- Thus, the collegium system consisting of the Chief Justice of India and four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court was put in place.
- However, the apex court's power to transfer is not unfettered and absolute and can only be carried out in public interest for better administration of justice.

- The Supreme Court can order a judge's transfer to improve the functioning of either of the High Courts or if there are close relatives of the judge practicing in the same Court.
- It can also do so if the judge has litigation or property interest in the State or has become controversial and so her continuance in the same High Court is not conducive.

### Issues:

- The collegium is not a creation of the Constitution, but of the court itself. Yet, when the collegium's decisions are called into question for having been influenced by extraneous considerations, there is no institutional check.
- In the case of Justice Tahiramani, though the collegium's recommendation stated that the transfer was made "in the interests of better administration of justice," the lack of public interest is glaring.
  - The judge has conducted herself with dignity befitting the high office.
  - She has not been mired in any controversy.
  - She does not have any close relatives practicing in Tamil Nadu.
- In the past, the functioning of the collegium has attracted much criticism, largely due to aberrations in certain selections and transfers.
- Earlier, in 2017, Justice Jayant Patel, who was slated to be appointed Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court, had resigned when he was transferred to the Allahabad High Court.
- Significantly, he was a member of the Bench of the Gujarat High Court that had ordered a CBI probe in the Ishrat Jahan encounter case.
- Retired Supreme Court judge, Justice Ruma Pal, had in 2011 called the functioning of the body a "mystique" shrouded in "secrecy".
- Later, the government's attempt to have a National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) was rejected by the Supreme Court in 2015 and the system of collegium has continued with its opaqueness and inconsistencies.
  - Ironically, Justice A.K. Mittal, who has been recommended to replace Justice Tahiramani, was superseded in 2018 when the collegium found his junior Justice Surya Kant to be more suitable for the position of Himachal Pradesh High Court Chief Justice.
  - He was later appointed in May 2019 to head one of the smallest High Courts.
  - Hence, the collegium's recommendation to have him replace Justice Tahiramani, who has had three stints as acting Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, defies logic.
- The transfer appears arbitrary, coming at a time when Justice S. Manikumar, a judge junior to her, has been recommended for appointment as Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court, which has a larger strength than its counterpart in Meghalaya.

### Way forward:

- The question here is whether the transfer serves the interests of the administration of justice for the people of Tamil Nadu.
- Such actions shake the faith of the public in the judges' functioning.
- The Supreme Court cannot function as a sentinel of justice unless it puts its own house in order.
- Its functions, both judicial and administrative, have to be transparent and accountable.
- Courts have in the past held illegal executive orders passed without reason. The same should apply to the administrative actions of the apex court's collegium.

### Conclusion:

- In recent times, despite its judicial pronouncements in cases such as the entry of women into Sabarimala and triple talaq, the Supreme Court has not exactly covered itself with glory in cases of women on its administrative side.
- The transfer of the highest-ranked woman High Court judge in the country will only dent the credibility of the collegium further.

- The resignation of a judge with 17 years of judicial service, just a year before her retirement, has to raise alarm bells about the health of the system.
- Judges of High Courts enjoy constitutional tenure and protection and cannot be subjected to public shame for undisclosed reasons.
- Any arbitrary transfer by the Supreme Court collegium reduces the High Court judges to a subordinate status. Further, the collegium system, by its opacity, has failed to build a fearless and strong judiciary and serve the public interest.

## Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### 1. Trump, Europe and the Iran effect

#### Context:

- Iran has deliberately violated its terms by producing more low-enriched uranium than the agreement permits.
- The European nations want to preserve the deal, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), even if they seem worried about a growing list of violations by Iran of the deal.
- European leaders, and France in particular, have highlighted the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" plan in regard to Iran being a way with no end.
- This was the reason why they had decided to try and keep the nuclear deal going despite Iran's seizure of tankers in the Strait of Hormuz.

#### Details:

- The division between the European Union (EU) and the U.S. over Iran has been one of the most pressing security challenges since Mr. Trump decided to abandon the deal that was struck in 2015.
- **Ensuring energy security**
- The major reason is that Europe needs to keep the Persian Gulf open to guarantee the flow of oil and ensure its economic security.
- However, on this issue, France and Germany have refused to join the American plan called "Project Sentinel" to protect ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz.
- The Europeans are fearful of getting involved in another war in West Asia which they do not want.
- The Europeans have been trying to find ways for their businesses to work around American sanctions on Iran.
- France, Germany and the United Kingdom have been trading with Iran legally using a trading system known as INSTEX, short for Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges.
- It has been designed to permit countries to trade with Iran without the use of American dollars, so as to avoid the U.S. financial system.
- For many European companies, the risk of facing sanctions because of trade with Iran outweighs any gain from trading with the Islamic Republic and more specifically the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) which is targeted by the U.S. as a terrorist organisation.
- **No appetite for war**
  - The Iran crisis and the debate it has fuelled reflects the strains between the U.S. and Europe over the maximalist political approaches of the U.S. President.
  - But it also shows the caution of America's allies about the war-mongering intentions of Mr. Trump's hawkish advisers to provoke a war with Iran no matter what the consequences are for the rest of the world.
  - The G-7 summit was not a success, especially with the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, trying to make a move against the EU on the JCPOA with the need to keep Mr. Trump on his side for an eventual trade deal following Brexit.
  - Iran's recent seizure of a U.K.-flagged tanker in the Strait of Hormuz has thrust the

relationship between London and Tehran into deep turmoil.

- This comes at a sensitive time when the Europeans are trying to salvage the Iranian nuclear deal.

### Way forward:

- No European country wants to trigger a military confrontation with Iran, one which would draw in other regional states and non-state actors.
- Despite the drone war between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia and the Lebanon Hezbollah and Israel which risks drawing in Iran in a new war in West Asia, European powers could play a major role in ending U.S.-led economic warfare against Iran and building a more effective diplomatic process in West Asia. However, the reality is that at this time the situation is at a deadlock.
- Trump administration will need to make its own calculations, without the advice of its partners, in light of the costly setbacks that some of its recent policies have experienced in the region.
- As for the Iranian government, the most immediate priority for containing public unrest and preventing social instability inside the country is to ask for help from France and Germany in finding a way out of the current economic crash dive.
- Iran will need to show some signs of flexibility that could possibly lead to a situation where some of the arrangements arrived at in the nuclear deal are enlarged and applied to other key issues like a mutually acceptable range for Iran's missile forces as well as Iran's clandestine military adventures with the help of the IRGC in countries such as Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

## F. Tidbits

### 1. 5 journalists in U.P. booked for circulating 'fake news'

- The Uttar Pradesh police have booked five journalists in Bijnor for allegedly circulating fake news reports.
- The FIR said the journalists tried to vitiate social amity by circulating fake news about a Valmiki family from Titarwala Basi village by putting up their house for sale after not being allowed to collect water from the village hand pump by an influential Dalit family from the same village.
- However, the police said that the issue had been resolved by the police and the village 'pradhan.'
- The journalists have been booked under Sections 153 A (promoting enmity), 268 (nuisance) and 503 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC and Section 66A of the IT Act.
- The journalists stood by their story and media persons held a meeting against the police action, alleging that the scribes were being targeted for factual reporting.

### 2. Centre asks States to identify accident-prone spots

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued new guidelines to State governments for identifying accident black spots on national highways and rectifying them.
- MoRTH has urged them to give "special attention in a strictly time-bound manner" to the issue.
- The guidelines detail the process for inspecting the spots, framing a proposal and obtaining sanctions for rectifying them and suggest a timeline for submitting an inspection report and completing the civil works.
- A black spot is defined as a stretch of not more than 500 metres in length where five accidents have taken place or where 10 fatalities have happened in the last three years.
- Once the correction has been made, authorities will also monitor whether accidents have declined.
- Recently, Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said the government had prepared a ₹14,000-crore plan to identify black spots.
- The Ministry has reached out to the World Bank for funds after approval from the Ministry of

## G. Prelims Facts

### 1. Chandrayaan-2: VSSC scientists keep fingers crossed for establishing contact with Vikram

- Scientists at the Space Physics Laboratory (SPL) of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) at Thumba are keeping their fingers crossed as the ISRO continues its efforts to establish contact with Vikram, the lander on the Chandrayaan-2 mission which has now been traced by the orbiter.
- Of the 14 payloads aboard India's second moon mission, four are from the SPL.
- Of the four, two — RAMBHA-LM (Radio Anatomy of Moon Bound Hypersensitive Ionosphere and Atmosphere-Langmuir Probe) and ChaSTE (Chandra's Surface Thermophysical Experiment) — are on the lander, which is believed to have crash-landed during soft-landing mission on the lunar south pole.
- RAMBHA, which is expected to provide valuable information on the lunar ionosphere, is made up of two components; one aboard the lander and the other, on the orbiter.
- SPL's payload on the orbiter, CHACE-2 (short for Chandra's Altitudinal Composition Explorer) is functioning perfectly.
- CHACE-2 is designed to measure the composition of the lunar exosphere and is an improvement on CHACE, which flew aboard the Moon Impact Probe (MIP) on the 2008 Chandrayaan-1 mission.
- The second SPL payload, the RAMBHA-Dual Frequency Radio Science experiment (RAMBHA-DFRS), will study altitude variations of electron density in the moon's ionosphere.
- The hardware for this payload was developed by the ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network, Bengaluru.

## H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

**Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to "Sentinelese" tribes:**

1. Sentinelese are designated as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.
2. They inhabit the North Sentinel Island of Andaman and Nicobar islands.
3. They are considered one of the most isolated tribes in the world.

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:**

All the statements are correct.

**Q2. Nilgiri Tahr is the state animal of:**

- a. Tamil Nadu
- b. Kerala
- c. Andhra Pradesh



d. Karnataka

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

Nilgiri Tahr is endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It is the State animal of Tamil Nadu.

**Q3. Consider the following statements:**

1. Saharias are not classified under the category of particularly vulnerable tribal group.
2. Saharias are majorly found in Madhyapradesh and also in Rajasthan.

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: b**

**Explanation:**

Saharias are a particularly vulnerable tribal group. The Saharia are an ethnic group in the state of Madhya Pradesh. They are also found in Baran district of Rajasthan.

**Q4. Consider the following statements:**

1. The keystone species of the Mukurthi National Park is the Nilgiri tahr
2. Mukurthi National Park is a part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

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:**

Mukurthi National Park (MNP) is a protected area located in the western corner of the Nilgiris Plateau west of Ootacamund hill station in the northwest corner of Tamil Nadu state in the Western Ghats mountain range of South India. The park was created to protect its keystone species, the Nilgiri tahr. The park is a part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, India's first International Biosphere Reserve.

## I. UPSC Mains Practise Questions

1. Write a brief note on the Sentinelese Tribe. Discuss the steps taken by the government to protect

- them and the impact of removal of the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) in 2018. (15 Marks, 250 Words).
2. Loss of deal with respect to Taliban peace talks indicates greater regional stability, than in its completion. Critically comment. (15 Marks, 250 Words)

