30 Oct 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS1 Related

Category: ART AND CULTURE

1. Renovation of 13th century temple to begin soon

Context:

Work on renovation of the historical 13th century Lakshmi Narasimha temple in Bhadravati that developed leaks after the recent rains will commence soon.

Details:

- The temple is located in Bhadravati taluk in the Shimoga District of Karnataka state.
- The temple was built during the Hoysala rule in the early 13th century.

- The temple is a 'trikuta' — a temple with three shrines (Vimana) — dedicated to deities Lakshmi Narasimha, Venugopalaswamy, and Purushothama.
- The basic building material being Soapstone.
- The temple stands on a jagati and the outer wall exhibits a two-tier decorative plan.

Hoysala Temple Architecture:

- Hoysalas grew into prominence in South India after the Chola and the Pandya power declined.
- Their chief temples are at Belur, Somnathapuram and Halebid.
- These temples have a plan called the stellate plan. This is because of the plan which emerged from being a straightforward square to a complex one with many projecting angles began to resemble a star.
- The star-like ground plan is a distinct feature of Hoysala architecture. The style is Vesara.
- They are made of soapstone which is relatively soft. This is believed to have enabled the artists to carve intricate details like jewellery.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Justice Bobde's hometown delighted over his appointment

Context:

The Law Ministry has announced that Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde will take oath as the 47th Chief Justice of India.

Appointment of Chief Justice of India has been covered in detail in 19th October Comprehensive News Analysis. Click Here to read.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India, Saudi Arabia constitute Strategic Partnership Council

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Saudi Arabia for a two-day-long visit to attend the third edition of Saudi Arabia's high-profile annual financial conference and for bilateral talks with the top leadership of the Gulf Kingdom.

Outcomes of the visit:

- Prime Minister announced the formation of the India-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council that will be led by the leaderships of both countries.
- An announcement by the Ministry of External Affairs declared that both sides sealed 12 MoUs on issues such as preventing narcotics trafficking, renewable energy, training of diplomats, defence industry production, security collaboration, Haj related cooperation, Atal Innovation Mission, bilateral air services and the use of RuPay cards in Saudi Arabia.
- Apart from defence, the two sides are keen to enhance maritime security cooperation and are considering joint naval exercises in 2020.

Strategic Partnership Council:

- A key takeaway of the visit is the Strategic Partnership Council.
- India and Saudi Arabia firmed their strategic partnership by signing an agreement to form a council headed by Prime Minister Modi and King Salman.
- It would enable regular monitoring of the progress of the strategic partnership.
- The council will have two parallel mechanisms under it — one to look at political and diplomatic ties and the second to supervise commercial and energy ties.
- This is a major development since Saudi Arabia is now only the fourth country with whom India has an inter-governmental mechanism headed by the prime minister.
- Germany, Russia and Japan are the other three.

India-Saudi Arabia Relationship:

- India imports around 18% of its crude oil from Saudi Arabia, making it the second-largest source of crude oil for India.
- It supplies 30 per cent of India's liquefied petroleum gas needs.
- Ties between the two countries have transformed in recent years with Riyadh beginning to refashion its ties with New Delhi in consonance with its Vision – 2030 programme under which Saudi Arabia has chosen eight countries to forge strategic partnerships with.
- These include India, China, the UK, the United States, France, Germany, South Korea and Japan.
- Once seen in Pakistan's corner, Saudi Arabia recently has been seemingly supportive of India's position on Kashmir.

2. House to vote on impeachment probe

Context:

- The Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives has announced that the House will hold a formal vote on the President's impeachment inquiry.
- The vote comes some five weeks after House Democrats launched an inquiry into whether President Donald Trump had violated his oath of office by pressuring Ukraine's President to investigate Mr. Trump's political opponents.
- According to the U.S. Constitution, the House has the sole power to impeach a President, and if impeached, a President is tried by the Senate and removed only if convicted there.

This issue has been covered in 26th September 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click Here](link) to read.

C. GS3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. Islamic State after Baghdadi

Context:

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the founder leader of the Islamic State (IS) blew himself up in an underground tunnel in a Syrian village where he was hiding when he was surrounded by U.S. special forces.

The fall of the Caliphate

- The fall began in Kobane, the Syrian border town, in early 2015, when Kurdish People Protection Units (YPG) militias defeated the IS. After that, the YPG took back most of the border region with help from the U.S.
- In central Syria, the IS was stopped in the outskirts of the ancient city Palmyra by the government forces.
- In Iraq, they faced resistance from the Iraqi Army.
- Surrounded by enemies, the IS remained concentrated on the core of its territory, spread from Der Ezzor in eastern Syria to Mosul in Iraq. But after its expansion was stopped, the U.S.-allied troops started attacking this core.
- The Syrian Democratic Forces, led by the YPG, attacked the IS in Syria while in Iraq, the Iraqi Army, Iran-trained Shia militias and the Peshmerga of Iraqi Kurdistan led the charge.
- They liberated all the major cities such as Raqqa, Der Ezzour, Falujjah, Ramadi and Mosul one by one, with help from the U.S. By mid-2018, the IS Caliphate was physically destroyed, and its soldiers were on the run.

What's next?

- While the IS is certainly on the backfoot now, the insurgency is not defeated yet.
- The death of Zarqawi did not bring an end to AQI.
- The death of Osama bin Laden did not mean that al-Qaeda central was finished.
- The IS is primarily an insurgency that tried to establish a proto-state. The organisational structure, which is largely decentralised with autonomous cells taking their own tactical decisions, also means that the group will survive the loss of its leaders. Even after it lost territories, IS cells continued to carry out terror attacks in Iraq and Syria. As long as Iraq and Syria remain chaotic and lawless, the IS remains would continue to find opportunities to strike a comeback.
- The group also has loyalist factions and affiliates in different parts of the world.
  - o The Boko Haram in Nigeria is an IS affiliate.
  - o The IS has a province in Afghanistan.
  - o It has operational units in Libya and Egypt's Sinai.
- All these suggest the threats from the IS are far from over despite the losses it suffered.

This issue has been covered in 29th October Comprehensive News Analysis under the Editorials Segment – "Death of a Terrorist". [Click Here](...) to read.

2. 'Kudankulam plant control systems are hack-proof'

Context:

Following the Social media buzz about the alleged cyber attack on Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP), its authorities have issued a statement denying the speculation of a cyber incident at the power plant.

Details:

- The allegation was fuelled by noted cyber intelligence specialist Pukhraj Singh, who was instrumental in setting up of the cyber-warfare operations centre of the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) that gathers technical intelligence for the Indian Government.
- The tweet suspected that a form of malware called 'Dtrack' has been found in VirusTotal's assessment.
- Speaking in general, noted cybersecurity expert GS Madhusudan said: "High security air-gapped systems are generally isolated from outside world and hence there is no possibility of a virus infecting an air-gapped system via external network."
- KKNPP Site Director Sanjay Kumar said the totally isolated network of KKNPP could not be

accessed by any outside network from any part of the globe. Hence, there was no question of it being hacked.

- There was a precedent where the standalone or air-gapped Natanz uranium enrichment facility in Iran was attacked by the Stuxnet virus in 2010. American and Israeli spy agencies are reported to have used a malware called Stuxnet, which "jumped" the air gap — it is believed to have required an initial human role to infect the first target device — and mount an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities.

Dealing with cyber attacks on critical infrastructure:

- Nuclear power plants aren't the only critical infrastructure in operation. As India digitises further, it will mean that there are more surfaces for attacks.
- India is centralising datasets, and connecting them together. Example: Aadhaar, the largest biometric database in the world; state resident data hubs with citizen data; the National Health Information Network with electronic health records is being planned; UPI; NATGRID with a plan to connect multiple databases together etc.
- As more critical infrastructure is set up, the risk of crippling critical parts of India's security and economic infrastructure increases.
- Cyber attacks are here to stay, and how the nation responds to them needs to be given due consideration.
- Defining global conventions around cyber attacks something like a global agreement around the digital space, akin to a digital Geneva convention on cyber warfare could help. A minimum agreed-upon list of norms on what states must absolutely not do to other states and citizens is needed.
- India should consider strengthening its Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERT), and empowering sectoral CERTs. Working with the private sector to enhance capacity and manpower related to cyber security will help develop local capabilities.

Conclusion:

- Kudankulam officials have confirmed that KKNPP Unit-1 & 2 are operating at 1000 MWe and 600 MWe respectively without any operational or safety concerns.
- It has been asserted that Indian nuclear plants including Kudankulam have standalone control systems that are not connected to the internet or any other external network.
- If indeed these attacks have happened, it would be best for the Indian government to acknowledge the attacks, address the vulnerabilities found, improve processes and build capacity to respond faster.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. 36 million Indians face flood risk: study

Context:

According to a study that uses a new modelling approach, the number of Indians who stand to be affected by rising sea levels may have been underestimated by as much as 88%.

Details:

- Estimates on the risks posed by flooding rely on detailed maps of the globe taken by the Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM), which was a radar mapping system that travelled aboard the space shuttle Endeavour in 2000.
- The maps so prepared form the basis for determining the elevation of the earth's topography.

Concerns:

- Current climate studies say that climate change has caused global mean sea level to rise by 11-16 cm in the 20th century and is expected to by as much as 2 m by the end of this century.
- In India, 36 million people would face annual flooding by 2050 and 44 million by 2100 if emissions continue to rise unabated.
- Nearly 21 million — and not 2.8 million — are expected to be living below the High Tide Line, the boundary that marks the farthest to which the sea reaches into the land at high tide.

These assessments show the potential of climate change to reshape cities, economies, coastlines, and entire global regions within our lifetimes.

The tidal threat

A new study suggests that in India, as of today, nearly 17 mn people live on land below the high tide lines and 31 mn on land below annual flood levels. The numbers are a sharp increase from previous estimates. Table lists new estimates and change from old estimations of population under threat

Population in areas prone to once-a-year-on-average coastal flooding (mn)			Population in areas below high tide line (mn)		
Country	New estimates	Change	Country	New estimates	Change
China	81	56	China	23	17.5
India	31	27	Vietnam	19	14.5
Vietnam	28	20.5	India	17	14.9
Bangladesh	28	25	Bangladesh	9.3	8.2
Indonesia	20	15.7	Indonesia	8.9	7.4
Thailand	8	7.54	Philippines	4.3	3.7
Philippines	5.4	4.52	Netherlands	4.1	0.1
Netherlands	4.9	-1.2	Egypt	3.9	3.9
Japan	4.1	0.1	Japan	3.2	-0.2
World	250	185	World	110	82

Read more about flood control and management.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Govt. to work on relief package for telcos

Context:

The government has constituted a Committee of Secretaries (CoS), headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, to work out a relief package for the telecom sector.

Issues:

- The industry's debt currently stands at about 4 lakh crore.
- Following the order, the telcos may have to pay the government 1.42 lakh crore within three months.

Details:

- CoS will review various demands made by the industry, including deferment of spectrum auction payment due for the next two years, reduction in spectrum usage charges and the Universal Service

Obligation Fund levy.

- The move may help mitigate the impact of more than Rs. 1.4 lakh crore that the telcos may need to pay the exchequer.

This issue has been covered in the following CNAs:

- **25th October** CNA
- **29th October** CNA

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India's Afghanistan conundrum

Context:

The United States of America is preparing grounds for a new round of talks with the Taliban to take the **Afghan peace process** forward.

Background:

- Afghanistan was elevated as a significant U.S. foreign policy concern in 2001, when the United States, in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led a military campaign against Al Qaeda and the Taliban government that harboured and supported it.
- In the intervening 18 years making it the longest military intervention by the USA in any country, an elected Afghan government has replaced the Taliban.
- Consequentially, most measures of human development have improved, although future prospects of these improvements seem uncertain with the resurgence of the Taliban's influence.
- In August 2017, President Trump announced what he termed a **new South Asia strategy** in a nationally-televised address. The policies it promised, for example, expanded targeting authorities for U.S. forces, greater pressure on Pakistan, a modest increase in the number of U.S. and international troops - were seen as a sign of renewed U.S. commitment.
- However, after less than a year of continued military stalemate, the Trump Administration in July 2018 reportedly ordered the start of direct talks with the Taliban that did not include the Afghan government. This lead gave rise to a worry that the United States would prioritize a military withdrawal over a complex political settlement that preserves some of the social, political, and humanitarian gains made since 2001.
- The fundamental objective of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan is preventing any further attacks on the United States by terrorists enjoying safe haven or support in Afghanistan. A deal with the Taliban would ensure this for the USA without expensive and long military intervention.
- The U.S.'s policy in Afghanistan is to resume talks with the Taliban and reach a troop withdrawal deal before Mr. Trump decides to initiate a unilateral withdrawal — that is, a removal of troops with no deal or ceasefire.
- The Taliban has little incentive to accede to Washington's likely demand of agreeing to a ceasefire before a troop withdrawal accord is signed, especially because doing so would deprive the Taliban of violence which serves as a powerful tool of leverage.

- The first round of talks failed to bring in a settlement, with the US abruptly calling off the talks. However, there have been recent attempts to restart the talks.

Concerns:

For India:

- The present state of affairs seem to be in favour of Pakistan irrespective of which way the talks head. Pakistan's moves as an instrumental facilitator of a U.S.-Taliban negotiation have been to serve Islamabad's interests. Pakistan is keen to avoid a role for India in Afghanistan, for strategic reasons.
- India has always insisted on an **Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process for the peace talks,** insisting on the critical role of the elected government and the people in the negotiations of the peace process. This has found no takers.
- India's key partner in Afghanistan, the elected government was excluded from the talks. India's argument that the Taliban is not elected and has no locus standi as representatives of the Afghan people appears to have gone unheeded.
- If the U.S. talks with the Taliban resume, this puts Afghanistan back on a reconciliation path, in a way that, the probable political settlement might feature a power-sharing arrangement resulting in Taliban occupying a major political role in Afghanistan. This would not be good for India's interest given the closeness of the Taliban with Pakistan and also the present reluctance of India to engage with the Taliban.
- If the peace talks fail, an intensifying war means that Afghanistan would suffer rapid destabilisation, thereby constraining India's ability to operate in **Afghanistan - a key strategic partner**.
- India has provided $650–750 million in humanitarian and economic aid, making it the largest regional provider of aid for Afghanistan. India's investments in Afghanistan would be in jeopardy.
- Failure to reach an agreement will lead to chaos in Afghanistan which would eventually lead to the Taliban growing even stronger and possibly seizing power by force. The reluctance of India to engage with the Taliban will lead to a decline in India- Afghanistan relations. Taliban's increase in influence will aid Pakistan's search for "**strategic depth**" across the Durand Line.
- The Taliban is far from reformed and there is every possibility that a resurgent Taliban would lead to Afghanistan again becoming a hotbed for terrorism, which can find its way to India.
- Thus, the winners in the emerging scenario are the Pakistan Army and ISI whose pursuit of strategic depth in Afghanistan seems to be fructifying with India losing influence.
- In the coming times, New Delhi could have some difficult decisions to make which might require India to change its long-held positions.

For Afghanistan:

- The non-involvement of the elected government in the peace talks at the insistence of the Taliban makes the entire process non-inclusive.
- The Taliban does not represent the interests of all the sections of the Afghans. The acceptance of this condition from the USA has resulted in the Taliban gaining unwarranted legitimacy.
- The resurgence of the Taliban would lead to Afghanistan again coming under sharia law which would lead to the reversal of many social changes which have been witnessed post the end of the Taliban in 2001.
- There is every possibility of Afghanistan again becoming a hotbed for terrorism which might lead to violence not only in Afghanistan but the surrounding regions as well.

Way forward:

- India will need to figure out how to secure its interests in a country where it has a significant footprint.
- If talks resume, it will need to decide how or if it should try to play a role in them. This might

involve India deciding to talk with the Taliban or convincing the others on the need to involve the elected government and the views of the people.

- If there is a reconciliation process and the trend lines point towards a settlement resulting in a Taliban power-sharing role, New Delhi will need to try to engage with the Taliban but on the precondition that the Taliban lays down its arms and discourages the use of violence as a tool.

For more on the Afghan peace talks refer:

Afghan Peace Process and India: RSTV – India's World

Afghan Peace Process: RSTV – India's World

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Legal pluralism in personal law

Context:

The Supreme Court's recent judgement in the Jose Paulo Coutinho v. Maria Luiza Valentina Pereira case has revived the need for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India.

Constitutional provisions:

- Indian Constitution has a provision for the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in **Article 44** as a Directive Principle of State Policy, which states that "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India."

What is the Uniform Civil Code?

- The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India proposes to replace the personal laws based on the scriptures and customs of each major religious community in the country with a common set of laws governing every citizen.

Background:

- Indian Constitution provides certain strong safeguards in Part III, for the protection of individual rights irrespective of their differences with respect to caste, creed, religion, race, sex and place of birth.
- It is undisputable and universally accepted principle that one has to give prime importance to one's religion, tradition, culture and customs as it comes under personal realm.
- The provision enshrined under Articles 25-28 of our Constitution provides religious freedom to all religions. It paved the way to frame personal laws as suiting to one's religion and culture.
- Traditionally, under the **basic feature of Secularism**, every religion is left free with a discretion to frame their own personal laws and keeping them away from judicial clutch.
- In a few instances it was found that under the guise of this religious freedoms, personal laws came in frequent conflict with other fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14-15 (right to equality) and Article 21 (right to life). These articles in our constitution act as a watchdog against any inequality, discrimination, inhuman treatment and violations of our basic rights like gender bias.
- Almost all personal laws in one way or the other clearly manifest certain gender-discriminatory provisions and have been challenged in the courts with the courts recurrently stressing on the need for a UCC.

Judicial precedents:

- Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum, 1985 case:
  - o In this case, the woman claimed maintenance from her husband under Sec.125 CrPC after she was given triple talaq. The Supreme Court clearly ruled in the woman's favour.
  - o The Supreme Court provided that the Muslim women are entitled to maintenance from their husband under Section 125 CrPC, when her economic position is weak and the husband's financial position is good enough to provide, even if it goes against the basic personal laws.
  - o The Supreme Court then directed Parliament to frame UCC. In this case the court held that Article 44(3) has remained as dead letter in the constitution.
  - o Justice Y.V.Chandrachud made an observation that "A common civil code will help the cause of national integration by removing desperate loyalties to law which have conflicting ideologies".
- Sarla Mudgal Vs Union of India, 1995 case:
  - o In this case, the question was whether a Hindu husband, married under the Hindu law, by embracing Islam can solemnise second marriage.
  - o The Supreme Court held that adopting Islam for a second marriage is an abuse of personal laws.
  - o The court held the view that Hindu marriage can be dissolved only under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. It meant that merely by converting into Islam and marrying again does not dissolve the marriage under Hindu Marriage Law and thus any such act will be an offence under Section 494[5] of the Indian Penal Code. It would also be a violation of the female's basic fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of our constitution.
  - o The Supreme Court again called for implementation of UCC and it also detailed how personal laws of different religions are in conflict with each other.
- Jose Paulo Coutinho v. Maria Luiza Valentina Pereira case, 2019:
  - o The case dealt with whether succession to the property of a Goan situated outside Goa in India will be governed by the Portuguese Civil Code, 1867 as applicable in the State of Goa or by Indian Succession Act or by personal laws, as applicable in the rest of the country e.g. Hindu Succession Act, 1956, Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, etc.
  - o The court held that Goa is a shining example of an Indian State which has a uniform civil code applicable to all, regardless of religion except while protecting certain limited rights. These exceptions have been questioned by the author of the article.
  - o The Supreme Court has lamented at the failure of successive governments to frame a UCC.
- Shayara Bano and others v. Union of India and others case, 2017:
  - o The 5 Judge Bench of the Supreme Court pronounced its decision in the Triple Talaq Case, declaring that the practice was unconstitutional.
  - o The judgement upheld the primacy of Human rights like equality and dignity over the personal laws.
  - o Though this case does not exclusively deal with UCC, the need for a uniform UCC become obvious.
- On passing the verdict on Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act the SC paved the way for an adoption of a child by persons from Muslim Community even though not allowed under their personal laws. The Supreme Court of India again asked the Union Government to form a UCC to remove gender inequality and abolish the retrograde practices followed under the framework of personal laws.
- The need of UCC is related to inconsistencies in Tax laws as well. The Hindu Undivided Families are exempted from taxes whereas Muslims are exempted from paying stamps duty on gift deeds. This brings in unnecessary differences which are generally exploited to avoid taxes. Such cases have been challenged in the courts as well.

Need for Uniform civil code:

- UCC will help in providing equal status to all citizens irrespective of their religion, class, caste, gender, etc. as it is envisaged in a secular democratic republic.
- It is commonly observed that personal laws of almost all religions are discriminatory towards women. There is a need to reform our social system, which is full of inequities, discriminations and other things which conflict with our Fundamental Rights. UCC will help promote gender equality. UCC will bring both men and women at par.
- India is a young country with more than half of India's population, being under 25 years. They are set to change the fortunes of not just India but the world too. An attempt of shedding their identities based on religion has to be given a serious consideration so as to utilize their full potential towards nation-building. They should be guided by the principles of equality, humanity, and modernity as is envisaged by the UCC.
- With the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code, all citizens will share the same set of personal laws. With this all Indian citizens will be equal before the court of law in case of both criminal laws and civil laws including personal laws. So, UCC will promote national integration.
- There have been demands for reforming the personal laws since independence. But, politicization of issues of discrimination, concessions, special privileges enjoyed by a particular community on the basis of their particular religious personal laws have either eliminated the chances of positive reforms or have drastically slowed down the process. Implementation of UCC provides an opportunity to address the challenge of reform of existing personal laws individually.

Concerns:

- Given the tremendous cultural diversity in India across the religions, sects, castes, states, etc., it would be challenging to come up with a common and uniform set of rules acceptable to all.
- The internal differences within the communities is a major factor. Example: not all Hindus in the country are governed by one law. Marriages amongst close relatives are prohibited by the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, but is considered auspicious in Southern India. The Hindu Code Bill recognises customs of different Hindu communities. Similarly, there is no uniform applicability of personal laws among Muslims and Christians. The Constitution itself protects the local customs of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram from outside influence.
- There is an alternative view which states that India is a unique example of unity in diversity. Uniformity should not be mistaken for unity and any attempt to ensure uniformity via the implementation of UCC might endanger diversity which has been a defining nature of our shared culture.
- Several communities, mainly minority communities perceive the Uniform Civil Code as an encroachment on their rights to religious freedom. The minorities fear that a common code will neglect their traditions and impose rules which will be mainly dictated and influenced by the majority religious communities.
- The Constitution via Article 25 provides for the right to freedom of religion of one's choice. Under the basic feature of Secularism, the state extends its respect to all religions equally. With the implementation of UCC the scope of the freedom of religion might be reduced. The UCC is seen as an interference by the state in personal matters.
- There is a view that the time is not yet ripe for UCC in India. With the recent controversies over beef, there needs to be given sufficient time for instilling confidence in the minorities that everyone's interest will be taken into account. Else efforts towards UCC will be counterproductive leaving minorities more insecure and vulnerable to get attracted towards fundamentalist and extremist ideologies.
- Attempts for implementation of UCC might endanger the secular fabric of India which has been largely successful in ensuring unity and progress in India.
- Since personal laws are in the Concurrent List, they may differ from State to State. The framers of the Constitution did not intend total uniformity or one law for the whole country. The states have brought in many amendments to cater to the local needs and culture this proves the futility of one

nation, one law.

Present status:

- In the backdrop of the Union law ministry asking the law commission to examine the matters in relation to the implementation of the UCC, the law commission stated that UCC was "neither necessary nor desirable at this stage."

Way forward:

- It is important to consider that the framers of the Constitution included UCC among the Directive Principles which they, as per Article 37, wanted to be "fundamental in the governance of the country." The importance of UCC was emphasized on, keeping in mind the advantages it can offer to India. However, the resistance to UCC must also be considered.
- One territory one law will draw more benefits rather one territory with multiple laws having conflicting provisions in the same area.
- Law is dynamic and therefore reformation in relevant areas should be welcome. Adoption of UCC will be a progressive legislation.
- UCC must be brought about by borrowing freely from different personal laws, making gradual changes in each, acknowledging the benefits that one community secures from the others.
- The government should be sensitive and unbiased at each step while dealing with the majority and minority communities. Otherwise, it might turn out more damaging than beneficial. Indeed, it is best to enact a UCC in a piecemeal manner.
- UCC can only emerge through an evolutionary process, which preserves India's rich legal heritage, of which all the personal laws are equal constituents. The codification and implementation of UCC must necessarily usher in the expected equality among genders and religions.
- Major sensitization efforts are needed to reform current personal laws which should best be initiated by the communities themselves. A change from within would be the best way to start the reforms. Such moves should be encouraged by the government.
- The issue of the Uniform Civil Code must not be allowed to take a political discourse. It is the responsibility of every stakeholder to ensure this.

For more information on UCC refer:

Uniform Civil Code in India

Category: ECONOMY

1. The new gold standard in development economics?

The topic of 'randomised control trials' (RCT) has been dealt with in the following link.

CNA Dated Oct 15, 2019

F. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Prelims Facts

1. Indian black ibis

- The red-naped ibis (Pseudibis papillosa) also known as the Indian black ibis or black ibis is a species of ibis found in the plains of the Indian Subcontinent and parts of South Asia.
- Unlike other ibises in the region it is not very dependent on water and is often found in dry fields.
- It is not as aquatic as many other species of ibis.
- It is classified as "Least Concerned" in the IUCN Redlist.

2. Assamese Bhaona to make an English debut in Abu Dhabi

What's in News?

Almost 500 years after saint-reformer Srimanta Sankardeva experimented with the literary language of Brajavali, Assam's Bhaona has now reached foreign shores in an English avatar.

Bhaona:

- Bhaona is a traditional form of entertainment, always with religious messages, prevalent in Assam. It is a simple drama which shows the victory of truth at the climax, generally using fictitious or mythological kings, queens, demons, Gods, soldiers, etc.
- The history of Assamese drama begins with the plays of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568) written in the early sixteenth century.
- The form of religious school established by Sankardeva is called Eksaran Bhagawati Dharma (literally meaning religion of devotion to single God).
- Bhaona was created by Sankardeva. He himself wrote seven dramas (called Onkia Naat) for performance in Bhaona.
- Later, many of his followers also wrote numerous dramas for Bhaona.
- These plays are popularly known as Ankiya Nats (one-act play) and their staging is known as bhaona.
- In Bhaona, men and women playing the roles of different characters speak dialogues in Brajawali often in lyrical form which is also created by Sankardeva he used this special language in Bhaona because the Sanskrit, which was the original language used in the Hindu religious texts, was difficult for common people.
- Nowadays, Bhaona is performed in spoken Assamese.

3. Make My Trip, Oyo face antitrust probe

What's in News?

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has ordered a detailed investigation into online travel booking companies Make My Trip and Goibibo and hospitality provider OYO based on complaints by members of the Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) alleging deep-discounting, payment

issues and cheating by these firms.

Antitrust laws:

- Antitrust laws are regulations that monitor the distribution of economic power in business, making sure that healthy competition is allowed to flourish and economies can grow.
- Antitrust laws apply to nearly all industries and sectors, touching every level of business, including manufacturing, transportation, distribution, and marketing.
- Antitrust laws prohibit a number of business practices that restrain trade.

Examples of illegal practices are price-fixing conspiracies, corporate mergers that are likely to cut back the competitive zeal of certain markets, and predatory acts designed to gain or hold on to monopoly power.

Competition Commission of India (CCI):

- CCI is a statutory body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing The Competition Act, 2002 throughout India.
- They prevent activities that have an appreciable adverse effect on competition in India.
- The idea of the Competition Commission was conceived and introduced in the form of The Competition Act, 2002.
- A need was felt to promote competition and private enterprise especially in the light of 1991 Indian economic liberalisation.

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements Hoysala Temple Architecture:

1. Hoysala temples follow the stellate plan.
2. Generally, Soapstone is used in Hoysala Temples.
3. Temples at Belur, Halebid and Somanathpuram are classic examples of Hoysala Architecture.

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:

- Hoysalas grew into prominence in South India after the Chola and the Pandya power declined.
- Their chief temples are at Belur, Somnathapuram and Halebid.
- These temples have a plan called the stellate plan. This is because of the plan which emerged from being a straightforward square to a complex one with many projecting angles began to resemble a star.
- The star-like ground plan is a distinct feature of Hoysala architecture. The style is Vesara.
- They are made of soapstone which is relatively soft. This is believed to have enabled the artists to carve intricate details like jewellery.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Red-naped ibis:

1. Red-naped ibis is widespread across much of Australia.
2. It is not as aquatic as many other species of ibis.
3. It is classified as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List.

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

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

The red-naped ibis (Pseudibis papillosa) also known as the Indian black ibis or black ibis is a species of ibis found in the plains of the Indian Subcontinent and parts of South Asia. Unlike other ibises in the region it is not very dependent on water and is often found in dry fields. It is not as aquatic as many other species of ibis. It is classified as "Least Concerned" in the IUCN Redlist.

Q3. Which of the following is/are NOT inflammatory bowel disease/s (IBD):

1. Crohn's disease
2. Ulcerative colitis
3. Jaundice

Choose the correct option:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is an umbrella term used to describe disorders that involve chronic inflammation of the digestive tract. Types of IBD include:

- **Ulcerative colitis:** This condition causes long-lasting inflammation and sores (ulcers) in the innermost lining of the large intestine (colon) and rectum.
- **Crohn's disease:** This type of IBD is characterized by inflammation of the lining of the digestive tract, which often spreads deep into affected tissues.
- The most common areas affected by Crohn's disease are the last part of the small intestine and the colon.
- The exact cause of Crohn's disease remains unknown. Previously, diet and stress were suspected, but now doctors know that these factors may aggravate but don't cause Crohn's disease. A number of factors, such as heredity and a malfunctioning immune system, likely play a role in its development.

Both ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease usually involve severe diarrhea, abdominal pain, fatigue and weight loss.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Bhaona is a traditional form of entertainment created by Sankardeva.
2. The art form is widely practiced in the north eastern state of Assam.
3. They are one act plays written in Brajawali and Sanskrit.

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

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

Bhaona is a traditional form of entertainment, always with religious messages, prevalent in Assam. It is a simple drama which shows the victory of truth at the climax, generally using fictitious or mythological kings, queens, demons, Gods, soldiers, etc. The history of Assamese drama begins with the plays of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568) written in the early sixteenth century. These plays are popularly known as Ankiya Nats (one act play) and their staging is known as bhaona. The bhaonas are written in the Assamese and Brajavali languages.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. America's changed Afghan policy and the present context of Afghan peace talks are a matter of concern for Afghanistan and India. India may need to recalibrate its stated policy to protect its interest. Comment. (15 Marks, 250 Words).
2. The Supreme Court judgement in the recent Jose Paulo Coutinho case, 2019 has reiterated the need for framing a Uniform civil code. In this backdrop examine the need for a UCC and the challenges in implementing it in the Indian context. Suggest the suitable way forward. (15 marks, 250 words).