

20 Nov 2019: Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [‘53 road crashes, 17 deaths per hour in 2018’](#)

Context:

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways released the annual report on road accidents in India.

Findings of the report:

- Road traffic injuries constituted the eighth leading cause of deaths in India in 2018.
- More than 1.5 lakh people lost their lives in road crashes in the country in 2018, registering an increase of 2.4% as compared to the year before.
- The report states a daily average of 1,280 road crashes and 415 deaths.
- The highest road fatalities were observed in Uttar Pradesh followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.
- Over-speeding is a major killer, accounting for 64.4% of the persons killed. This category was followed by driving on the wrong side of the road, use of mobile phones and drunken driving.

Key facts:

- India is the most unsafe country in the world for road users across 199 countries, as reported by the Geneva-based World Road Federation's World Road Statistics 2018. It's followed by China (63,000 deaths) and the U.S. (37,000 deaths).

Conclusion:

A lot of states that have opposed the implementation of the Motor Vehicles Amendment Act or have reduced the fines are amongst the States with the highest road crash fatalities. The latest data highlights the urgent need on the part of the states to implement key road safety provisions of the Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019. Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Uttarakhand were among the states that heavily slashed the penalties levied under the amended law.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. U.S. says Israeli settlements no longer considered illegal, angers Palestinians

Context:

- The Trump administration has said that it no longer considers Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be a violation of international law.
- The announcement reverses four decades of American policy and would further undermine the Palestinians' effort to gain statehood.

What are the West Bank settlements?

- The West Bank is a patch of land that was captured by Jordan after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.
- Israel snatched it back during the Six-Day War of 1967 and has occupied it ever since.
- It has built some 130 formal settlements in the West Bank, and a similar number of smaller, informal settlements have mushroomed over the last 20-25 years.
- Over 4 lakh Israeli settlers — many of them religious Zionists who claim a Biblical birthright over this land — now live here, along with some 26 lakh Palestinians.

Are the Israeli settlements illegal?

- The vast majority of the world's nations consider the settlements illegal.

- The United Nations General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and the [International Court of Justice](#) have said that the West Bank settlements are violative of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
 - Under the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), an occupying power “shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies”.
 - Under the Rome Statute that set up the International Criminal Court in 1998, such transfers constitute war crimes, as does the “extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly”.
 - Under the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, both Israel and the Palestinians agreed that the status of settlements would be decided by negotiations. But the negotiations process has been dead for several years now.
- Israel walked into East Jerusalem in 1967, and subsequently annexed it. For Israel, Jerusalem is non-negotiable.
- The Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of their future state. Most of the world’s nations look at it as occupied territory.

American stand earlier:

- The 1978 legal opinion on settlements is known as the Hansell Memorandum. It had been the basis for more than 40 years of carefully worded U.S. opposition to settlement construction that had varied in its tone and strength, depending on the President's position.
- In 1978, when Jimmy Carter was President, the State Department concluded that the Israeli settlements were inconsistent with international law.
- In 1981, President Ronald Reagan said he did not agree even though the establishment of new Israeli communities in Palestinian territory was indeed “unnecessarily provocative”. Thereafter, the United States took the line that the settlements were “illegitimate”, not “illegal”, and repeatedly blocked UN resolutions condemning Israel for them.
- In 2016, President Barack Obama broke with this policy — and the US did not veto a resolution that called for an end to Israeli settlements.
- At present, the U.S. administration has said: “After carefully studying all sides of the legal debate, this administration agrees with President Reagan. The establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law.”

What will be the impact of the change?

- Trump administration believes any legal questions about settlements should be resolved by Israeli courts and that declaring them a violation of international law distracts from larger efforts to negotiate a peace deal.
- Those who support the right of Israelis to settle in the West Bank are likely to see the decision as an endorsement. It will boost Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has promised sweeping annexations in the West Bank.
- It could also spell further trouble for the administration of a peace plan, which is unlikely to gather much international support by endorsing a position contrary to the global consensus.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. Network for intel agencies to share info will go live next year

Context:

The ambitious National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) project will be operational by the end of 2020.

What is NATGRID Project?

- The National Intelligence Grid or NATGRID is the integrated intelligence grid connecting databases of core security agencies of the Government of India.
- It is a robust intelligence gathering mechanism related to immigration, banking, individual taxpayers, air and train travels.
- The project, initially started in 2009 (conceptualised following the [26/11 Mumbai terror attacks](#)) is an online database for collating scattered pieces of information and putting them together on one platform.
- The NATGRID will enable multiple security and intelligence agencies to access a database related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details, among others, from a common platform.
- 10 Central government agencies: Intelligence Bureau (IB), Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), Directorate General of Central Excise and Intelligence (DGCEI) and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), will have access to the data on a secured platform.

To know more about the [NATGRID Project](#), click here.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. No funds for Delhi under clean air programme

Issue:

Despite being among the most polluted capital cities in the world, Delhi hasn't been allotted funds under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):

- The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) is an initiative launched by the Centre to reduce air pollution in 102 cities by 2024.
- The Central government had launched the NCAP under the Central Sector "Control of Pollution" Scheme as a long-term, time-bound, national-level strategy to tackle the air pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner with targets to achieve 20 per cent to 30 per cent reduction in PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations by 2024, keeping 2017 as the base year for the comparison of concentration.
- The city-specific action plans have been approved for ground implementation for all 102 non-attainment cities.

To read more about the National Clean Air Programme, [click here](#).

Budget allocation under NCAP:

- In the Union Budget 2019-20, the Finance Minister had allocated 406 crore for NCAP.
- 102 non-attainment cities have been identified under NCAP based on the ambient air quality data for the period 2011-2015 and the WHO report of 2014-2018.

- Of the 102 cities, for 28 of them with million-plus population and air quality of $PM_{10} > 90\mu g/m^3$, the Union Environment Ministry is providing Rs. 10 crore fund in the current year.
- For the remaining non-attainment cities, funding of Rs. 10 lakh per city for those with a population of less than five lakh and Rs. 20 lakh per city for those with a population of five to 10 lakh have been sanctioned.
- The funds are released for various components, which include installation and commissioning of Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS), creating green buffer zone along the roads, mechanical street sweeper, mobile enforcement unit, public awareness and capacity building activities and water sprinkler.
- The 28 priority cities are: Vijayawada, Chandigarh, Raipur, Bhilai, Surat, Ahmedabad, Dhanbad, Bangalore, Bhopal, Gwalior, Mumbai, Nagpur, Navi Mumbai, Pune, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, Kolkata, Patna, Agra, Allahabad, Kanpur, Lucknow and Varanasi.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. 'Srisaillam dam needs maintenance'

Context:

'Waterman of India' and Magsaysay Award winner Rajendra Singh has said the Srisaillam Dam needs repair and maintenance works urgently.

Issues:

- It is said that several dams in the country are poorly maintained.
- It was pointed out that infrastructure was being developed but there was no proper maintenance of it.

Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP):

- The Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), Government of India, with assistance from the World Bank, is implementing the DRIP.
- The Central Dam Safety Organisation of the [Central Water Commission](#), assisted by a consulting firm, is coordinating and supervising the project implementation.

Project development objectives of DRIP:

- To improve the safety and performance of selected existing dams and associated appurtenances in a sustainable manner.
- To strengthen the dam safety institutional setup in participating states as well as at the central level.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

Category: HEALTH**1. Turning the policy focus to child undernutrition****Context:**

The Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS) report shows that India has sustained its progress in reducing stunting, wasting and the number of underweight children in the last decade.

Terminologies:

- **Malnutrition** refers to deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients (calories, protein, carbohydrates, vitamins or minerals). Malnutrition refers to all deviations from adequate and optimal nutritional status.

The term malnutrition addresses 3 broad groups of conditions:

- - - **Undernutrition**, which includes wasting, stunting and underweight. 'Undernutrition' is used to refer to generally poor nutritional status but also implies underfeeding. Undernutrition is caused primarily by an inadequate intake of dietary energy, regardless of whether any other specific nutrient is a limiting factor.
 - **Micronutrient-related malnutrition**, which includes micronutrient deficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals) or micronutrient excess. For example, goitre, scurvy, anaemia and xerophthalmia are forms of malnutrition caused by inadequate iodine, vitamin C, iron and vitamin A, respectively.
 - Overweight, **obesity** and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers).
- **Stunting**: Stunting indicates that a child's height is lower than the average for his/her age.
- **Wasting**: Wasting indicates that a child's weight is lower than the average for his/her height.
- **Underweight**: An underweight child's weight is lower than the average for his/her age.

Details:

- The **Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS) report** was brought out recently by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, child stunting and the condition of being underweight declined by 10% and 7% points, respectively. The survey reveals that India has sustained its progress made in reducing the number of stunted and underweight children in the last decade.
- India's past performance in child wasting has been rather poor, however, the report reveals an interesting, rather surprising, turnaround.
- The extent of the decline in wasting is larger than that of stunting: about 4% points within 22 months. This is indeed a remarkable achievement, especially against a measly decline in wasting in the last ten years: 21% in 2015-2016 from 19.8% in 2005-2006.

- Despite such sustained decline, the present stunting level still belongs to the threshold level of ‘very high’. **The Global Hunger Index (GHI)**, 2019 ranks India at the 102nd position out of 117 countries. Hence, what is of urgent requirement is increasing the rate of decline.
- The CNNS report draws our attention to some important factors, which have not received the necessary attention.
 - **Educating the mothers:**
 - Stunting among children under four years came down from 46% to 19%, a drastic 27% points decline, when maternal education went up from illiteracy/no schooling to 12 years of schooling completed.
 - A similar drastic decline was also observed in the number of underweight children when maternal education went up.
 - Increasing the educational attainment of women significantly is certainly more feasible than increasing the household income to ensure a similar decline in undernutrition.
 - Women’s education, besides being of instrumental significance, has an intrinsic worth of its own. Studies suggest, women’s secondary education might be capturing the cumulative effects of household wealth, women’s empowerment and knowledge and health-seeking behaviour.
 - **Sanitation:**
 - Ending open defecation and enhancing access to safe water and sanitation are important policy goals, which need to be sustained under the Swachh Bharat initiative.
 - However, ending open defecation alone will not reduce stunting phenomenally, as is evident from the experience of Bangladesh and as observed in the so-called Muslim advantage in child mortality in India — relatively lower child mortality among Muslims compared to Hindus — which occurs ostensibly due to the former’s better sanitation and hygiene practices, does not translate into a similar stunting advantage among Muslims.
 - More efforts, besides ending open defecation, are required, if we are to accelerate the decline in child stunting.
 - **Dietary diversity:**
 - Dietary diversity is one aspect that needs to be given more importance in nutrition policy.
 - It is important to move away from the present focus on rice and wheat, which studies denounce as ‘staple grain fundamentalism,’ of Public Distribution System (PDS), to a more diversified food basket, with an emphasis on coarse grains.
 - It would be worth including millets in the PDS on a pilot basis, in States where stunting levels are high. Evidence suggests that dietary diversity is indeed good for reducing iron deficiency anaemia, levels of which also remain high in India.
 - It may be useful learning from the virtues, in terms of food habits, of the marginalised than from the vices of the privileged groups. The rising obesity among the latter is a cause for concern and is an emerging public health problem in India which demands equal attention.

Concerns with the report:

- India’s past performance in child wasting has been rather poor, however, the report reveals an interesting, rather surprising, turnaround.
- The extent of the decline in wasting is larger than that of stunting: about 4% points within 22 months. This is indeed a remarkable achievement, especially against a measly decline in wasting in the last ten years.
- While a fair measure of decline in wasting, consistent with that of stunting, is expected, the magnitude, in this case, appears rather high.
- This is especially so, as the states which have witnessed a decline now had previously witnessed an increase in wasting during the last decade, between 2005-06 and 2015-16.

- If the decline has actually happened, then it means that many States have achieved an unprecedented decline in wasting, reversing their past poor record, within a short span of time.
- Surprisingly, these States have not performed equally well in reducing stunting, despite the fact that wasting and stunting share many common causes.
- The above observations cast doubts on the data quality of the CNNS.

Way forward:

- There is a need for independent validation to not only dispel any doubt regarding the data quality of the CNNS but also help identify the drivers of rapid reduction in child wasting in India.
- The state should work towards increasing maternal education, increasing dietary diversity and also following an integrated approach to addressing the challenge of undernutrition.
- The issue of undernutrition needs the attention it deserves since only a healthy and productive population can ensure the vision of a new India.

For more information on Nutrition in India: [Click here](#)

For information on India's national nutrition strategy refer: [Click here](#)

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Rebalancing counterterrorism

Context:

India's approach to counter-terrorism.

Background:

- The current government has declared a **“zero tolerance” policy on terrorism.**
- India's military responses in 2016 (surgical strikes) and 2019 (Balakot airstrikes) in the backdrop of terrorist attacks in Uri and Pulwama, were framed as attempts to impose costs on the Pakistani terrorist groups and their Army backers.
- These responses mark a drastic change in India's approach to counter-terrorism.
- The present government has repeatedly declared that it will emulate Israel's apparently successful strategy in responding to cross-border terrorism.

Concerns:

- The present government's emulation of Israel's strategy in responding to cross-border terrorism seems to mischaracterize Israeli strategy.
- There is a place for punishment in counter-terrorism but India risks overemphasizing the narrow role of military punishment, and it fails to consider other elements of strategy, which Israel itself has embraced, that are critical to counter-terrorism effectiveness.
- **Use of military punishment as a counter-terrorism tool:**
 - India's military responses in 2016 and 2019 were framed as attempts to impose costs on the Pakistani terrorist groups and their Army backers. But such minor actions have a marginal material impact on the target. At best they may have killed fighters and temporarily damaged a training facility.

- Strategies of punishment work when an actor can impose sufficiently heavy costs on the enemy such that the enemy is dissuaded from attacking again. The Pakistan Army and its terrorist proxies and their anti-India ideology have only hardened over time. Minor cross-border military action will not exact a cost sufficient to change the adversary's preferences or strategy.
- Israel uses military action to eliminate specific enemy capabilities, such as weapons manufacturing, although such tactics only work if they are enabled by exquisite intelligence and targeting, and even then the destroyed capabilities are likely to be reconstituted.
- The use of military action at best allows the punisher to manage the ongoing conflict, and communicate diminishing patience with the adversary.
- Military action also carries the risks of inadvertent escalation, especially if the punishment actions themselves are escalatory as they can create a commitment trap, binding the government to a policy of retaliation, lest it be seen as weak in the next crisis. Thus, the next crisis will be shaped by the Balakot crisis and, with each side thinking it can safely escalate force, could be more dangerous.
- Punishment, then, never affords a resolution to a rivalry.

Way forward:

- Future attacks are inevitable considering that the sponsorship of cross-border terrorism is a core tenet of Pakistan's security strategy. In such a scenario there are questions on how should India respond to the next terrorist attack sponsored by Pakistan.
- India needs to consider an effective counter-terrorism strategy that goes beyond punishment.
- As Israel itself has shown, counter-terrorism requires a balance, including at least three other lines of effort.
 - First, it requires effective **denial operations**, to make terrorist attacks more difficult for the enemy.
 - At the tactical level, this means simple adherence to security procedures — the attacks on the Pulwama and Pathankot air force base, for example, were costlier because of sub-standard force protection measures.
 - Beyond security, this means addressing the grievances of the local population, which drives radicalisation.
 - Second, it requires **shaping operations** to incentivise the adversary to limit its attacks.
 - Israel can use carrots and sticks in occupied territories, including economic development programmes or harsher security restrictions, but India lacks such leverage over the Pakistani Army and terror groups and must rely on international actors.
 - India's counter-terrorism strategy must be synchronised with wider foreign policy, using harsh action through the [Financial Action Task Force](#), or productive bilateral talks with China, to isolate Pakistan and make its strategy of supporting cross-border terrorism less appealing.
 - Third, it requires **cultivating resilience**, to reduce the political impact of terrorism.
 - Counter-terrorism is a national security issue and political parties must resist the attempts at politicizing them. Such policies only serve to sharpen public fears.
 - Despite all its counter-terrorism experience, Israel still suffers terrorist attacks, but most can be absorbed without generating public hysteria.
- **Effective counter-terrorism requires a more comprehensive strategy.** It requires a constant process of evaluation and adjustment – Israel does not have all the answers and relies on trial and error for different contexts.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Iran on the boil

Context:

Nationwide protests in Iran.

Details:

- Following the Iranian government's decision to raise the price of rationed fuel, nationwide protests broke out in Iran.
- Iran still has one of the lowest fuel prices in the world. But the rise was enough for a people reeling under high inflation, joblessness and a collapsing economy to take to the streets.
- Thousands of people took to the streets, reminiscent of recent protests in Hong Kong, Chile, Lebanon and neighbouring Iraq.
- Security personnel reportedly unleashed violence on the protesters, while the government's response has raised the prospects of more violence. The government has branded the protesters as counter-revolutionaries and blamed foreign hands.

Challenges to Iran:

- President Donald Trump's decision to pull the U.S. out of the **2015 nuclear deal** and reimpose sanctions has dealt a blow to Iran's economy.
- Inflation has risen to 40%. A quarter of Iran's youth are unemployed. According to the IMF, the country's economy is expected to contract by 9.5% in 2019, while the currency, the rial, has plunged to record lows against the dollar.
- The economic woes have weakened the delicate balance between the regime and its angry youth.
- This is the latest challenge to the Iranian regime that's already struggling to fix a battered economy, hostile ties with the U.S. and waning influence in West Asia.
- The protests have broken out at a time when Iran's influence in Lebanon and Iraq is being challenged by protesters.

Way forward:

- The latest round of protests might die down. But Iran needs a lasting solution to address its revolting underbelly. It can't violently suppress the protesters forever and needs to get the nuclear deal back on track.
- Iran is struggling under the weight of U.S. sanctions and needs to revive the nuclear deal.
- There is a need for a balanced nuclear deal which addresses the concerns of both Iran and the US. The deal would be in the interest of the people of Iran and would ensure peace in the larger West Asian region.

Category: POST INDEPENDENCE HISTORY

1. A lost opportunity in 1971

Background:

- Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's time in office was marked by epoch-making achievements, including the swift and successful war with Pakistan in 1971.

- The tenure also witnessed some serious lapses of judgment, including the [Simla Agreement](#) of 1972 which resulted in a disadvantageous peace with Pakistan following the **1971 Indo-pak war**.
- The Simla Agreement was signed on July 2, 1972, by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then Prime minister of Pakistan, and Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India.

Simla Agreement:

- The Agreement was the result of the resolve of both the countries to "put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations". It conceived the steps to be taken for further normalisation of mutual relations and it also laid down the principles that should govern their future relations.
- The Simla Agreement was ratified by the Parliaments of both the nations in 1972.
- Some of the major outcomes of the Simla Agreement are:
 - The agreement paved the way for diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh by Pakistan.
 - The agreement held that both India and Pakistan will "settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations".
 - The agreement converted the ceasefire line of 17 December 1971 into **the Line of Control (LOC)** between India and Pakistan and it was agreed that "neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations".

Concerns with Simla Agreement:

Disadvantageous peace for India:

- Post-1971 war, India had Pakistan on its knees, holding over 15,000 square kilometres of its territory and 93,000 of its soldiers which were nearly a quarter of its army, as prisoners of war. Some have considered India's move to return these to Pakistan a blunder.
- Though the decision to repatriate Pakistani prisoners of war was reportedly taken to get Sheikh Mujibur Rahman back to Bangladesh alive and well. But that thinking doesn't seem correct given that the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of the war occurred after the signing of the Delhi Agreement, long after Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had returned to Bangladesh in January 1972.
- The Simla agreement was mild on the aggressor country given that Pakistan had waged war on India.

The spirit of the Simla Agreement lost:

- India has maintained that Kashmir dispute is a bilateral issue keeping with the spirit of the Simla Agreement and must be settled through bilateral negotiations, and thus, had denied any third party intervention even that of the United Nations. This has not stopped Pakistan from internationalizing the Kashmir issue.
- The agreement converting the ceasefire line of 17 December 1971 into the Line of Control (LOC) between India and Pakistan was to, in the future convert this LOC into the international border which could have been a solution to the Kashmir issue. But there has been a difference of opinion regarding this in India and Pakistan.

Pakistan not held accountable:

- The Simla Agreement and the subsequent **Delhi Agreement, 1973** gave Pakistan everything it wanted: the territory it lost to India in the war and the safe return of all its soldiers without one of them being held responsible for the genocidal campaign unleashed in what is now Bangladesh.
- India ought to have rightly insisted that an international tribunal try those prisoners of war who had contributed to the well-documented genocide in Bangladesh.
- This would have also eroded the credibility of the Pakistani Army, eliminated it as a political force and led to more enduring peace in the region.

No enduring Peace:

- Nothing in the Agreement pinned Pakistan down to future good behaviour. What the Simla Agreement failed to achieve for India could well have been obtained through the 1973 Delhi Agreement signed by India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. But India failed to leverage its dominant position to ensure enduring peace in the region.
- It included some non-bindable provisions, such as the clause requiring both governments “to take all steps within their power to prevent hostile propaganda directed against each other”. Pakistan started working on nuclear weapons post this agreement.
- The agreement has not prevented the relationship between the two countries from deteriorating to the point of armed conflict, most recently in the Kargil War of 1999. In **Operation Meghdoot** of 1984 India seized all of the inhospitable Siachen Glacier region where the frontier had been clearly not defined in the agreement (possibly as the area was thought too barren to be controversial).

Conclusion:

- India’s failure to convert India’s victory in the 1971 war into a durable peace will continue to bear its consequences on India-Pakistan relations, one of them being India having to confront a nuclear Pakistan.
- This should serve as a learning lesson for India in future relations with its neighbour.

F. Tidbits

1. Delhi Jal Board to collect, test 1,400 water samples

What’s in News?

Delhi Jal Board has constituted 32 teams to pick up 1,400 random samples from across the city in a bid to conclusively resolve the on-going controversy over the quality of water supplied by the utility through the piped network.

- A recent study by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) said that water in Delhi was the most unsafe among 21 State capitals. The result was based on 11 water samples taken from across the city.
- BIS reported that Delhi water samples did not meet 19 of the 28 parameters, including odour, total dissolved solids, acidity, turbidity, hardness, and presence of aluminium, manganese, iron, calcium compounds as well as nitrates, chlorides, sulphides, phenolic compounds, anionic detergents and E. coli.

2. SC recommends permanent commission for women in Army

- The Supreme Court has said that the armed forces should consider granting permanent commission to women officers under the Short Service Commission (SSC).
 - These SSC officers — the only women officers in the army — have to retire after 14 years whatever their age, unlike their male counterparts who retire only on reaching 60 years.
 - Delhi High Court had in 2010 held the practice unconstitutional and discriminatory and directed the Centre to treat all the women army officers on par with male officers.

- The same year, Centre challenged the decision in the apex court.
- The government has already issued notification for permanent jobs to women officers in 10 branches of the Army.
- All branches in the Indian Air Force, including fighter pilots, are already opened for women officers. In the Navy, SSC has been applicable in all non-sea going branches.
- In Naval Armament branch, women officers under SSC are eligible for grant of permanent commission.
- Now, to accommodate the women SSC officers, the government will have to confirm their permanent commissions with retrospective effect from 2010.

3. RS passes Jallianwala Trust Bill

What's in News?

Rajya Sabha has passed the amendment to Jallianwala Trust Bill.

- The Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha in July 2019 and was subsequently passed.
- It amends the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951. The 1951 Act provides for the erection of a National Memorial in memory of those killed or wounded on April 13, 1919, in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar. In addition, it creates a Trust to manage the National Memorial.
- The Trust was first set up by then Congress president Motilal Nehru in 1920.

Details:

- Under the 1951 Act, the Trustees of the Memorial include: (i) the Prime Minister as Chairperson, (ii) President of the Indian National Congress, (iii) Minister in-charge of Culture, (iv) Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, (v) Governor of Punjab, (vi) Chief Minister of Punjab, and (vii) three eminent persons nominated by the central government.
- The Bill amends this provision to remove the President of the Indian National Congress as a Trustee.
- It has replaced the Congress president as a member of the Trust with the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, or the leader of the single largest Opposition party in case there is no Leader of Opposition.

Read more on the Jallianwala Bagh [here](#).

G. Prelims Facts

1. Mahabodhi Temple

- The Mahabodhi Temple Complex is one of the four holy sites related to the life of Lord Buddha.
- It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, an ancient, but much rebuilt and restored Buddhist temple in Bodh Gaya, marking the location where the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment.
- The first temple was built by Emperor Asoka in the 3rd century B.C., and the present temple dates from the 5th or 6th century.

- It is one of the earliest Buddhist temples built entirely in brick, still standing in India, from the late Gupta period.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. A lunar eclipse occurs in the new moon phase only.
2. There is no annular lunar eclipse because the Earth is much bigger than the Moon.

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:

- A lunar eclipse can occur only on the night of a full moon.
- Annular eclipse is the eclipse of the sun in which the edge of the sun remains visible as a bright ring around the moon.
- There is no annular lunar eclipse because the Earth is much bigger than the Moon and its shadow will never be small enough to leave a ring. However, the Moon does experience total eclipses.

Q2. Which of the given countries does Mediterranean Sea border?

1. Syria
2. Lebanon
3. Israel

Choose the correct option:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. NATGRID connects databases of core security agencies of the Government of India.
2. The intelligence gathering mechanism relates to immigration, banking, individual taxpayers, air and train travels.
3. The office of NATGRID is attached to the Ministry of Defence.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

The National Intelligence Grid or NATGRID is the integrated intelligence grid connecting databases of core security agencies of the Government of India. It is a robust intelligence gathering mechanism related to immigration, banking, individual taxpayers, air and train travels. The project, initially started in 2009 (conceptualised following the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks) is an online database for collating scattered pieces of information and putting them together on one platform. The office of NATGRID is attached to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

- 1. River Mahadayi is an east-flowing river.
- 2. The river originates in Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary and is called Mandovi in Goa.
- 3. Dindi, Kalasa and Banduri are the tributaries of river Mahadayi.

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

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

Mahadayi River rises in Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary in the Western Ghats. It flows in a westerly direction, entering Goa. It is joined by a number of streams along its course, growing in volume to become Mandovi before emptying itself into the Arabian Sea. Kalasa and Banduri are the tributaries of river Mahadayi. Dindi is a tributary of River Krishna.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

- 1. India's failure to convert its victory in the 1971 war into a durable peace in the region via the Shimla Agreement of 1972 is a case of missed opportunity. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
- 2. India's recent military actions in response to terrorist attacks mark a drastic change in India's approach to counterterrorism. Discuss the effectiveness of such a strategy and the need for a more comprehensive counterterrorism strategy. (15 marks, 250 words)