

08 Dec 2019: Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category:HEALTH

1. **Measles outbreaks continue unabated: WHO**

Context:

The report released by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) on behalf of the **Measles and Rubella Initiative**.

Details:

- **Children under the age of five accounted for most of the 1,40,000 people who died from measles in 2018**, according to new estimates released in the report.
- Data released by WHO has noted that measles cases more than doubled in 2018 compared to 2017. While final data for 2019 is not yet available, reports indicate that **the number of measles cases continues to be dangerously high**.
- The number of children killed in the preceding years by a **preventable disease** is proof that measles anywhere is a threat to children everywhere. When children go unvaccinated in significant numbers, entire communities are at risk.

Measles and rubella:

- **Measles is a highly contagious virus and spreads rapidly in unvaccinated children**, causing symptoms from rash to blindness, pneumonia to death.
- **Rubella virus is the primary cause of congenital rubella syndrome leading to abortions and children born with birth defects of heart, eye, and brain.**
- Both measles and rubella can be **prevented by a highly-effective Measles-Rubella (MR)**

The campaign in India:

- India initiated one of the **world's largest measles-rubella campaign** to eliminate measles and control rubella in the country.
- By November 2019, more than 324 million children and adolescents between 9 months to 15 years of age have been vaccinated with one dose of MR vaccine.

2. 2.3 million Children in India unvaccinated for measles

Context:

The report published in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR).

Details:

- In 2018, measles caused an estimated 10 million cases and 1,42,000 deaths globally, according to the report.
- The estimated cases and deaths are much more than what countries have reported to the World Health Organization and UNICEF. The number of measles cases reported in 2018 was only 3,53,000.
- The first dose of measles vaccine was introduced as part of the national immunization program in the 1990s in India. Based on the **WHO's recommendation to administer a second dose to prevent infection and death in 90-95% of vaccinated children**, India introduced the second dose from 2010 onwards. **India was one of the last countries to add a second dose of measles vaccine as recommended by the WHO.**

Concerns:

- There were nearly **70,000 cases of measles in India in 2018, the third-highest in the world**. In 2019, over 29,000 confirmed cases have been reported to the WHO.
- **Measles can be prevented through two doses of vaccination**. But the number of children who are not vaccinated against measles is alarmingly high in six countries. **At 2.3 million, India has the second-highest number of children who are not vaccinated against measles.**
- According to the MMWR report, in 2018, 19.2 million children globally worldwide did not receive the first dose through routine immunization services.

- In 2017, 2.9 million children in India under one year of age had not been vaccinated with the first dose, according to UNICEF. **In one year, the number of unvaccinated children in India had reduced from 2.9 million to 2.3 million. The corresponding reduction in the case of Nigeria has been much more** — from nearly 4 million unvaccinated children in 2017 to 2.4 million in 2018.
- In India, the first dose of measles vaccine is given at nine-12 months of age and the second dose is given at 16-24 months of age **through the national immunization program**. But it appears that **millions of children in India do not receive measles vaccine through routine immunization activities**.
- **The WHO recommends 95% coverage using two doses of measles vaccine to prevent outbreaks**. Though vaccine coverage with first and second dose has increased globally since 2000, it has **not reached anywhere near 95%**. In 2018, only 86% of children globally received the first dose through routine immunization. In the case of the second dose, the coverage globally is just 69%.

Effective strategy:

- Considering the fact that many children get missed by the routine immunization program, **mass immunization campaigns are an effective strategy** for delivering vaccination to children who have otherwise been missed by routine services.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. A good start but challenges begin now

Context:

- Shaktikanta Das took charge as the 25th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in December 2018 when the relationship between the government and the central bank had touched a new low.

Good Start:

Addressing the RBI-Government tussle:

- The relationship had turned sour between the government and the RBI, particularly with Mr. Das's predecessor Urjit Patel, **over issues such as the bank's capital framework and governance issues**.
- **A committee was appointed to look into the issue of economic capital**, the issue regarding RBI's governance has been out of Media focus lately.
- The RBI governor has insisted on **extensive consultation exercises with all stakeholders**, including banks, non-banks, and industry houses and in the process has sent out a signal that the RBI is ready to listen to divergent viewpoints.

Interest rate Policy:

- **Setting interest rates, which is the primary policy-making responsibility of the RBI**, in the first year of Mr. Das' tenure was not a complicated process. Inflation remained within acceptable limits, while growth was coming down rapidly. In such a scenario, the debate was not whether interest rates should be reduced but on the quantum of reduction needed.

- **Between February 2019 and October 2019, the RBI has reduced the interest rate on all the five occasions when the monetary policy committee met, by a total of 135 basis points (bps).**
- The first sign that policy-making will not be as straight forward was evident in the December 5 policy. As **October's retail inflation went beyond the central bank's medium-term target of 4%**, the RBI decided to pause on rate cuts.
- While keeping the rates unchanged, the **RBI maintained an 'accommodative' stance**, meaning further rate cuts are not off the table.

FDI flows:

- Net foreign direct investment increased to \$20.9 billion in the first half of 2019-20 from \$17 billion in 2018-2019, while net foreign portfolio investment was \$8.8 billion in April-November 2019 as against a net outflow of \$14.9 billion in the same period in 2018.
- This also helped the central bank to shore up the foreign exchange that recently **crossed the \$450-billion mark for the first time.**
- **India's foreign exchange reserves stood at \$ 451.7 billion on December 3, 2019** — an increase of \$38.8 billion over end-March 2019.

Challenges ahead:

Pressure on rupee:

- While there were few occasions of volatility, **the exchange rate has been relatively stable in the 2018-2019 period on the back of steady inflows.**
- With the **economy on a downhill path, the long term sustainability of the foreign fund inflow is questionable.** Once the outflows start, it will put pressure on the rupee though the import cover of 11 months acts as a cushion. **Depreciation of the rupee** leading to complications on the exchange front could make policy-making further complicated.

Risk-averse nature of Banks:

- The biggest challenge for the RBI would be to address the **risk-averse nature of the banks.**
- This is evident from the **inadequate monetary transmission.** In response to the 135 bps policy rate cut by the RBI, the one-year marginal cost of funds-based rates of banks came down only by 49 bps.
- **The year-on-year credit growth of banks is in single digits.**

Emerging growth-inflation dynamics:

- The central bank has lowered the GDP growth estimate to 5% for FY20, sharply down from the 6.1% estimated during the October 2019 policy. **Inflation projection for the second half of the current financial was raised to 4.7-5.1% compared with 3.5-3.7% projected in October 2019.**
- **Addressing falling economic growth and rising inflation necessitates a more complex approach from the RBI and its monetary policy committee.**
- Das, aware of the emerging growth-inflation dynamics, has opted for not further reducing the interest rates to support growth in the December monetary policy.
- **The growth-inflation conundrum** has kicked in for the RBI Governor when RBI governor acknowledged there was a case to look through the spike in inflation, which was primarily due to food prices, but decided to be on a wait-and-watch mode, for more clarity on the inflation front, the outlook for which was also clouded by an increase in telecom tariffs.

2. Personal income tax rate may be cut

Context:

- **The GDP growth slowed to a six-year low of 4.5% in the second quarter of 2019 fiscal** from the 5% recorded in the first quarter of 2019.

Details:

- The government has taken several measures during August and September 2019 to **boost and revive the sagging economy**.

Boosting consumption:

- **Public sector banks have disbursed nearly ₹5 lakh crore**, without compromising on prudential norms, in October-November 2019 to boost consumption.
- The government is also focusing on **spending on infrastructure**, whose spillover can go to core industries and the labour classes.

Slashing Corporate Tax:

- In the biggest reduction in 28 years, the government in **September 2019 slashed corporate tax rates by up to 10 percentage points** as it looked to pull the economy out of a six-year low growth, with a ₹1.45-lakh crore tax break.

Rationalization of the personal income tax rate:

- Following the reduction in corporate tax in September 2019, there has been a growing demand for a cut in the personal income tax to buttress consumption.
- **The rationalization of the personal income tax rate will put more money in the hands of people, which will boost consumption expenditure in the economy.**
- The **unstructured bringing down of rates** and the need to ensure that there are no loopholes being exploited by taxpayers will require asking for a lot of information from the tax assesses in a **technology-driven system**. This might make the system cumbersome for the tax assesses. The government needs to address this problem.
- The government also intends to further **simplify taxation systems**, including removal of exemption. This would lessen the harassment of taxpayers.

Goods and Services Tax (GST):

- **The rates have to be rationalized and the entire tax system has to be simplified.**
- For the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the rate structure will have to be decided by the **GST Council**. This will require coordination between the states and the center.

D. GS 4 Related

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E. Editorials

1. What are the laws on rape and sexual crimes?

Context:

The rape and murder of a veterinarian in Hyderabad and the burning of a rape survivor in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh, has led to an outcry for justice for the victims and a clamour to make the **criminal justice system** tougher on an offender committing **sexual crimes against women and children**.

Background:

- **The codification of Indian laws began with the enactment of the Charter Act, 1833** by the British Parliament which led to the establishment of the **first Law Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Macaulay**.
- The Law Commissioners decided to put the criminal law of the land in two separate codes. The first to be placed on the statute book was **the Indian Penal Code** formulating the substantive law of crimes. This was enacted in October
- **The first Code of Criminal Procedure was enacted in 1861**, which consolidated the law relating to the set-up of criminal courts and the procedure to be followed in the investigation and trial of the offence.

Provisions in the IPC:

- **'Rape' as a clearly defined offence was first introduced in the Indian Penal Code in 1860**. Prior to this, there were often diverse and conflicting laws prevailing across India.
- **Section 375 of the IPC** made punishable the act of sex by a man with a woman if it was done against her will or without her consent. The definition of rape also included sex when her consent has been obtained by putting her or any person in whom she is interested, in fear of death or of hurt.
- Also, **sex with or without her consent, when she is under 18 years is considered rape**. However, under the exception, sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape.
- **Section 376 provided for seven years of jail term to life imprisonment to whoever commits the offence of rape**.

1972 Mathura custodial rape case:

- For over a century after 1860, the criminal law relating to rape and sexual assault cases remained unchanged until the watershed incident of the Mathura custodial rape case.
- On March 26, 1972, a young Adivasi girl named Mathura was allegedly raped by policemen in Maharashtra. In the trial that ensued, the sessions court came to the conclusion that she had sexual intercourse while at the police station but rape had not been proved and that she was habituated to intercourse.
- While the sessions court acquitted both the policemen, the High Court reversed the order of acquittal. When the case reached the Supreme Court, it overturned the High Court verdict saying that "the intercourse in question is not proved to amount rape".
- The top court, in its September 15, 1978 verdict, said no marks of injury were found on the girl after the incident and "their absence goes a long way to indicate that the alleged intercourse was a peaceful affair".

The 1983 Criminal Law Act amendment:

- The controversial verdict in the Mathura custodial rape case sparked wide scale protests across the country seeking a change in existing rape laws. This culminated in the **Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act of 1983**. A new **Section 114A in the Indian Evidence Act of 1872** was inserted which presumed that there is an absence of consent in certain prosecutions of rape if the victim says so. This applied to custodial rape cases.
- In the IPC, Section 228A was added which makes it punishable to disclose the identity of the victim of certain offences including rape.

Gender neutrality of the Law:

- Following the direction of the Supreme Court in a public interest litigation (PIL) initiated by a non-governmental organization to **widen the definition of sexual intercourse in Section 375 of the IPC**, the Law Commission in its 172nd report recommended widening the scope of rape law to make it **gender-neutral**.
- While the rape law in India even today remains gender-specific, as the perpetrator of the offence can only be a 'man', the 172nd report led to the amendments in the Indian Evidence Act in 2002.
- A new provision was inserted which barred putting questions in the cross-examination of the victim as to her general 'immoral character' in rape or attempt to rape cases.

Stricter rape laws:

- The nationwide public outcry, in 2012, following gang rape and murder in Delhi, led to the passing of **the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act in 2013** which **widened the definition of rape and made punishment more stringent**.
- Parliament made the amendments on the recommendation of the **Justice J.S. Verma Committee**, which was constituted to re-look the criminal laws in the country and recommend changes.
- The 2013 Act, which came into effect on April 2, 2013, **increased jail terms in most sexual assault cases and also provided for the death penalty in rape cases that cause the death of the victim or leaves her in a vegetative state**.
- It also created new offences, such as the use of criminal force on a woman with intent to disrobe, voyeurism and stalking.
- **The punishment for gang rape was increased to 20 years to life imprisonment from the earlier 10 years to life imprisonment**.
- Earlier, there was no specific provision in law for offences such as the use of unwelcome physical contact, words or gestures, demand or request for sexual favours, showing pornography against the will of a woman or making sexual remarks. But, **the 2013 Act clearly defined these offences and allocated punishment**.
- Similarly, **stalking was made punishable with up to three years in jail**.
- The offence of acid attack was increased to 10 years of imprisonment.

Offences against minors:

- In January 2018, an eight-year-old girl in Rasana village near **Kathua** in Jammu and Kashmir was abducted, raped and murdered by a group of men. The news of the shocking act led to nationwide protests and calls for harsher punishment.
- This led to the passing of **the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018** which for the first time put the **death penalty as a possible punishment for rape of a girl under 12 years; the minimum punishment is 20 years in jail**.

- Another new section was also **inserted in the IPC to specifically deal with rape on a girl below 16 years. The provision made the offence punishable with a minimum imprisonment of 20 years which may extend to imprisonment for life.**
- The **minimum jail term for rape, which has remained unchanged since the introduction of the IPC in 1860, was increased from seven to 10 years.**

2. Seeking a review of creamy layer reservations

Context:

The Central government has asked the Supreme Court of India to refer to a seven-judge Bench the question whether the **creamy layer concept should apply (or not) to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes while giving them reservation in promotions.**

Background:

The creamy layer concept:

- The **‘means-test and creamy layer’** first finds expression in the Supreme Court’s landmark judgment in **Indra Sawhney versus Union of India**, delivered by a nine-judge Bench on November 16, 1992.
- The judgment recorded lawyers describing the **‘creamy layer’** as **“some members of a backward class who are highly advanced socially as well as economically and educationally.** They constitute the forward section of that particular backward class — as forward as any other forward class member. They lap up all the benefits of reservations meant for that class, without allowing benefits to reach the truly backward members of that class”.
- **The Indra Sawhney judgment had upheld the government’s move, based on the Mandal Commission report, to give a 27% reservation to Other Backward Classes.** But it held that the **creamy layer** (socially advanced persons) **“can be and must be excluded from backward classes”.**
- The court said **“economic criterion** could be adopted as an indicium **or measure of social advancement”** in order to identify members of a creamy layer in a class or a group.
- The court asked the Central government to fix the norms for income, property, and status for identifying the creamy layer. In 1993, the creamy layer ceiling was fixed at ₹1 lakh. It was subsequently increased to ₹2.5 lakh in 2004, ₹4.5 lakh in 2008, ₹6 lakh in 2013, and at ₹8 lakh since 2017.

Constitutional amendments:

- The **Indra Sawhney verdict had held there would be reservation only in initial appointments and not promotions.**
- The Centre introduced **Article 16(4A)** through the Constitution (Seventy-seventh Amendment) Act on May 31, 1995, to overcome the effect of this judgment and continue with its **policy of extending quotas for SCs and STs in promotions, reasoning that their representation in States’ services has not reached the required level.**
- Article 16(4B) was also introduced in the Constitution to **carry forward unfilled vacancies in subsequent years and not apply the 50% cap on the reservation to these vacancies.**
- **Article 335 of the Constitution was amended in 2001** to allow relaxations in qualifying marks and lowering of standards in favour of SCs/STs. **The amendments were challenged in the Supreme Court and referred to a five-judge Bench in the M. Nagaraj case.**

Nagaraj Case:

- In 2006, the five-judge Bench, in Nagaraj, laid down **three conditions for the promotion of SCs and STs in public employment.**
- The court held that the government cannot introduce quota in promotion for its SC/ST employees unless it proves that the particular community was backward, inadequately represented and providing reservation in promotion would not affect the overall efficiency of public administration. The opinion of the government **should be based on quantifiable data.**
- The judgment in Nagaraj also **held that the creamy layer was applicable to SCs and STs in government promotions.**

The 'Jarnail Singh' judgment:

- In Jarnail Singh, a five-judge Bench led by then Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra **upheld the 2006 Nagaraj case verdict's reasoning that the creamy layer principle was based on the right to equality.**
- The court held that **quota benefits should go to the weakest of the weak** and not be snatched away by members of the same class who were in the "top creamy layer". Justice Rohinton F. Nariman, who wrote the September 26, 2018 judgment in the Jarnail Singh case, said the **creamy layer concept ensured that only the genuinely deserving members of an SC/ST community get reservation benefits.**
- The 2018 judgment, while modifying the part in the Nagaraj verdict which required States to show quantifiable data to prove backwardness, rejected the Centre's argument that Nagaraj had misread the creamy layer concept ushered in by Indra Sawhney by applying it to SCs and STs.
- Justice Nariman had observed in his judgment for the court: "**The whole objective of reservation is to see that backward classes of citizens move forward so that they may march hand in hand with other citizens of India on an equal basis.** This will not be possible if only the creamy layer within that class bag all the coveted jobs in the public sector and perpetuate themselves, leaving the rest of the class as backward as they always were."
- The 2018 judgment said that when the court applied creamy layer to SCs and STs in the Nagaraj case, it did not tinker with the Presidential List under Articles 341 or 342 of the Constitution. The caste, group or sub-group named in the List had remained intact.

Government's Stand:

- The government has asked the Chief Justice of India, Sharad A. Bobde, to refer a September 26, 2018 judgment of a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in **Jarnail Singh versus Lachhmi Narain Gupta** to a larger Bench of seven judges for a review.
- The government **wants the Supreme Court to reconsider its stand** that socially, educationally and economically advanced "cream" of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) communities should be excluded from the benefits of reservation in government services.

The government believes that the '**creamy layer**' will become a **ruse to deprive the backward classes of the benefit of reservation.** The Attorney-General of India, K.K. Venugopal, said the SC/ST community as a whole still continues to bear the yoke of centuries' old backwardness.

F. Tidbits

1. Kannadigas to get priority in the private sector

- The Karnataka government has amended rules directing industrial establishments that have taken any support from the government to give priority to Kannadigas in jobs on the shop floor in 'C' and 'D' category of employees.
- It has been done by revising rules governing recruitment in industries under the Karnataka Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Rules 1961.
- The industries getting incentives from the government must provide 100 percent reservation in their blue-collared jobs and those not availing any benefits are required to accord priority to Kannadigas.
- The revised rules also empower the state to intervene if private companies fail to implement the rules in letter and spirit.
- **Andhra Pradesh recently passed legislation** that made it mandatory for existing and upcoming industries in the state to reserve 75 percent jobs for locals, despite the **50 percent cap on reservation prescribed by the Supreme court.**
- Questions are bound to be raised against this move as to whether the rule **violates Article 19 of the Constitution.**

2. India, U.S. will conclude trade talks soon, says USISPF chief

- Outstanding trade issues between India and the U.S. are moving towards resolution, and the first quarter of 2020 will see both countries conclude ongoing talks, Mukesh Aghi, President and CEO of the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), has said.
- Indian and American interlocutors indicated convergence on contentious trade issues that have dampened bilateral ties.
- There is said to be movement towards resolution on the restoration of **Generalised Systems of Preference (GSP)** for India and the resolution of the **price cap dispute related to American medical devices in India.**
- India is said to be open to the idea of moving **the Trade Margin Rationalisation (TMR) regime for price control on imported medical devices,** as being demanded by American manufacturers.

3. Dutch, Danish heritage in Hooghly gets an ASI push

- The western banks of the Hooghly [Ganga] had anchored different **colonial settlements, including the French, Portuguese, Danish, Dutch and British.**
- The **French architecture in Chandannagar** and the **Portuguese structures at Bandel** are well known. The **Dutch's** legacy and architecture can be witnessed in
- **The Dutch settlement in the area started as early as 1656, a couple of years before the Mughal king Aurangzeb ascended the throne.** They started the trade of cotton, indigo, and spices. Not many of the Dutch monuments are found today as they were demolished after the British took control of the region.

G. Prelims Facts

1. COPD treatment eluding power loom workers

- **Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), is an irreversible lung congestion caused by long-term exposure to organic dust.**
- In the Indian context, the labourers associated with cotton processing are highly vulnerable to COPD.
- **The disease is preventable, but not curable.** Symptomatic cure for cough bleeding or breathlessness may provide temporary relief. But in the absence of long-term treatment, mortality is alarmingly high.
- As per the WHO Global Report on Tobacco Attributable Mortality, 2012, within the non-communicable diseases group, 28% of deaths caused by COPD are attributable to tobacco. **And exposure to indoor air pollution caused by cooking and heating could aggravate the incidence, especially among women.**
- According to the University of Washington's Global Burden of Disease study, 2018, **COPD was the second-highest cause of deaths in India after heart diseases in 2017.**

2. Odisha reduces farmers' scheme assistance

- The **Odisha government** has reduced the financial assistance given to farmers under the **Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme** to ₹4,000 per annum from ₹10,000.
- The decision to reduce the assistance was taken after the Odisha government merged the KALIA scheme with the **Centre's PM-KISAN, launched in February 2019.**
- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is a **Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding from the Government of India.**
- Keeping the parity of both the schemes, the **small/marginal farmers** may be given with ₹5,000 for 2019-20 and ₹4,000 per year from 2020-21, so that they will **get ₹10,000 annually i.e ₹6,000 from PM-KISAN and ₹4,000 from KALIA.**
- The actual cultivators (sharecroppers) who are **landless**, will continue to get assistance from KALIA i.e ₹10,000 annually since they are **not considered under PM-KISAN.**

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following pairs is wrongly matched?

- Rumtek Monastery: Gangtok, Sikkim
- Namdroling Monastery: Pinjoor, Himachal Pradesh
- Ghum Monastery: Darjeeling, West Bengal
- Namgyal: Dharmashala, Himachal Pradesh

Answer: b

Explanation:

Namdroling Monastery: Karnataka

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act:

1. The Act provides for the establishment of Special Courts for trial of offences under the Act, keeping the best interest of the child as of paramount importance at every stage of the judicial process.

- The POCSO Act is only applicable to child survivors and adult offenders. In case two children have sexual relations with each other, or in case a child perpetrates a sexual offence on an adult, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, will apply.

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

- 1 only
- 2 only
- 1 and 2 both
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Explanation:

Self-explanatory

Q3. which of the following statements are correct?

- The pygmy hog is classified as critically endangered in the IUCN red list.
- Wild populations of the Pygmy hog have been limited to only the Manas national park in Assam.

Options:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- 1 and 2 both
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The pygmy hog (*Porcula salvania*) is critically endangered, previously spread across Bhutan, India and Nepal, but now only found in India (Assam). The current world population is about 150 individuals or fewer.
- The pygmy hog is the sole representative of *Porcula*, making the conservation of this critically endangered species even more important, as its extinction would result in the loss of a unique evolutionary branch of pigs. They used to be widespread in the tall, wet grasslands in the southern Himalayan foothills from Uttar Pradesh to Assam, through Nepal and north Bengal. However, human encroachment has largely destroyed the natural habitat of the pygmy hog by development, agriculture, domestic grazing, and deliberate fires. Only one viable population remains in the Manas National Park, but even there, threats due to livestock grazing, poaching, fire, and tigers persist.
- The pygmy hog is designated as a Schedule I species in India under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and offences against them invite heavy penalties.

Q4. which of the following statements are wrong with respect to the monetary policy committee?

- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 was amended by Finance Act (India), 2016 to constitute MPC.
- The committee comprises seven members - three officials of the Reserve Bank of India and three external members nominated by the Government of India and The Governor of Reserve Bank of India as the chairperson ex officio of the committee.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1 and 2 both
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 was amended by Finance Act (India), 2016 to constitute MPC which will bring more transparency and accountability in fixing India's Monetary Policy.
- The Monetary Policy Committee of India is responsible for fixing the benchmark interest rate in India. The committee is answerable to the Government of India if the inflation exceeds the range prescribed for three consecutive months.
- The committee comprises six members - three officials of the Reserve Bank of India and three external members nominated by the Government of India.
- The Governor of Reserve Bank of India is the chairperson ex officio of the committee. Decisions are taken by majority with the Governor having the casting vote in case of a tie. The current mandate of the committee is to maintain 4% annual inflation until 31 March 2021 with an upper tolerance of 6% and a lower tolerance of 2%.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Enumerate the laws dealing with sexual crimes in India. Comment on the adequacy of these laws in addressing the problem of sexual violence. Suggest necessary changes required to ensure a tougher criminal justice system on sexual crime offenders. (15 marks, 250 words)
 2. The Supreme Court's Indra Sawhney judgment is a landmark in the domain of reservations in India. Comment. Does the Supreme Court's stand in the 2018 Jarnail Singh case follow the same principles as laid out in the Indra Sawhney case? (10 marks, 150 words)
-