

# 19 Jan 2020: Comprehensive News Analysis

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## B. GS 2 Related

### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. [India-Pak. trade freeze hits thousands: report](#)

##### Context:

A report highlighting the effect of India-Pakistan ties on the lives of the people in the bordering regions.

### Background:

- **Following the Pulwama attack, India imposed economic sanctions on Pakistan** which curbed the bilateral trade between the two neighbouring countries.
- There has been the shutdown of trade between India and Pakistan across **the Wagah-Attari border and the Line of Control (LoC) Salamabad-Chakhan da Bagh routes.**
- The **cancellation of the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan** and the trade routes' closure, was followed by **Pakistan's counter-measures, including an airspace ban and suspension of trade relations.**

### Details:

- According to the **report titled "Unilateral decisions, bilateral losses"** authored by researchers at the **Bureau of Research on Industry and Economic Fundamentals (BRIEF)**, the measures and countermeasures have led to a **decline in the relatively meagre bilateral trade of \$2.56 billion in 2018-19 dropping to \$547.22 million (April-August 2019).**
- It has resulted in **losses in billions of dollars and hundreds of job days** affecting the livelihood opportunities of the locals.
- Many families and roughly 50,000 people, in Punjab and nearly 900 families in Kashmir have been directly affected by the shutdown of trade between India and Pakistan.
- The affected groups comprise of traders, custom house agents, truck drivers and helpers, those working at tyre and mechanic stores, local dhabas and motels, who are **more vulnerable to economic hardships and poverty.**

### Government's arguments:

- Government officials justify the decisions on trade as being **meant to be a tough message for Pakistan** and to show India's frustration over **Pakistan's continued support to terrorism.**
- The economic sanctions would **affect Pakistan's economy even more than India's.**
- The Union Home Ministry has argued that trade needs to be stopped until a stricter regulatory regime is in place to block the **misuse of the route for smuggling weapons, narcotics and fake currency.** The ministry has stated in the suspension order that trade would be resumed at a later date considering any change in prevailing circumstances.

### Way forward:

- The governments at the Centre and in Punjab and Jammu Kashmir should **consider compensating the affected people for the losses as a short term measure.**
- In the longer run, there is the **need to find alternative trading markets internally** so that those affected are not put out of business permanently.

## 2. Doval, Gotabaya discuss bilateral issues

### Context:

India's National Security Adviser's meeting with the Sri Lankan President.

### Background:

- **India and Sri Lanka have had high-level engagements since the election of the new president in Sri Lanka.**

- The change in leadership was viewed with caution in India given the fact that there were concerns that **the new dispensation would favour China over India.**
- Recently during the visit to Sri Lanka, the Chinese Foreign Minister had pledged that China would stand by Sri Lanka and not allow outside influences to interfere in Sri Lanka's internal matters. This was in reference to the Tamil issue in SL and was meant to **strengthen China-SL ties and draw a wedge between India and SL.**

#### Details:

- The meeting between the NSA and the Sri Lankan President in Colombo involved discussions on key bilateral issues including **economic development and strategic cooperation.**
- Strengthening of bilateral cooperation on **national security, intelligence sharing, maritime security & fostering of regional collaboration,** were some of the key points of discussion. The two countries discussed **strengthening military ties.**
- Among the issues discussed was also the topic of **countering and preventing debt traps** in the backdrop of the huge debt owned by SL to China.

### 3. Need FTA to spur India, EU trade: Rinkevics

#### Context:

Latvian Foreign Minister's Statement on **the India-EU Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA).**

#### Background:

- **The EU-India trade negotiations began in 2007 and were suspended in 2013.** Since then, despite several attempts by Brussels and New Delhi, the two sides have been unable to agree to revive the talks on the proposed BTIA.
- Despite the break in trade talks, trade between India and the group of 28 European nations has been growing. **The EU is India's largest trading partner** with about \$108 billion trade in goods in 2018-2019, and \$42 billion in services. **EU is also the largest source of foreign direct investment in India.**

#### Details:

- Latvian Foreign Minister has rightly stated that the India-EU trade cannot increase substantially until the Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) between the European Union and India are negotiated.
- **Several EU countries are hampered in investing in India without an investment agreement in place.**
- There are many issues with the trade negotiations which needs to be addressed. With a comprehensive trade deal, there is a chance for improvement of trade figures between the EU and India.

#### India-Latvia ties:

- There is immense scope for **India-Latvia economic co-operation given the potential for IT companies in Latvia to outsource business to India as well as recruit "skilled and talented" Indian professionals.**

#### Way forward:

- There is hope that there will be movement on the BTIA when the Indian Prime Minister visits Brussels for the **India-EU summit in March 2020**.

For more information on this topic: [Click Here](#)

## Category: HEALTH

### 1. Regulator flags 49 drug samples as 'not of standard quality'

#### Context:

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization's (CDSCO), December 2019 list of drugs declared not of standard quality.

#### Details:

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO), in its December 2019 list of **drugs/medical devices and cosmetics** declared not of standard quality/spurious/adulterated/misbranded, has flagged 49 samples, as "not of standard quality".
- Of the 1,336 samples tested, 1,286 were declared of standard quality, 49 "not of standard quality" and one
- The drugs "failed" the quality test because of the presence of foreign matter, description, particulate matter, extractable volume, sterility, disintegration, dissolution and other parameters.
- Such defects may arise because of **inadequate pre-formulation development studies, lack of in-process controls** exercised by the manufacturer or **unsuitable conditions under which drugs are stored or transported**.
- **Spurious or imitation drug products are formulations manufactured concealing the true identity of the product** and made to resemble another popular brand drug, to deceive the buyer. The product may or may not contain active ingredients.

#### Concerns:

- **Health risks** associated with the consumption of these 'not of standard quality' drugs.
- **Impacts the Indian brand of pharma products in other countries.**

### 2. China reports four new cases caused by coronavirus strain

#### Context:

China has reported four new cases of pneumonia believed to be caused by a new coronavirus strain.

#### Background:

- **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) had killed nearly 800 people globally during a 2002/03 outbreak.** SARS had its origin in China.
- **SARS is a respiratory infection** affecting mainly the lungs.

#### Details:

- The new virus was discovered in the **central Chinese city of Wuhan** and it belongs to the same **large family of coronaviruses that includes SARS**.
- Thailand and Japan have confirmed new cases of the virus, stoking worries globally as many Chinese people will travel abroad during the Lunar New Year holidays.
- **The World Health Organization (WHO) has also warned that a wider outbreak is possible**, though it has advised against any travel restrictions for China.
- Though there are reports that say the new virus does not appear to be as lethal as SARS, **there is little knowledge about its origins and its transmissibility**. This lack of knowledge can severely **undermine efforts to curb and contain its spread**.
- Countries like the United States, Thailand and South Korea have stepped up **monitoring of travellers** from Wuhan as part of their efforts to prevent the disease from spreading.

## C.GS 3 Related

### Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

#### 1. Green nod for oil, gas exploration waived

##### Context:

**The Environment Ministry's notification** granting exemption to oil and gas firms involved in exploratory drilling, from seeking environmental clearance.

##### Background:

- Previously, even exploratory surveys required the highest level of environmental scrutiny and were classified under **category 'A' projects**.
  - Category 'A' projects required project proponents to prepare an **Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) plan**.
  - The EIA would be **scrutinized by a centrally constituted committee of experts**.
  - The project would also be **subject to a public hearing** involving the locals of the proposed project site. Public hearings, for category 'A' projects, are generally exempted if they are offshore projects.

##### Details:

- The new exemption of environmental clearance is **valid only for drilling explorations of both on-shore and offshore projects**.
- Developing an offshore or onshore drilling site as a hydrocarbon block will still continue to merit a "category A" classification.
- **The new amendments demote exploratory projects to the category of 'B2' projects**, which implies that the project appraisal would be conducted by the States concerned and will not require an EIA.
- The move is part of a **larger process of decentralization by the Centre**, which is seeking the devolution of **more regulatory actions to State and local units**.

##### Concerns:



- Since the exploratory drilling process is **an ecologically-intensive exercise** that involves digging multiple wells and conducting seismic surveys offshore, environmentalists fear that the exemption could **lead to lax oversight over such projects**.
- Environmentalists note with concern that this move is part of a **continuing trend of the larger lack of oversight by the Environment Ministry** and making the projects more business-friendly by **focusing on ease of doing business**.

#### Tamil Nadu and Puducherry experience:

- In 2019, ONGC and the Vedanta group were granted permission to conduct exploratory oil surveys in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.
- **Amid fears** that the exploratory drilling would lead to the **destruction of agricultural fields** in the Cauvery delta, there were protests in the region.
- There are also arguments by environmentalists that offshore drilling operations can lead to a **build-up of heavy water contaminants and possibly affect fish and other sea life that rely on sonar for navigation**.
- There are fears that the exploratory drilling in offshore areas can **increase the risk of oil spills and severely impact the coastal ecology**.

## 2. Eastern Ghats: land-use policies, climate change hit endemic plant habitats

### Context:

A study on the **effect of anthropogenic activities and climate change on the endemic species** of the Eastern Ghats in India.

### Background:

- The Eastern Ghats, consisting of a chain of broken hill-ranges is **spread across Odisha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**.
- The Eastern Ghats is home to **unique ecosystems and consists of over 450 endemic plant species**. The region remains one of the **most exploited and degraded ecosystems of India**.

### Details:

#### Increasing anthropogenic pressure:

- The study notes that with intensifying **anthropogenic activities like agricultural practices, urbanization and pressures from mining and deforestation**, the Eastern Ghats ecology is under severe strain.
- The highly threatening human activities in the Eastern Ghats area are mining, urbanisation/settlements, dam construction, **firewood collection and agricultural expansion**. **Unsupervised tourism** has also been a major source of concern.
- The study estimates that by 2050 the total human population in the Eastern Ghats region would reach 2.6 million, raising pressure from anthropogenic activities.

#### Habitat Destruction:

- The increased demand for land for food, road and other activities will lead to **encroachments and threaten the habitats of endemic and rare, endangered and threatened (RET) species of Eastern Ghats**.

- The endemic species of Eastern Ghats were found to be distributed in the core areas of the forests of Kalahandi, Mahendragiri, Nallamalai-Seshachalam, Kolli and Kalrayan hill forests, while the RET species were distributed not only in the core areas but also in the periphery of the forests, thus being at a greater risk from anthropogenic disturbances.
- There are fears that this **habitat destruction could have led to species loss also**.
- The study notes that **unsupervised tourism** has also affected the distribution of endemic and RET species.

#### Climate change effect:

- Observations based on simulations have shown that the temperature in the region is likely to increase by 1.8 degree Celsius by 2050 to 1.98 degree Celsius by 2070. The rainfall is also projected to increase by 113 millimetres by 2050 and 160 millimetre by 2070.
- **Given that the mean temperature and rainfall are crucial for the plant species, the endemic species are at risk.**
- The regional or local climate change (warming) has led to **frequent prolonged non-rainy days**, increased number of days with maximum and minimum temperatures resulting in loss of soil moisture and soil degradation.
- The increased temperatures and reduced moisture have also contributed to **the occurrence of frequent forest fires**, eliminating regeneration of the less-frequent endemic species in the forest.

#### **Significance of the study:**

The study confirms other similar studies from across the globe which have shown that **the tropics are losing more plant biodiversity than other regions**. These observations stress the need for **urgent conservation strategies**.

#### **Way forward:**

- The biodiversity conservation initiatives of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of Government of India and State forest departments should **focus on the Eastern Ghats to protect declining habitats of endemic and RET species**.
- **More scientific studies** including the setting up of larger species inventories to identify and record species can help on conservation efforts.
- The administrations should consider **redefining the boundaries of national parks and sanctuaries based on the richness of endemic and RET species**. This would aid the conservation efforts of these species.
- **Ecotourism with regulatory guidelines** being a positive way to educate and promote conservation should be encouraged and supported by the state.

### **3. M.P. focuses on reviving threatened tree species**

#### **Context:**

Madhya Pradesh Government's **Afforestation policy**.

#### **Background:**

- With around 25% area under forests, **Madhya Pradesh**, according to the India State of Forest Report, 2019, **has the largest forest cover in the country**.
- Notably, 32 out of the total 216 naturally occurring tree species in the State face the threat of extinction.

### Details:

- **In a notable shift from the British-era focus on high-value timber to indigenous species having traditional value**, the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department in 2019 planted 70 lakh saplings of such threatened indigenous tree species.
- The threatened species were identified based on extensive research. A species was deemed threatened based on both the present threat and future threat perception to it.
- The threatened species identified included:
  - Bija: Has high timber and fodder value and is used to cure diabetes and make concussion equipment.
  - Tinsa: used to improve fertility in women.
  - Salai: Used in producing resin and gum.
  - Dahiman: used to cure high blood pressure.
- The afforestation approach was based on the principle that there is a need to find solutions to the problem of threatened species **based on local situations**.
- Madhya Pradesh state **plans to have at least 10% of all plantations in the State planted with endangered indigenous species**.

### Significance:

#### Change in approach:

- Lack of awareness on the traditional importance of the species was a major reason for the endangerment of indigenous species.
- Following the British policy, the department had only focused on timber of greater economic value like sal till recently.
- **For the first time in the country, Madhya Pradesh has taken initiative in identifying species under threat and taking steps to protect them.**

#### Biodiversity:

- The species shown for revival are **in compliance with International Union for Conservation of Nature guidelines**.
- Focusing on the threatened indigenous species will help **sustain the biodiversity of the region** which will bring in the subsequent advantages of higher biodiversity.

#### Support Livelihoods:

- The approach involves plans to **revive traditional wisdom**. It will **boost livelihood opportunities due to the involvement of locals**. This is in line with the State Forest Policy, 2005 of Madhya Pradesh.
- The administration has also drafted **supportive gum and resin policy for value addition** and grading of the products. This will benefit the locals by supporting employment generation.

#### Combat climate change:

- The **indigenous species could also withstand harsh climatic conditions, and vagaries of nature**, thereby proving useful to combat climate change and also help mitigate its effects.

### Category: INFRASTRUCTURE



## 1. Study on national gas grid soon

### Context:

A study on the **proposed national gas grid**.

### Details:

- ICF Resources LLC, a U.S. entity is undertaking the study for the **Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB)**.
- This study forms part of **The India National Gas Grid Technical Assistance programme** which stems from an **agreement between PNGRB and the United States Trade Development Agency (USTDA)**. It involves an update of a 2011 study. USTDA and ICF Resources will fund the project cost.

### Aspects of the study:

- The study will consider the important aspect of **demand analysis to ascertain the viability of the project**. It will involve providing an update on the gas demand analysis, including anchor consumers, industries, **city gas distribution (CGD)** and **emerging demand centres such as CNG and LNG for road transport**.
- The study will take a new look at the **gas supply analysis too**, which will include a review of **LNG imports, domestic supply, potential transnational gas pipeline imports and virtual pipelines**.
- The study will involve a **detailed review of the regulatory regimes governing the expansion of natural gas in the country**. This will ensure the development of new companies in the domain.

### Significance:

- The study will aim at developing an **economic basis for building India's Natural Gas Grid (NGG)**.
- The study comes on the back of the push to **promote the use of natural gas in India**, given the benefits of usage of Natural gas. It **involves lower transport costs in the form of piped transport**. **It leads to lesser emissions as compared to fossil fuels**.

### Additional Information:

- The natural gas pipeline network in India stands at 16,324 km as on April 2019. Nearly 7,000 km of pipeline is under construction.
- **Share of natural gas in India's energy basket is 6.2% as against 23.4% globally** and is expected to increase in the future.

## D. GS 4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

Category: ECONOMY

## 1. Is the Indian economy staring at stagflation?

### Context:

The **retail price inflation has increased to a nearly six-year high of 7.35% in December 2019**, raising worries that the Indian economy may be headed towards stagflation.

### Philips Curve:

- The **conventional view in economics** is that there is an **inverse relationship between economic growth and inflation**.
- The idea was first proposed by economist William Phillips, based on statistical studies of inflation and unemployment. The **“Phillips Curve”** is the result of this study.
- The **inverse relationship between inflation and unemployment** was seen as a confirmation of the hypothesis that inflation helps the economy function at its full potential.
  - **Inflation, by boosting nominal wages** can encourage workers in an economy to accept lower real wages. The employment and production capacity increases boosting economic growth.
  - **Without inflation, workers would be unwilling to accept lower real wages**, which in turn would lead to higher unemployment and decreased output in the economy.
- However, at **inflation rates beyond a certain level**, at which point labour and other resources in the economy are fully employed, inflation will **have no employment or growth benefits**.
- Accordingly, policymakers are often advised to **maintain a certain inflation rate** to ensure that unemployment is kept to a minimum and the economy is operating at full capacity.

### Stagflation:

- **Stagflation is an economic scenario where an economy faces both high inflation and low growth (and high unemployment) at the same time.**
- Stagflation challenges the conventional view that inflation helps an economy operate at full capacity.
- **The stagflation crisis in the United States in the 1970s**, caused by rising oil prices, led many to question the validity of the Phillips Curve.

### Background of Indian economic situation:

- The Indian economy has had **six consecutive quarters of slowing growth since 2018**.
- Economic growth in the second quarter of 2019-2020 was just 4.5%. For the 2019-2020 financial year, growth is expected to be around 5%.
- **The slowdown has mainly been attributed to the lack of sufficient consumer demand for goods and services.**
- Ironically, insufficient demand was cited as the primary reason behind the low price inflation that was prevalent in the economy until recently. This had prompted the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to cut interest rates in order to boost demand. **The RBI has cut its benchmark interest rate, the repo rate, five times in 2019.**
- As against the expectation that the interest rate cuts would spur demand and boost the economy, in the second half of 2019, **prices of goods began to rise at a faster pace and the growth rate of the economy continued to fall significantly.**
- This combination of rising prices and falling growth has led many to believe that **India may be sliding into stagflation.**
- The only aspect of comfort is the fact that **core inflation**, which excludes items such as vegetables whose prices are too volatile, **remains within the RBI’s targeted range**. This is often used for reasoning that India is not in a full-fledged stagflation condition.

## Concern:

### Policy dilemma:

- The major reason attributed to the current slowdown in India is the **lack of sufficient consumer demand**. In such a scenario the general measures suggested to revive the Indian economy involves measures like greater spending by the government and the central bank.
- However, **stagflation essentially prohibits the government and the central bank from taking such countercyclical policy steps**.
  - If the central bank decides to inject fresh money into the economy either by **cutting its benchmark interest rate or other unconventional means**, it could lead to a further rise in prices and result in retail inflation rising further above the RBI's targeted range of 2-6%.
  - A similar rise in inflation could result if the government engages in **deficit spending** that is funded by the RBI.
- The reluctance to inject more money into the economy would be bad news at a time when the economy, with **significant unemployed resources, is not functioning at its full capacity**.

### Affecting the common people:

- Stagflation characterized by high inflation and low growth affects apart from being politically disadvantageous to the ruling government, also affects the common people.
- **The slowdown in growth could affect peoples' incomes**. There could be lesser employment avenues leading to lower incomes.
- Higher inflation could cause a **reduction in people's standard of living** as they can afford fewer things with the disposable income they earn.

## Way forward:

There are contrasting views on what needs to be done for an economy to recover from stagflation.

### Focus on growth:

- Given the fact that India's nominal GDP growth, **a measure of the overall level of spending in the economy, is expected to hit a 42-year low of 7.5% this year**, some economists suggest that policymakers should **focus exclusively on boosting aggregate demand in the economy**.
- They argue that the central bank should further ease its policy stance and the government should spend more on infrastructure and other sectors to boost the economy.
- These economists consider the **RBI's target of keeping inflation from rising above 6% as an arbitrary one**. They argue that this target can be modified as per the need of the economy in its current state.
- **Core inflation in December 2019 was at 3.7%**. Hence, Inflation on the broader level, as measured by the core inflation figures, remains within the RBI's target range.

### Inflation is a concern:

- Some economists are **cautious about advocating a big-spending approach to rescue the economy from stagflation**. The fact that monetary easing in the last one year has only raised prices without leading to higher growth rates points to the futility of such an approach. **Injecting further liquidity into the economy may lead to higher inflation**.
- **India's growth rate was mainly boosted by the availability of easy credit over the last decade**. Further credit expansion by the central bank and debt-fuelled government spending, will **not lead to genuine and sustainable economic growth**. The need is for **supply-side reforms to bring about genuine economic growth**.

## 1. Can States challenge the validity of central laws?

### Context:

Kerala government's move to file a suit in the Supreme Court of India seeking to declare the CAA as unconstitutional.

### Background:

- Amid protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, or CAA, 2019, **Kerala government has filed a suit in SC seeking to declare CAA as unconstitutional.**
- Punjab has also decided to challenge the CAA in the Supreme Court.
- Meanwhile, **Chhattisgarh has filed a similar suit in SC, challenging the constitutional validity of the National Investigation Agency Act.**
- All these states have **invoked Article 131**, to challenge the Central government's policies.

### Details:

#### Constitutional provisions:

- Both High Courts and the Supreme Court have the power to adjudicate cases against the State and Central governments. The **validity of any executive or legislative action is generally challenged by way of writ petitions under Article 226 of the Constitution in respect of High Courts**, and, in respect to fundamental rights violations, **under Article 32 in the Supreme Court.**
- Unlike individuals, State governments cannot complain of fundamental rights being violated. Therefore, the Constitution provides that whenever a State feels that its legal rights are under threat or have been violated, it can take the issue to the Supreme Court.
- **Article 131 confers exclusive jurisdiction on the Supreme Court** to adjudicate disputes involving States, or the Centre on the one hand and one or more States on the other. This means no other court can entertain such a dispute.
- There have been past instances of states having filed cases under Article 131 against neighbouring States in respect of river water sharing and boundary disputes and also against the Centre.

#### The suit filed by Kerala:

- Kerala's suit asks the SC to declare CAA, 2019, as being violative of the Constitution. Its main argument is that the **CAA, 2019 provisions go against the principle of secularism that is a basic feature of the Constitution.**
- The suit also **challenges the validity of notifications issued under the Passport (Entry into India) Amendment Rules and the Foreigners (Amendment) Order**, in 2015-16, as being contrary to the Constitution.
  - The notifications of 2015 had given an exemption to persons belonging to minority communities in Bangladesh and Pakistan — namely, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians, from the purview of the laws against the illegal entry of foreigners into India.
  - It extends such provisions to minorities who were compelled to seek shelter in India due to religious persecution or the fear of religious persecution and entered India on or **before December 31, 2014.**
  - The 2016 notification also adds Afghanistan as the source country of such minorities.

- The 2015-16 notifications formed the basis for creating the categories of people who were not to be treated as illegal migrants. The CAA chooses the same groups for conferment of citizenship on a fast-track mode.
- **The term “religious persecution” is not found in the CAA**, but only mentions that those exempted from the Foreigners’ Act under the 2015 and 2016 notifications will not be treated as “illegal migrants”. This aspect is also a part of the suit filed by Kerala.

#### The suit filed by Chhattisgarh:

- **Chhattisgarh has sought a declaration that the NIA Act, 2008, is unconstitutional.**
- The major argument is **that ‘Police’ is a subject reserved for the States**, and having a central police agency, which has overriding powers over the State police, with no provision for consent from the State government for its operations, is **against the division of legislative powers between the Centre and the States.**
- Chhattisgarh suit argues that NIA act was passed in spite of it being **beyond the legislative competence of Parliament** and also that such an agency would be against the federal spirit of the Constitution.

#### Legal precedents:

- There are **two conflicting opinions of the Supreme Court** on the question of whether the suits challenging central laws are maintainable or not.
- **In the State of Madhya Pradesh v. Union of India and Another, case of 2011** the Supreme Court has held that though the Central laws can be challenged in the State High Courts as well and also before the SC under Article 32, **no such provision is available to challenge the validity of a Central law under the exclusive original jurisdiction of the SC provided under Article 131.**
- **In the State of Jharkhand vs. State of Bihar and Another (2014) case**, another Bench of the SC stating that it does not accept the view that the constitutionality of a law cannot be raised in a suit under Article 131 **referred the matter to a larger Bench for an authoritative pronouncement.**

#### Way forward:

- One of the issues to be decided is whether such **a suit involves a question on the violation of a legal right.**
  - There have been arguments against the suit filed by Kerala government stating that Kerala has raised a dispute that does not involve any legal right but is only a political question. And that, therefore, it cannot file a suit under Article 131.
  - However, Kerala’s suit points out that **under Article 256 of the Constitution, the State would be compelled to comply with the CAA and rules and orders passed by the Centre.** Since the Kerala government believes that these laws and rules are arbitrary, unreasonable, and violative of fundamental rights, a dispute involving law and fact has indeed arisen between Kerala and the Centre.
- The Supreme Court may have to **constitute a larger Bench to decide the question whether the suits challenging central laws are maintainable.** If the suits are declared maintainable, then the same Bench may also adjudicate the disputes.



### 1. Odisha police win friends, trust with a skating rink

- The modern recreational facility of a skating rink has been set up on the campus of a police station in Odisha's backward and remote Nuapada district.
- It is a means to connect with the locals in a **region affected by left-wing extremism**. **Security forces find it difficult to challenge Maoists without cooperation from the people.**
- Even a small initiative like this will **definitely bridge the gap between the people and the security forces**. Children could play in close proximity to the police establishment and grow up without harbouring a fear of security forces.

## G. Prelims Facts

### 1. IIT Bombay efficiently removes heavy metals from water

- The term heavy metal refers to any metallic chemical element that has a relatively high density, atomic weights, or atomic numbers. **Heavy metals are toxic or poisonous even at low concentrations.** Examples of heavy metals include **mercury (Hg), cadmium (Cd), arsenic (As), chromium (Cr), thallium (Tl), and lead (Pb).**
- Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay have developed a **carbon-based nanostructure that can simultaneously remove heavy metals** such as arsenic, chromium, cadmium and mercury from wastewater with very high efficiency.
- **No electricity is required for the nanostructure to remove heavy metals from water** as it allows for gravity-driven purification of the water. **The nanostructures can be recycled and reused multiple times.**

### 2. Heatwave effect

- Heatwaves can also occur in the ocean and these are known as **marine heatwaves or MHWs**. Under MHWs the ocean temperatures are **extremely warm for an extended period of time**.
- Marine heatwaves **can occur in summer or winter** - they are defined based on differences with expected temperatures for the location and time of year.
- Marine heatwaves **affect ecosystem structure, by supporting certain species and suppressing others**. Biodiversity can be drastically affected by marine heatwaves. Marine heatwaves can **cause economic losses** through impacts on fisheries and aquaculture.
- The unprecedented death of nearly one million birds between 2015 and 2016, whose remains washed ashore in Alaska, US, was brought on by a **severe and long-lasting marine heatwave in the northeast Pacific dubbed "The Blob"**.
- The heatwave lasted more than 700 days from 2014 to 2016, increasing water temperature and **interrupting patterns in the food web from the smallest creatures to top predators**. It squeezed out the bird's fish food supply in the Pacific Ocean.

## H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Q1. The Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement of India is associated with which of the following?**

- a. The European Union
- b. South Korea
- c. United States of America
- d. Japan

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

On 28th June 2007, India and the EU began negotiations on a broad-based Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) in Brussels, Belgium.

**Q2. Which of the following statements are correct?**

- 1. Share of natural gas in India's energy basket is higher compared to the global average.
- 2. India is more dependent on LNG imports as compared to crude oil imports.

**Options:**

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Share of natural gas in India's energy basket is 6.2% as against 23.4% globally.
- India is heavily dependent on crude oil and LNG imports with 82.8% import dependence for crude oil and 45.3% for natural gas/LNG.

**Q3. The term "The Blob" is associated with which of the following**

- a. Cold current off the coast of Peru
- b. Marine Heat waves in northeast Pacific
- c. Heat wave in North America
- d. Depression off the coast of South America

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The unprecedented death of nearly one million birds between 2015 and 2016, whose remains washed ashore in Alaska, US, was brought on by a **severe and long-lasting marine heatwave in the northeast Pacific dubbed "The Blob"**.

**Q4. Which of the following statements are correct with respect to the Sun temple at Konark?**

1. It is attributed to King Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga dynasty.
2. It is a classic illustration of the Kalinga Architecture.

**Options:**

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- Konark Sun Temple is a 13th-century CE Sun temple at Konark. The temple is attributed to king Narasinga Deva I of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty.
- The Sun Temple in Konark exhibits the traditional Odisha style of architecture, also known as Kalinga architecture.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Stagflation challenges the conventional economic view that inflation helps an economy operate at full capacity. Comment. Discuss the concerns associated with Stagflation in an economy. (10 marks, 150 words)
2. In a notable shift from the British-era focus on high-value timber, the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department's move to focus on threatened indigenous tree species, holds immense significance in the present context. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)

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Read previous [CNA](#).