05 Feb 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. No decision yet on nationwide NRC, Minister tells Parliament

Context:

The government informed the Lok Sabha that it has till now not taken any decision to prepare the National Register of Citizens (NRC) at the national level.

Details:

- Also, the government is in discussion with the States having concerns with regard to the preparation of the **National Population Register** (NPR).

- According to the Citizenship Rules, 2003, the NPR is the first step towards the compilation of the NRC.

- The NPR form is yet to be finalised and notified but the trial form last year collected details from 30 lakh respondents on 21 parameters, including the place of birth of father and mother and the last place of residence.

Concerns:

- Several opposition-ruled States have vociferously opposed the NPR, slated to begin from April 1, 2020 onwards along with the decennial Census.

Nationwide NRC / National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) has been covered in:

2. Why no action on pleas on T.N. MLAs disqualification, asks SC

Context:

The Supreme Court has questioned the Tamil Nadu Speaker's inaction with respect to the disqualification petitions filed under the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law) against Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam and 10 other AIADMK MLAs for voting against the confidence motion moved by Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami in February 2017.

Background:

- Tenth Schedule petitions were filed against Mr. Panneerselvam and the 10 other MLAs, for defying the party whip on March 20, 2017.

- However, before the Speaker could proceed, the ECI recognised Mr. Panneerselvam's faction as a "separate group".

- Subsequently, the Panneerselvam and the Palaniswami (OPS-EPS) factions merged.

- In November 2017, the ECI declared the duo as the leaders of the AIADMK.

- Meanwhile, the DMK approached the High Court for the disqualification of the 11 MLAs. The writ petitions were dismissed, following which the DMK moved the Supreme Court in May 2018.

Details:

- Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, referred to a January 2020 judgment of a three-judge Supreme Court Bench led by Justice Rohinton Nariman that directed Speakers to decide anti-defection law petitions within a maximum of three months.

- A 2007 judgment by a Constitution Bench in Rajender Singh Rana case had laid down that the "failure of the Speaker to exercise his jurisdiction will attract judicial review".

- The Rana judgment has been highlighted and reiterated in the January 2020 verdict authored by Justice Nariman as the head of a three-judge Bench.

For in-depth understanding of Anti-defection Law, read 10th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

3. 'No compromise on patient interests'

Context:

The NITI Aayog has come out with draft norms to link existing private medical colleges with district hospitals through viability gap funding, as announced in the Budget 2020-21 for aspirational districts.

Details:

- The government will not compromise on the interest of patients while handing over district government hospitals to private medical colleges through public-private partnership (PPP) mode, the Health Minister said in the Rajya Sabha, during the question hour.

- The Minister said the step was permitted under Section 2(5) of the Medical Council of India (MCI) Act 1999, and made it clear that it was not being done to promote the private sector.

- The government said Clause 2(5) of the MCI's Establishment of Medical College Regulations, 1999, prescribes that the appropriate government may allow utilisation of facilities of a hospital owned and managed by it for establishing a medical college by a person/agency/trust/society/company by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding for this purpose.

- The Minister said that the hospital to be linked would be of minimum 300 beds with necessary infrastructural facilities capable of being developed into a teaching institution for the proposed medical college.

4. Only 7 in 100 anganwadi beneficiaries are in cities

Context:

- According to the government's response to a Right to Information (RTI) query, for every 100 anganwadi beneficiaries in the country, only seven are in urban areas.

- The disparity is primarily because of a severe lack of anganwadis in cities, leading to poor coverage of the government's flagship programme in early childhood development.
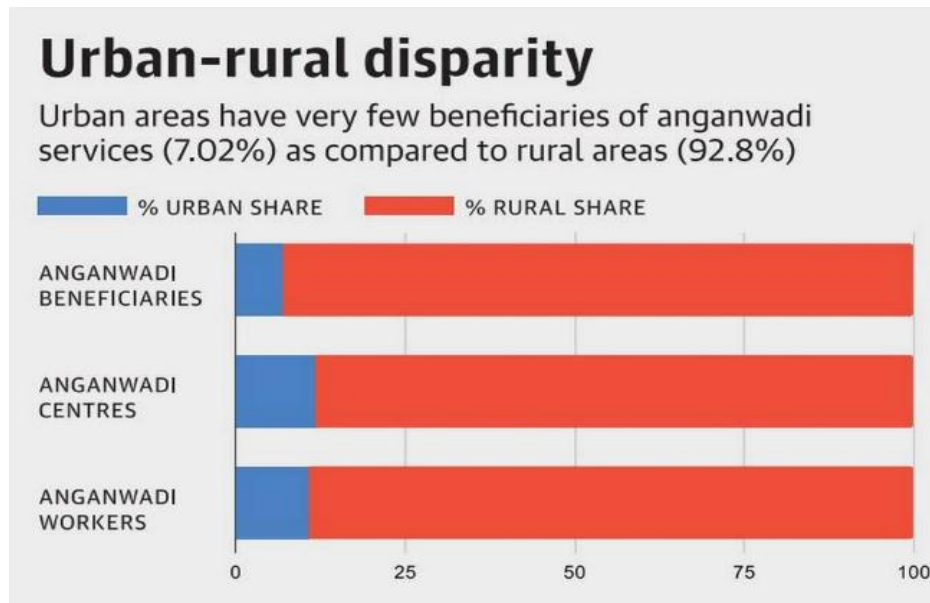
Details:

- Anganwadis or day-care centres are set up under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) by the Women and Child Development Ministry to provide a package of six services.

- The services include supplementary nutrition; pre-school non-formal education;

immunisation, nutrition and health education; as well as referral services.

- The aim of the scheme is to reduce infant mortality and child malnutrition.

- Beneficiaries include children in the age group of six months to six years, and pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Issues:

Urban-rural disparity

Urban areas have very few beneficiaries of anganwadi services (7.02%) as compared to rural areas (92.8%)

Legend: % URBAN SHARE (blue), % RURAL SHARE (red)

- ANGANWADI BENEFICIARIES
- ANGANWADI CENTRES
- ANGANWADI WORKERS

Axis: 0, 25, 50, 75, 100

- While there were a total 7.95 crore beneficiaries of the anganwadi scheme in the country as on September 30, 2019, only 55 lakh were registered at urban anganwadis.

- This is primarily because of an acute paucity of anganwadi centres in urban areas.

- There are as many as 13.79 lakh anganwadis operational across the country, out of which 9.31 lakh centres are linked to the government's web-enabled data entry system called Rapid Reporting System. Of those anganwadis that can be monitored online, 1.09 lakh centres are in urban areas and the remaining 8.22 lakh were in rural areas of the country.

- As per Census 2011, 32% of India's 1.2 billion population live in cities, though experts have said that if the definition of an urban settlement was broadened, the share of urban population will be much higher.

- A recent first-of-its-kind pan-India study on nutrition status, the Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey 2016-18, found that 35% of children under five were stunted and 17% were wasted. It also said 22% of children in the age group of 5-9 years were stunted and 23% were thin for their age. Also, 20% of those in the 10-19 years age group were thin for their age.

- At the same time, 2% of under four-year-olds, 8% of children in the 5-9 years age

group, and 6% of adolescents, were overweight. Data also showed that children in urban areas showed two to three times higher prevalence of obesity as compared to their peers in rural areas.

Conclusion:

With these facts before it, the NITI Aayog has prepared a draft working paper to strengthen the ICDS programme in urban areas, keeping in mind challenges such as migration, population density and the long commute involved for workers and beneficiaries.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Pakistan Parliament passes resolution asking India to revoke its decision on Kashmir

Context:

Pakistan's Parliament has unanimously passed a resolution expressing unflinching and unwavering support to the Kashmiri people and demanding India to reverse its decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Details:

- The National Assembly or lower house passed the resolution on the eve of what Pakistan observes as the Kashmir Solidarity Day on February 5 annually.

Concerns:

- Tensions between India and Pakistan have spiked since India abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

- India's decision evoked strong reactions from Pakistan, which downgraded diplomatic ties and expelled the Indian envoy.

India has categorically told the international community that its move to scrap Article 370 of the Constitution revoking the special status of J&K was an internal matter and has also advised Pakistan to accept the reality.

Read more about [Article 370.](link)

2. Bhutan ends free entry for Indian tourists

Context:

- Ending decades of free entry to Indian tourists visiting Bhutan, the government in Thimphu has decided to levy a daily Rs.1,200 ($17) fee for "regional tourists" from

India, the Maldives and Bangladesh, beginning July 2020.

- The fee, called a Sustainable Development Fee (SDF), is meant to help the government deal with burgeoning numbers in tourist traffic, which it is seeking to regulate through a new tourism policy.

This issue has been covered in the 16th June 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. [Click here](link) to read.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Maharashtra tops list of States hit by global medical data leak

Context:

According to a recent report published by Greenbone Sustainable Resilience, a German cybersecurity firm, medical details of over 120 million Indian patients have been leaked and made freely available on the Internet.

Details:

- The first report was published in October 2019, in which Greenbone revealed a widespread data leak of a massive number of records, including images of CT scans, X-rays, MRIs and even pictures of the patients.

- The follow-up report, which was published in November, classifies countries in the "good", "bad" and "ugly" categories based on the action taken by their governments after the first report was made public.

- India ranks second in the "ugly" category, after the U.S.

Issue:

- Greenbone's original report says the leak was facilitated by the fact that the Picture Archiving and Communications Systems (PACS) servers, where these details are stored, are not secure and linked to the public Internet without any protection, making them easily accessible to malicious elements.

- The number of data troves containing this sensitive data went up by a significant number in the Indian context a month after Greenbone's initial report was published.

- The updated report also places Maharashtra at the top of the States affected by the leak.

Concerns:

- The fact that PACS servers are vulnerable to attack or are accessible is not new information, and there have been a number of reports on this topic in the past.

- No report, however, has dealt with the breadth and depth of the problem associated with unsecured PACS servers.

- The leak is worrying because the affected patients can include anyone from the common working man to politicians and celebrities.

- In image-driven fields like politics or entertainment, knowledge about certain ailments faced by people from these fields could deal a huge blow to their image.

- The other concern is of fake identities being created using the details, which can be misused in any possible number of ways.

Conclusion:

Any communication between a doctor and a patient was a privileged one. A doctor or a hospital is thus ethically, legally and morally bound to maintain confidentiality.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. No rules were broken, says NCBS

Background:

- The government had ordered an inquiry into a study conducted in Nagaland by researchers from the U.S., China and India on bats and humans carrying antibodies to deadly viruses like Ebola.

- The study came under the scanner as two of the 12 researchers belonged to the Wuhan Institute of Virology's Department of Emerging Infectious Diseases, and it was funded by the United States Department of Defense's Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). They would have required special permissions as foreign entities.

- Investigations were ordered as to how the scientists were allowed to access live samples of bats and bat hunters (humans) without due permissions.

Details:

- Under the scanner after the government ordered an inquiry into a study conducted in Nagaland by researchers from the U.S., China and India on bats and humans carrying antibodies to deadly viruses like Ebola, the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) said researchers based at the NCBS collected samples of serum from

bats and humans. These samples were tested at the NCBS with the technologies supplied by the Duke-National University of Singapore Medical School (Duke-NUS).

- The NCBS said its researchers have been studying bat antibodies in Nagaland since 2012.

- In 2017, the NCBS and Duke-NUS started a collaboration, in which researchers based at the NCBS collected samples of serum from bats and humans.

- The NCBS said researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology were not directly involved in the study. They were listed co-authors only because they supplied reagents, which is standard practice for scientific authorship.

- The published study, however, notes researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology contributed in writing review and editing.

- The NCBS statement further said it is not a direct recipient of research funds from the DTRA, which funded the study, and no biological samples or infectious agents were transferred into or out of India.

What does the study suggest?

- The study, 'Filovirus-reactive antibodies in humans and bats in Northeast India imply Zoonotic spillover', published in PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases states the researchers found "the presence of filovirus (e.g. ebolavirus, marburgvirus and dianlovirus) reactive antibodies in both human (e.g. bat hunters) and bat populations in Northeast India, a region with no historical record of Ebola virus disease.

- The Nagaland study suggests bats in South Asia act as a reservoir host of a diverse range of filoviruses, and filovirus spillover occurs through human exposure to these bats.

"How bats harbour several viruses yet not get sick?"

Bats serve as natural hosts for numerous viruses including the Ebola virus, Nipah virus, coronaviruses such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and the 2019 novel coronavirus.

- Even as these viruses cause harm in humans, they rarely if at all cause any harmful effects in bats. This is the case even when the viral load is extremely high in bats.

- A study published in the journal Nature Microbiology revealed the mechanism responsible for bats to harbour numerous viruses without themselves getting affected and also live long. Compared with terrestrial mammals, bats have a longer lifespan.

- The reason why bats can harbour these viruses without getting affected is simply that

bats can avoid excessive virus-induced inflammation, which often causes severe diseases in animals and people infected with viruses.

- When pathogens infect humans and mice, the immune system gets activated and a typical inflammatory response to fight the microbes is seen. While controlled inflammatory response to fight infection helps keep humans healthy, it can contribute to the damage caused by infectious diseases, and also age-related diseases when the inflammatory response becomes excessive.

- In complete contrast, the researchers found that the inflammatory response is dampened in bats immaterial of the variety of viruses that are present and the viral load.

- The researchers found that significantly reduced inflammation in bats was because activation of an important protein — NLRP3 — that recognises both cellular stress and viral/bacterial infections was significantly dampened in bat immune cells.

- The researchers found that reduced activation of the NLRP3 protein was in turn due to impaired production of mRNA (transcript). Since mRNA production is impaired the NLRP3 protein production gets compromised leading to less amount of the protein being produced. But this was not the case with mice and humans — there was no impairment to mRNA production so the NLRP3 protein was unaffected.

- The NLRP3 protein is found as four variants in bats. The researchers found that the function of all the four variants in bats was dampened compared with human NLRP3.

- Further analysis comparing 10 bat and 17 non-bat mammalian NLRP3 gene sequences confirmed that these adaptations appear to be bat-specific.[/su_box]

Conclusion:

Given the widespread challenges from the newly discovered viruses, officials say they want to take no chance on their spread and will take action to ensure all medical studies in the country adhere to strict norms.

Steeped in secrecy

Researchers from the U.S., China and India conducted the study on bats and humans carrying antibodies to deadly viruses like Ebola

■ The study found the presence of filovirus-reactive antibodies in human and bat populations in northeast India

■ Bats often carry Ebola, rabies, marburg and the SARS coronavirus

■ The study suggested that bats in South Asia act as a reservoir host of a diverse range of filoviruses

■ For the study done in 2017, 85 individuals participating in an annual bat harvest at Mimi, Nagaland, were picked

- Bats often carry ebola, rabies, Marburg and the SARS coronavirus. Many high-profile epidemics have been traced to bats, and scientists are discovering new bat-borne viruses all the time. Ebola and Marburg viruses are known to cause severe hemorrhagic fevers, which affect many organs and damage the blood vessels, killing more than 50 percent of the people they infect, according to the World Health Organization.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. A case of a maritime presence adrift

Context:

- The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations agency tasked with regulating shipping, had mandated that merchant ships should not burn fuel with sulphur content greater than 0.5% beginning January 1, 2020.

- The global sulphur cap is only one of the many environment-related regulations that have been shaking up the shipping industry.

Concerns:

- Before the ban, fuel had a comfortable sulphur content limit of 3.5%, which was applicable to most parts of the world.

- Despite the industry gradually gearing up to introduce the new fuel, many industry professionals feared that the new very-low-sulphur fuel would be incompatible with the engines and other vessel equipment.

- Past mandates on sulphur limits in American waters had led to many technical problems.

  - There have been instances of ships having been stranded after fine particles separated out from the fuel, damaging equipment and clogging up devices.

- The shipping industry is generally risk-averse and slow to accept changes. For instance, efforts are ongoing to reduce nitrogen oxides (NOx) and ozone-depleting gases.

- Further, the IMO has announced an ambitious project to decarbonise shipping in order to reduce carbon emissions.

  - These regulations are triggering massive technological, operational and structural changes; they come at a price which will have to be borne to a large extent by developing countries such as India.

- The IMO's policies or conventions have a serious impact on every aspect of shipping including the cost of maritime trade. The sulphur cap, for instance, will reduce emissions and reduce the health impact on coastal populations but ship operational costs are going up since the new fuel product is more expensive.

- As refineries including those in India struggle to meet the demand, freight costs have started moving up, with a cascading effect on retail prices.

Global regulator - IMO:

- Shipping, which accounts for over 90% by volume and about 80% by value of global trade, is a highly regulated industry with a range of legislation promulgated by the IMO.

- The IMO currently has 174 member states and three associate members; there are also scores of non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations.

- The IMO, like any other UN agency, is primarily a secretariat, which facilitates

decision-making processes on all maritime matters through meetings of member states. The binding instruments are brought in through the conventions — to which member states sign on to for compliance — as well as amendments to the same and related codes.

- Structurally, maritime matters are dealt by the committees of the IMO — the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), Technical Cooperation Committee, Legal Committee and the Facilitation Committee.

- Each committee is designated a separate aspect of shipping and supported by sub-committees. Working groups and correspondence groups support the subcommittees.

- The subcommittees are the main working organs, where the proposals from a member state are parsed before they are forwarded to one of the main committees.

- The main committees, thereafter, with the nod of the Assembly, put the approved proposal for enactment through the Convention, amendments, and codes or circulars.

- Prominent maritime nations have their permanent representatives at London and are supported by a large contingent during the meetings. They ensure that they have representation in every subcommittee, working group and even correspondence groups so that they are clued in.

Issue (With respect to India):

- The IMO currently lists India as among the 10 states with the "largest interest in international seaborne trade".

- But India's participation in the IMO to advance its national interests has been woefully inadequate.

- To ensure that their maritime interests are protected, the European countries move their proposals in unison and voting or support are given en bloc. China, Japan, Singapore, Korea and a few others represent their interests through their permanent representative as well as ensuring that a large delegation takes part and intervenes in the meetings.

- While these countries have fiercely protected their interests, India has not.

  o For example, its permanent representative post at London has remained vacant for the last 25 years.

  o Representation at meetings is often through a skeletal delegation, approved by

the Ministry.

- o A review of IMO documents shows that the number of submissions made by India in the recent past has been measly and not in proportion to India's stakes in global shipping.

- There have also been obstacles in pushing issues which are of importance to India. A classic case was the promulgation of "High Risk Areas" when piracy was at its peak.

  - o The IMO's demarcation resulted in half the Arabian Sea and virtually the entire south-west coast of India being seen as piracy-infested, despite the presence of the Indian Navy and Coast Guard.

  - o The "High Risk Area" formulation led to a ballooning of insurance costs.

  - o It affected goods coming into or out of India. It took great efforts to revoke the promulgation and negate the financial burden.

  - o There was also great difficulty in introducing the indigenously designed NavIC (NAVigation with Indian Constellation) in the worldwide maritime navigation system.

- In contrast, the European Union has a documented procedure on how to influence the IMO. New legislative mandates, fitment of new equipment and changes to ship structural designs being brought on have been driven by developed countries.

Conclusion:

So far, India's presence and participation in the IMO has been at the individual level. India should now make its presence felt so that its national interests are served. It is time India regained its status as a major maritime power.

Category: SECURITY

1. Navy to the rescue

Context:

- India, recently sent an amphibious warship, INS Airavat, to Madagascar in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to help in rescue efforts after the island nation was hit by a cyclone.

- As part of Operation Vanilla, the Navy delivered clothing, food and medicines, and also provided diving and communication assistance for evacuation.

- The move follows an appeal by Madagascar President for international help to deal

with an unprecedented situation caused by floods.

Component of peacetime strategy:

- The Navy's turn towards human-centred maritime security isn't recent. It was in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami that naval commanders first recognised the importance of large-scale relief and rescue missions in the IOR.

- For over a decade, considerable resource and energy has been spent developing specialist capability and skills for naval humanitarian operations.

- In recent years, humanitarian operations have emerged as a key component of the Indian Navy's peacetime strategy in the IOR.

  - In March 2019, the Navy deployed four warships for relief operations when Mozambique was hit by Cyclone Idai.

  - The Navy also sent two warships to Japan to assist in rescue efforts following Typhoon Hagibis.

  - In 2018, Indian vessels had delivered urgent medical assistance to Sulawesi, Indonesia, after it was struck by a high-intensity earthquake.

  - Operation Samudra Maitri was launched after a telephonic conversation between the Indian Prime Minister and Indonesian President, with naval planners mobilising assets and relief material in quick time.

- The Navy's new humanitarian approach, is believed to be a maritime manifestation of the PM's vision for the IOR, christened SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region).

India's regional security role:

- What's new today is New Delhi's resolve to polish its 'regional security provider' credentials.

- The Navy has reached out to countries across the Indo-Pacific region, with greater deployment of assets, personnel and specialist equipment, showcasing an ability to undertake complex and diverse missions.

- The highpoint of the Navy's 'benign' efforts was the evacuation of over 1,500 Indian expatriates and 1,300 foreign nationals from Yemen in 2015 amid fighting for control of Aden.

- Three years later, Indian naval ships were in Yemen again, to evacuate 38 Indians stranded in the cyclone-hit Socotra Island.

- The Navy's humanitarian impulse stems from a desire to be a linchpin of security in

the IOR.

- At the core of the evolving operations philosophy is the concept of 'first responder', with the capability and willingness to provide assistance. Such an approach has the potential to create an extended sphere of Indian influence in the IOR.

- Naval leaders recognise that benign missions help project Indian soft power and extend New Delhi's influence in the littorals.

- Prompt response during humanitarian crisis helps generate political goodwill in the neighbourhood.

Cause for caution:

- While low-end naval assets in humanitarian mode create strategic equity for India, prolonged presence of front-line warships in foreign waters has the potential to make partners anxious.

- As experts suggest, naval power, must be deployed discreetly, shaping perceptions in subtle ways. The key is to not let the underlying intent of a mission appear geopolitical.

- To ensure that motives aren't misunderstood, and assistance provided is efficient and cost-effective, it is best to use dedicated disaster-relief platforms.

Way forward:

- Unlike the U.S. and China that have in their inventory hospital ships fully equipped for medical assistance, India deploys regular warships and survey ships converted for medical aid. India's improvised platforms do not match the U.S. Navy's medical ship USNS Mercy or the People's Liberation Army Navy's Peace Ark that enable specialised medical services on a more visible scale.

- The Navy's expanding array of humanitarian missions reveals a need for greater coordination with the Indo-Pacific navies – in particular the U.S. Navy, the Royal Australian Navy and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces — which possess significant experience and assets to mitigate humanitarian threats.

- As natural disasters in the IOR become more frequent and intense, India's regional security role is likely to grow exponentially. At the forefront of disaster scenarios, the Indian Navy and Coast Guard would find themselves undertaking demanding missions.

- Humanitarian operations could serve as a springboard for a larger cooperative endeavour in the maritime commons.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Beyond preparedness

Context:

Recent reports suggest that the Union Cabinet will be taking up the proposal to amend the Disaster Management Act of 2005.

Disaster Management Act of 2005:

- The Act was enacted to effectively prevent, mitigate and prepare for disasters.

- It came into being on the heels of three major disasters in the Indian subcontinent:

    1. The 1999 super cyclone in Odisha.

    2. The 2001 Bhuj earthquake.

    3. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

- The Act mandated the creation of the National Disaster Management Authority, State Disaster Management Authorities, and District Disaster Management Authorities.

- It laid down the framework, roles and responsibilities of these bodies to formulate and implement disaster management plans at their levels.

Issue:

The Disaster Management Act of 2005 largely focuses on improving preparedness, providing immediate relief, and protecting infrastructure. However, it neglects a key aspect of disaster management – long-term recovery. Steps towards recovery and rehabilitation of disaster-affected people are hardly discussed.

How has the imbalance in priorities shaped disaster management since 2005?

- The Act's enormous emphasis on preparedness has translated into timely warnings, relief shelters and massive evacuation exercises. All these steps have reduced casualties.

- Further, the National Disaster Response Fund and State Disaster Response Funds have helped guide immediate relief in the aftermath of disasters.

- Post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery are left to respective Ministries and Departments.

    o However, only select States like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha have

department-level disaster management plans.

- While integrating post-disaster rehabilitation measures with existing development schemes can be seen as the right step towards mainstreaming disaster management, it is marred by poor implementation and lack of intent from different ministries and departments.

- Scholarship on disaster management conceptualises recovery as action taken to rebuild lives once the hazardous situation has passed. However, this has been commonly interpreted as providing food, water and medicines.

Way forward:

- In instances where States have moved beyond mere provision of food, water and medicines, long-term recovery measures have largely focussed on addressing physical vulnerabilities such as the provision of shelter.

- While these interventions are crucial, long-term recovery needs much more emphasis, but it is tricky because everyday vulnerabilities stemming from poverty are accentuated by recurring hazards.

- Recovery measures should address inherent vulnerabilities pertaining to livelihoods, education, water, sanitation, health, and ecology of the disaster-affected communities.

- Intangible losses such as psycho-social needs of the communities should be given equal emphasis.

- Long-term recovery needs to be thought of alongside development in an integrated and comprehensive manner by combining with health, skill building, and livelihood diversification schemes.

These points would ensure that communities have, at the very least, recovered to a new normal before the next disaster strikes. This understanding is crucial to the lawmakers looking to the amend the Act.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Continuity and fiscal follow-through

The editorial talks about the 15th Finance Commission and how it has by and large, gone with the approach and methodology of earlier Commissions.

Background:

- The appointment of the Fifteenth Finance Commission by the President of India

under Article 280 of the Constitution was notified in November 2017. It was required to submit the report by October, 2019 for five years for the period 2020-21 to 2024-25.

- However, due to various political and fiscal developments, notifications were issued first, in July 2019 extending the tenure of the Commission up to November 2019, and again in November 2019 requiring it to submit two reports, one for 2020-21 and the second covering the period of five years beginning April 1, 2021 and further extending the tenure up to October 30, 2021.

- The first report submitted by the Commission was placed in Parliament by the Union Finance Minister before presenting the Union Budget on February 1, 2019.

Basis for extension:

- There were good reasons for extending the tenure of the Finance Commission as making medium-term projections in the current scenario would have entailed serious risks.

  o The abolition of Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir required the Commission to make an estimation excluding the Union Territory.

  o The deceleration in growth and low inflation has substantially slowed down the nominal GDP growth which is the main tax base proxy; making projections of tax revenues and expenditures based on this for the medium term could have posed serious risks.

  o Poor revenue performance of tax collection combined with the fact that the compensation agreement to the loss of revenue to the States was effective only two years of the period covered by the Commission's recommendations - posed uncertainties.

Projections:

- The Commission has continued with the approach and methodology adopted by the previous Commissions for tax devolution and revenue-gap grants. It has

  o Made projections of revenues and revenue expenditures of the Union and individual States.

  o Applied selective norms to the states.

  o Recommended devolution of taxes to the States from the divisible pool.

  o Recommended revenue deficit grants for the States which had post-devolution gaps.

- The Fifteenth Finance Commission continued with the recommendation of the previous Commission relating to vertical division of taxes, and adjusted the States' share to 41% to exclude the share of Jammu and Kashmir.

- For the horizontal shares, however, the formula has been changed to consider "fiscal needs, equity and efficiency".

Addressing States' concerns:

- The commission, in addition to income distance, population and area and forest cover, it has used two additional factors — demographic performance and tax effort.

- It has assigned 15% weight to the 2011 population, reduced the weight of income distance to 45%, increased the weight to forest cover and ecology to 10% and 12.5% weight to demographic performance and 2.5% weight to tax effort.

- By keeping the weight of 2011 population at 15% and giving an additional 12.5% to demographic performance which is the inverse of fertility rate, the Commission has shown sensitivity to the concerns of these States.

Local body grants:

- The recommended grants for local bodies amount to Rs. 90,000 crore comprising Rs. 60,750 crore for panchayats and the remaining 29,250 crore for municipal bodies.

- All the three layers of panchayats will receive the grant and 50% of the grant is tied to improving sanitation and supply of drinking water; the remaining is untied.

Grants for Disaster Relief:

- In the case of disaster relief, the Commission has recommended the creation of disaster mitigation fund at the Central and State levels.

- Inter-State allocation is made based on past expenditures, area and population and disaster risk index.

Sectoral Grants:

- The Commission has worked out a framework for giving some sectoral grants as well.

- In the main report, it has proposed to give grants for police training, modernisation and housing, railway projects in States taken on a cost-sharing basis, maintenance of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana roads, strengthening the judicial system, and improving the statistical system.

- The States are required to prepare the necessary grounds.

- It has also presented a broad framework for recommending monitorable performance grants for agricultural reform, development of aspirational districts and blocks, power sector reform, and incentives to enhance trade including exports and pre-primary education.

- The challenge, however, will be to design and dovetail sectoral and performance grants with the existing plethora of central sector and centrally sponsored schemes.

F. Tidbits

1. Surat's diamond trade hit by coronavirus, holiday in Hong Kong

What's in News?

The outbreak of the coronavirus in China has adversely affected Surat's diamond industry, which was expecting a spike in volumes following the China-U.S. trade treaty.

- With the sudden outbreak and rapid spread of the pandemic, exports are unlikely to go up, as per the assessment of industry players in the diamond city.

- Now, the Surat diamond industry would suffer a further blow, as the city imports rough gems from Hong Kong and exports polished diamonds to Hong Kong and thereon to China.

- Industry insiders estimate that as much as 37-38% of the diamonds exported to Hong Kong from India are from Surat, and the jewellery made from polished diamonds is also exported to Hong Kong from Surat.

- Earlier, pro-democracy agitation in Hong Kong had hit the diamond industry and now with the coronavirus scare, losses could run into several hundred crores of rupees.

G. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Designation of a place as UNESCO World Heritage Site provides prima facie evidence that such a site is legally protected pursuant to the Law of War, under the Geneva Convention.

2. The latest addition to the UNESCO World Heritage Site from India was Jaipur.

3. There are 38 places in India, designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- A UNESCO World Heritage Site is a place that is listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as of special cultural or physical significance.

- UNESCO designation as a World Heritage Site provides prima facie evidence that such culturally sensitive sites are legally protected pursuant to the Law of War, under the Geneva Convention, its articles, protocols and customs, together with other treaties including the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and international law.

- In July 2019, Jaipur was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites from India. With this, India got its 38th UNESCO World Heritage Site.

  o The capital city of Jaipur, included in the list of world heritage sites, was founded in 1727 by the then Kachwaha Rajput ruler of Amber, Sawai Jai Singh II.

  o The city was established on the plains and built according to a grid plan interpreted in the light of Vedic architecture.

- India has 38 world heritage sites that include 30 Cultural heritage sites, 7 Natural sites and 1 mixed site.

Q2. "Amrabad Tiger Reserve" is located in:

a. Andhra Pradesh
b. Telangana
c. Tamil Nadu
d. Karnataka

Answer: b

Explanation:

Amrabad Tiger Reserve was earlier a part of the 'Nagarjunasagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR)' but post-bifurcation of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the northern part of the reserve is vested with Telangana state and is renamed as 'Amrabad Tiger Reserve'. The southern portion continues to be 'NSTR' and is with Andhra Pradesh.

Q3. Which of the following is/are the service/s covered under the Integrated

Child Development Scheme (ICDS)?

1. Supplementary nutrition to children below 14 years of age.

2. Supplementary nutrition to pregnant and lactating mothers.

3. Pre-school non-formal education.

4. Health check-up for pregnant and lactating mothers.

Choose the correct option:

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 1, 2 and 3 only
c. 2 , 3 and 4 only
d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: c

Explanation:

Under the Integrated Child Development Scheme, supplementary nutrition is provided only to children below 6 years of age.

The objectives of ICDS are sought to be achieved through a package of services comprising:

- Supplementary nutrition

- Immunization

- Health check-up

- Referral services

- Pre-school non-formal education

- Nutrition & health education

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. When the question of disqualification of a member on account of defection arises, the decision of the Speaker or the Chairman of the House is final.

2. A member who is disqualified for being a member of that House under the 10th Schedule shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a Minister until the time he is re-elected as a member of the house.

3. No court shall have any jurisdiction with respect to the matter connected with the disqualification of a member of a House under the 10th Schedule.

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

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

All the statements are correct.

Judicial Intervention:

- The 10th Schedule bars any court from having any jurisdiction in respect of matters connected with the disqualification of a member of a House under the Schedule.

- Further, Articles 122 and 212 expressly prevent the intervention of courts in the proceedings of Parliament and State Legislature.

  o The doctrine of Basic Structure, as declared in the Kesavananda Bharati vs. State of Kerala consequently include bar of formal jurisdiction related to Articles 122 and 212.

- However, the power of the Supreme Court and the High Courts with respect to issuing writs, as given by Articles 32 and 226, remain applicable.

  o In Chandra Kumar vs. Union of India, the Supreme Court held that if any provision of any law takes away the writ jurisdiction of any court, it will be deemed as a violation of the basic structure of the Constitution.

- In the Kihoto Hollohan vs. Zachillhu and Others verdict, Supreme Court laid down a balance between the judiciary's intervention and the level of autonomy and discretion of speaker with respect to disqualification on the ground of defection:

  o The law initially stated that the decision of the Presiding Officer is not subject to judicial review.

  o This condition was struck down by the Supreme Court and allowed appeals in

the Supreme Court and High Courts against the Presiding Officer's decision.

- o **However, it held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the Presiding Officer gives his order.**

- o In 2015, the Hyderabad High Court refused to intervene after hearing a petition which alleged that there had been a delay by the Telangana Assembly Speaker in acting against a member under the anti-defection law.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. With the government planning to amend the Disaster Management Act of 2005 discuss the importance of main streaming disaster management with an emphasis on "long-term recovery". What components need to be addressed while considering the long-term recovery measures? (15 Marks, 250 Words).

2. With respect to the increasing incidences of natural calamities in the Indian Ocean Region, comment on India's growing role as a regional security provider. Is India's growing role a cause for caution? Justify your answer. (15 Marks, 250 Words).