

12 Aug 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Daughters have equal right to inherit property, says SC

Context:

The Supreme Court has held that daughters have an equal birthright with sons to inherit joint Hindu family property.

SC Ruling:

- A three-judge bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra ruled that a Hindu woman's right to be a joint heir to the ancestral property is by birth and does not depend on whether her father was alive or not when the law was enacted in 2005.
- The amended Hindu Succession Act gives daughters equal rights to ancestral property and will have a retrospective effect.
- SC agreed with lead arguments made by senior advocate Bishwajit Bhattacharya that the substituted Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 confers the status of 'coparcener' to a daughter born before or after the amendment in the same manner as a son.

What is the 2005 law?

- The Mitakshara School of Hindu Law codified as the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 governed succession and inheritance of property but only recognised males as legal heirs.
- The law applied to everyone who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion.
- Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj are also considered Hindus for the purposes of this law.
- In a Hindu Undivided Family, several legal heirs through generations can exist jointly. Traditionally, only male descendants of a common ancestor along with their mothers, wives and unmarried daughters are considered a joint Hindu family.
- **Women were recognised as coparceners or joint legal heirs for partition arising from 2005.**
 - Section 6 of the Act was amended in 2005 to make a daughter of a coparcener also a coparcener by birth, in the same manner as the son.
 - The law applies to ancestral property and to intestate succession in personal property — where succession happens as per law and not through a will.

Note:

- The 174th Law Commission Report had also recommended this reform in Hindu succession law.
- Even before the 2005 amendment, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu had made this change in the law, and Kerala had abolished the Hindu Joint Family System in 1975.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Indian, Afghan officials discuss Loya Jirga

Context:

Indian and Afghan officials in Delhi and Kabul discussed the outcome of the Loya Jirga, in Afghanistan that advised the release of 400 Taliban militants convicted of serious crimes.

Details:

- The two sides discussed:
 - The likelihood of intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha, Qatar.
 - Hopes for a permanent ceasefire, in a briefing two days after the Jirga's decision.
- Talks are also on for the release of the last of the group of seven Indian hostages still held by the [Taliban](#) following their abduction in 2018. Six hostages had been released earlier.

- It is hoped that the release of the Taliban prisoners will include those demanded in exchange for the release of the Indian hostages.

Conditions on which 400 Taliban militants were released:

- The officials have made it clear that the release is conditional and contingent on
 - A reduction in the level of violence by the Taliban.
 - A humanitarian ceasefire for civilians to be transported during the coronavirus pandemic without fear of the Taliban.
- The Taliban is also required to guarantee that none of the men being released will return to combat.

This topic has been comprehensively covered in the [10th August 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

C. GS 3 Related

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. 'Confidential' report on Assam Accord released

Context:

The confidential report on Assam Accord was made public by the All Assam Students' Union (a part of the Centre's high-level committee on the implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord) quoting the government's disinterest in processing their recommendations.

Assam Accord:

- The Assam Accord (1985) was a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of Assam on 15 August 1985.
- The Accord brought to an end six years of the Assam movement, an agitation in the state against undocumented immigrants.

Background:

- A high-power committee was constituted by the Centre in July 2019 with 14 members and justice Sharma as its chairman for the implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.
- It had submitted its report to the Chief Minister of Assam in February 2020.

What is Clause 6 of the Assam Accord?

- As per Clause 6, constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the culture, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.
- It is one of the promises in the Assam Accord, a memorandum of settlement inked between the representatives of the All Assam Students' Union, the Assam state government and the Government of India.
- The Clause that ended the anti-foreigners' Assam agitation from 1979-1985.
- The bone of contention since the signing of the Accord was the definition of Assamese people. The committee tried to address this issue.

Details:

- The report sought to implement the Assam Accord in letter and spirit, and also asked the government for prompt measures to seal the India-Bangladesh border.
- It also suggested reservation of 80-100 percent in Parliament seats from the state, while recommending the creation of an Upper House in Assam.

2. NSCN-IM releases details of 2015 pact

Context:

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland-IM has for the first time released the details of the 2015 framework agreement.

Background:

- The NSCN-IM, one of the largest Naga groups, signed a framework agreement in August 2015 to end the decades-old issue.
- Ravi (interlocutor) signed the agreement on behalf of the Centre in the presence of the Prime Minister. The other two signatories were Isak Chishi Swu, who died in 2016 and Thuingaleng Muivah, 86, who is leading the talks.
- An understanding was reached between the two sides not to release this in the public domain for security reasons.

Issue:

- Having released the details of the agreement, NSCN-IM has accused interlocutor R.N. Ravi of deleting a key word from the original document and sharing the modified version with other Naga groups.
- The Naga talks have hit rough weather as the NSCN-IM has demanded that the interlocutor be removed from the position.

This issue has been covered in [11th August 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

Category: DEFENCE

1. IAF to get 106 trainer aircraft

Context:

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister has approved defence procurements worth ₹8,722.38 crore.

Details:

- The defence procurements include 106 HTT-40 Basic Trainer Aircraft (BTA) for the Indian Air Force (IAF) built by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- **HTT-40 Basic Trainer Aircraft (BTA):**

- HTT-40 is a training aircraft design and developed by Aircraft Research and Design Centre (ARDC) and built by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited has successfully developed HTT-40 prototypes and certification process is underway.
- It will replace the Indian Air Force's retired HPT-32 Deepak as a basic trainer.
- The DAC also approved the procurement of an upgraded version of Super Rapid Gun Mount (SRGM).
- **Super Rapid Gun Mount (SRGM):**
 - SRGM is fitted as the main gun on board Navy and Coast Guard warships from Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL).
 - The upgraded version of SRGM has enhanced capability to perform against fast manoeuvring targets such as missiles and fast attack crafts and increase the maximum engagement range.
- Procurement of 125 mm **APFSDS (Armour Piercing Fin Stabilized Discarding Sabot) ammunition** for the Army as a 'design and development case' has been approved.
 - The ammunition being procured will have a 70% indigenous content.
- The DAC also granted approvals that are likely to **speed up the procurement of AK-203 assault rifles from Russia and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle upgrades.**

Category: ECONOMY

1. Debt revamp to prolong banks' asset quality uncertainty: Fitch

Context:

According to [Fitch Ratings](#), a one-time debt restructuring allowed by RBI to help lenders and borrowers amid the COVID-19 pandemic will prolong uncertainty about the banking sector's asset quality.

Details:

- RBI recently announced that it will allow restructuring of corporate and personal loans to ease debt strains on companies and lenders.
- Fitch said it believes that the scheme may be designed to give banks more time to raise capital, which remains challenging in the current environment, to address the impact of the crisis on loan portfolios.
- "The policy could open a window for banks to build capital buffers while putting off full recognition of the coronavirus pandemic's impact on loan portfolios, but is reminiscent of a strategy adopted over 2010-2016 that delayed and exacerbated problems for the banks," Fitch said.
- RBI has set up a committee to oversee restructuring plans involving creditors with more than ₹15 billion of debt.
 - According to Fitch, lending to retail and small- and medium-sized firms is likely to account for a substantial portion of future pandemic-linked asset quality stress.

Concerns:

- Indian banks are burdened with more than \$120 billion in bad loans.
- The banking sector is ranked the third-worst among 13 major world economies in asset quality.
- RBI's experience with loan restructuring in the past hasn't been encouraging.
 - In several instances the restructuring was used for evergreening of loans, a practice in which banks provide additional loans to stressed borrowers, often indirectly, to enable them to repay existing loans.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POPULATION AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES

1. India's population data and a tale of two projections

Context:

- A study by the Seattle-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).

Details:

- The study estimates that **India's population will peak by mid-century at around 1.61 billion**. It also estimates that by 2100, India's total population will be around 1.09 billion and could also be as low as 724 million.
 - **India's current population stands at 1.35 billion.**
- The IHME study's observation is in line with the widely-used United Nations projections of **India becoming the largest population country by around mid-century**.
- However, the two projections exhibit large divergence on their prediction of the population number by 2100. While the UN predicts a population of 1.45 billion by 2100, the IHME study predicts a total population of around 1.09 billion.

Possible causes for divergence:

- The IHME population projections accuracy is **subject to the assumptions made**. The IHME study **assumes an average Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 1.29**.
 - Total fertility rate (TFR) refers to the total number of children born or likely to be born to a woman in her lifetime if she were subject to the prevailing rate of age-specific fertility in the population.
- Since the assumed **TFR is less than the replacement level fertility, it is resulting in a sharp population decline**.
 - **Replacement level fertility** is the total fertility rate at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, without migration. **This rate is roughly 2.1 children per woman** for most countries, although it may modestly vary with mortality rates.
- The assumption for the TFR for India is based on data regarding contraceptive use in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and the potential for increasing contraceptive use.
- However, there are concerns that the contraceptive use in the NFHS is poorly estimated, and as a result, unmet need for contraception may be lower than that estimated by the IHME model, generating implausibly low fertility projections for 2100.

Significance of the study:

- Despite the divergence in the projection of numbers for 2100, the UN's projections and the IHME projections both predict that **India's population will peak by mid-century and subsequently decline driven by a sharp reduction in fertility**.

- The high population would pressurize the developmental process in India given the scarce resource base.
- Ideally, the **population policy should focus on peaking at the earliest and then decreasing**. A major aspect of this would be the need to **decrease the TFR in India**.

Fertility decline:

- In the 1950s, India's total fertility rate (TFR) was nearly six children per woman and today it stands at 2.2.
- The massive push for family planning coupled with forced sterilisation during the 1970s led to a 17% decline in TFR from 5.9 in 1960 to 4.9 in 1980. Between 1992 and 2015, TFR has fallen by 35% from 3.4 to 2.2.
- **Around 18 States and Union Territories have a TFR below 2**, below the replacement fertility levels.

Possible causes for declining TFR:

Family planning programme:

- This involved measures like **sterilisation, condom distribution and intrauterine device (IUD) insertion**.
- Between 1975 and 1994, family planning workers were assigned targets on sterilisations, condom distribution and intrauterine device (IUD) insertion. There were concerns that such targets often led to coercion. Following the **Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994**, family planning has lost primacy in the Indian policy discourse.

Disincentive system:

- **Punitive policies** designed to punish people with large families include measures like denial of maternity leave for third and subsequent births, limiting benefits of maternity schemes and ineligibility to contest in local body elections for individuals with large families.
- These public policies are aimed to **encourage the small family norm**.
- However, these policies were mostly ignored in practice.

Aspirational revolution:

- The **socio-economic transformation of India since the 1990s** seems to have played an important role in decreasing the TFR in India.
- **Agriculture has become an increasingly smaller part of the Indian economy and aspirations for jobs outside agriculture have grown**.
- While farmers preferred more children as a resource in their agricultural work, the new parents aspire to ensure quality education for their children. Given the scarcity of their monetary resources, they prefer to limit the number of their children as this allows them to invest more in each child. Subsequently, parents have begun to rethink their family-building strategies.
- While the fertility decline in western countries can be mainly attributed to retreat from the family, Indian parents' aspirations for their children seem to be driving the fertility decline in India.

Conclusion:

- While the demographic data suggests that the aspirational revolution is already underway, the need of the hour is to hasten the fertility decline by ensuring that the health and family welfare system are able to **provide contraception and sexual and reproductive health services on demand**.

1. From locker rooms to classrooms

Context:

- Increasing instances of **cybercrimes and cyberbullying of girls and women**.

Concerns:

Gender violence:

- Instances of non-consensual sharing of images online to threaten and shame girls and women amount to a **form of gender violence** and raise serious questions about the existing mindsets of the youngsters indulging in such acts.

Growing digital presence:

- There is a growing trend of digital presence in the form of **social media usage**.
- As the boundary between the real and the virtual world becomes increasingly blurred, the perceived risks of the **use of technology for nefarious purposes have only increased**.

Challenge posed by the pandemic:

- COVID-19 seems to have only increased the challenges that women face. **The [National Commission for Women](#) has reported a surge in domestic violence and cybercrimes**, which has made girls and women more vulnerable as they face violence and abuse inside their homes and online.

Wrong solutions:

- Deactivating social media handles or deleting so-called provocative photos are being used as a quick fix measure. However, this approach does not address the **real problem which seems to be the existing gender norms and norms of masculinity**.

Way forward:

Mainstreaming the issue:

- Societies must **sensitize children and young women and men** of the issue of gender violence.
- Schools should adopt **Gender-based Violence programmes and curricula**, to **mainstream the issue of gender violence** which will allow the possibility of healthy discussions on the issue.

Educational intervention:

- There should be efforts made to **shape positive mindsets among the young**. This could involve educational interventions. Such educational interventions will enable society to move towards the **ideal of gender equality**.
- This could involve engagement between school communities, civil society organisations and governments to **define alternatives for pre-existing gender norms**.

Engaging boys:

- There is a need to **engage boys to achieve gender equality**.
- A **community-based behavioural change programme** needs to be designed to provide young boys with the skills and knowledge they need to challenge existing gender norms and take action to end violence and discrimination against women and girls.

Social movement:

- The movements towards gender equality and the eradication of violence against women like the **Riot Grrrl** and **#MeToo movement** are gaining traction. These movements point to the fact that positive changes can be effected only when people come together to **confront the dominant social norms**.
- There is a need for a social movement involving everyone to redefine the existing gender norms and norms of masculinity.

Safer digital spaces:

- A major measure to prevent and counter cyberbullying would involve the **creation of safe digital spaces and addressing the issues of privacy**.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Just closure

Context:

- The Supreme Court of India has indicated that it would not allow the closure of the trial in the **Enrica Lexie-St. Antony case** until “hefty” and “adequate” compensation is paid by Italy for the killing of two fishermen by its marines.

For more information on this issue, refer to:

[CNA dated 8 Aug 2020](#)

Background:

Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling:

- Recently, the Permanent Court of Arbitration had ruled that **while India is entitled to get compensation in the Italian Marines case, it can't prosecute the marines** and the marines should face criminal proceedings only in Italy.
- The PCA's finding on jurisdiction is **in conflict with the Supreme Court's ruling in 2013** that the Union government of India alone can try the case.

For more information on this, refer to:

[CNA dated July 4, 2020](#)

- Previously the Union government had declared that it would abide by the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague but the continuation of the case in the Supreme Court of India has led to a complex situation.

Arguments for ending the trial:

- Ending the ongoing trial in the SC would be in line with the Union government's stand to abide by the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague. This would portray India as a country respecting International laws and rules by keeping up its **obligations under UNCLOS**.
- There are no reasons to delay the process of bringing closure to the matter given that the PCA has itself ruled that India is entitled to compensation and has mandated negotiations on the quantum of the compensation.
- The pendency of the matter in court could portray India as being reluctant to cease criminal proceedings against the marines and may actually **delay the reaching of a fair settlement in the case**.
- The legal tangles in the Enrica Lexie-St. Antony case since 2012 have also **caused diplomatic tensions between India and Italy**.

Way forward:

Legal provisions:

- The central government can approach the SC for **withdrawal from prosecution under Section 321 of the CrPC**.
 - Section 321 of the [Criminal Procedure Code](#) enables the Public Prosecutor or the Assistant Public Prosecutor to withdraw from the prosecution of any person for which he is tried. For doing so, the consent of the Court is necessary.
- The central government can make use of the provisions available under **Article 253 of the Constitution** to bring a law to close the ongoing trial in the SC.
 - Article 253 of the Constitution allows the Parliament to enact a law to give effect to any international treaty or convention.

Conclusion:

- India's focus should be on **ensuring adequate compensation** for families of fishermen killed by marines and **ensuring a purposive criminal trial in Italy**.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Rajya Sabha output up, says Venkaiah

What's in News?

M.Venkaiah Naidu has completed three years in office as Vice-President and Chairman of the [Rajya Sabha](#).

Productivity and output in Rajya Sabha:

- The Vice President remarked that the functioning of the Rajya Sabha has shown certain winds of change, with a consistently higher level of productivity and increased legislative output over the last few sessions.
- The attendance in the meetings of the Committees of the Upper House has for the first time crossed the 50% mark.
- A research and analysis commissioned by the Vice President had revealed that the productivity of the House had been declining over the last 25 years.
- The House had reported annual productivity of 100% only once in 1999 in the last 20 years.
- The overall productivity of the last eight sessions presided over by him during the last three years has been 65.50%.
- Referring to the improvement in legislative output as yet another indication of change, he referred to the 93 bills passed by the Rajya Sabha during the last three years of his chairmanship.

2. Israel AI-based technologies to help tackle COVID-19

What's in News?

As a part of Israel-India cooperation to fight the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, AIIMS, Delhi, has received state-of-the-art AI-based technologies and high-end equipment from the Embassy of Israel. The technologies include:

- An AI video-oriented, voice-operated autonomous personal AI assistant robot.
- An app that can be installed on any mobile phone of COVID-19 staff which makes the work of the hospital staff much more effective and easier.
- Innovative products designed to give clinicians constant contact-free access to patient's vitals like heart rate and respiratory rate to ensure contact-free, continuous patient monitoring.
- A 12-hour disinfection product called CPD that stays active and continuous to protect the surface against new attacks of contamination.
- A non-invasive remote-patient monitoring system that aids as a preliminary screening tool of respiratory indicators of suspected COVID-19 patients and recovering patients.
- AI-based software for ultrasound use and designed specially to fight COVID-19.

3. Putin declares world's first COVID-19 shot

President Vladimir Putin said that Russia had become the first country to grant regulatory approval to a COVID-19 vaccine after less than two months of human testing.

- The vaccine would be called 'Sputnik V' in homage to the world's first satellite launched by the Soviet Union.
- It is developed by Moscow's Gamaleya Institute.
- It has not yet completed its final trials.

Concerns:

- Moscow's decision to grant approval before the final trials has raised concerns among some experts.
- Only about 10% of the clinical trials are successful.
- Scientists fear Moscow may be putting national prestige before safety.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. A Special Mention Account is:

- An account that shows symptoms of bad asset quality before it is identified as a Non-Performing Asset.
- Account recording a nation's transactions with the rest of the world.
- An account with an overdraft limit to Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana account holder up to ₹ 10,000.
- An account that has been classified as a Non-Performing Asset.

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Special Mention Accounts are those assets/accounts that show symptoms of bad asset quality before it is identified as Non-Performing Asset (NPA).
- SMA or special mention accounts are ones where the principle or interest payment is delayed. It is classified as SMA 0 for delays from 0 to 30 days, SMA 1 for 31 to 60 days and SMA 2 for 61 to 90 days. Payments not made beyond 90 days are classified as NPAs.
- It is a classification brought in by the RBI to detect early signs of stress among bank borrowers and monitor accounts that run the risk of turning into bad loans or NPAs.
- Special Mention Accounts are usually categorized in terms of duration. SMA loans — divided into three baskets (SMA-0, SMA-1 and SMA-2).

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) :

- It is the highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry.
- It is chaired by the Prime Minister.
- It was formed in 2001 after the Group of Ministers' recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System'.

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

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3
- 2 and 3 only

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) is chaired by the Defence Minister.

Q3. Which of the given statement defines Total Fertility Rate (TFR)?

- The fertility rate at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, without migration.
- The fertility rate at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next.

- c. The average number of children born to women during their reproductive years.
- d. The number of live births per thousand of the population per year.

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Answer:

- Total Fertility Rate refers to the average number of children born to women during their reproductive years.
- In simple terms, it refers to the total number of children born or likely to be born to a woman in her lifetime if she were subject to the prevailing rate of age-specific fertility in the population (reproductive years).

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):

1. It is an international agreement that resulted from the 3rd UN Conference on the Law of the Sea.
2. India has not ratified UNCLOS.
3. UN has no direct operational role in the implementation of UNCLOS.

Which of the given statement is/are correct?

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is an international agreement that resulted from the 3rd UN Conference on the Law of the Sea.
- India became a signatory to UNCLOS in 1982 and has had continuous representation in CLCS, ITLOS and the International Seabed Authority (ISA) since their inception in 1997, 1996 and 1994 respectively.
- United Nations has no direct operational role in the implementation of UNCLOS. There is, however, a role played by organizations such as the International Maritime Organization, the International Whaling Commission, and the International Seabed Authority (ISA).

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. India's population policy should focus on ensuring a sustainable Total Fertility Rate (TFR). Comment. Also discuss the factors that have contributed to the decreasing TFR in India. (15 marks, 250 words)(GS paper 1/ Population and associated issues)
2. In light of the increasing instances of cybercrimes and cyberbullying of girls and women, discuss the challenges involved and suggest suitable measures to address these challenges. (10 marks, 150 words)(GS paper 1/ Social issues)

