

23 Nov 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. [Uproar over Kerala law to curb abusive content](#)

Context:

Kerala Governor recently signed an ordinance amending the law to give the police more powers to prosecute persons who exploit various communication platforms to slander fellow citizens.

Details:

- The ordinance has introduced a new provision, Section 118-A, to the Kerala Police Act, 2011.

- The amendment proposes three years of imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹10,000 for those convicted of producing, publishing or disseminating derogatory content through any means of communication to intimidate, insult or defame any person.

Issues:

- The drastic amendment to the Kerala Police Act, 2011, would give the local law enforcement more powers to curb defamation.
- The ordinance would allow whimsical interpretations by law enforcement agencies.
- Opposition parties, journalists' bodies and civil rights activists see it as a threat to the freedom of the press and free speech in the State. It is argued that the amendment would reverse the course on media freedom, muzzle free speech and jeopardize civil liberties.
- It is opined that conferring power on the police to gauge mental injury, loss of reputation and such matters due to dissemination of information would result in widespread abuse.

Section 66 A of the Information Technology Act, 2000:

- In 2015, the Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which gave the government power to arrest and imprison an individual for allegedly offensive online posts.
- The court ruled that as it did not distinguish between speech that was merely "offensive or annoying" and that which was guilty of inciting a disruption of public order, Section 66A was liable to have a chilling effect on free speech.
- The same judgment also declared as invalid Section 118 (d) of the Kerala Police Act, which prescribed a jail term for those who caused annoyance to others by indecent statements, comments, calls or messages.

In effect, the new ordinance tries to resurrect a section struck down as unconstitutional by the apex court.

Conclusion:

- Despite the guarantees in the Constitution, free speech, dissent and even legitimate criticism is looked at as an exercise in bad faith, and projected as an attack on democratically elected authority. As a result, existing laws are being weaponised to arrest journalists and citizens for a tweet or a slogan or a Facebook post.
- The ordinance decides to strike a blow against liberty and is a sign of an endemic intolerance to dissent, cutting across ideological lines.
- The institutions of a mature democracy should shrug off such comments.
- The Kerala government must withdraw an ordinance that does not pass the constitutional test.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Japanese grant to strengthen Maldives Coast Guard

Context:

The Maldives and Japan have signed an agreement for a Japanese grant of \$7.6 million to be extended to the Maldives Coast Guard and the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Center.

Details:

- The development comes less than three months after the signing of the 'Framework for U.S. Department of Defence-Maldives Ministry of Defence - Defence and Security Relationship'.
- The grant aid is the Maldives's second major pact with a member of the [Quad](#).
 - The Quad member countries' Foreign Ministers had recently held discussions, including on ways to counter Chinese presence and influence in the region.

Significance:

- The Maldives is home to nearly 4 lakh people and assumes geopolitical significance, owing to its strategic location.
- The deal will be utilised to further strengthen the capabilities of the Maldives Coast Guard, the country's Maritime Rescue and Coordination Center, Sub-Regional Centers and Vessels.
- It includes the provision of communications equipment, professional search and rescue dive equipment.

India's Position:

- In a departure from its earlier reservations to other big powers expanding its strategic presence in the region, India had welcomed the Maldives's first military agreement with the U.S., the Maldives's first with a country other than India.
- India views the development as a positive one, as it did when Washington and Male earlier signed the defence pact that focusses on maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean, besides promoting a rules-based order that promotes stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. PM for integrated fight against climate change

Context:

Prime Minister's comments on India's fight against climate change in a G-20 event - "Safeguarding the Planet: The Circular Carbon Economy Approach".

Details:

- The PM said that the climate change issue must be tackled using an integrated approach.
- He asserted that the entire world can progress faster if there is greater support of technology and finance to developing nations.
- "Inspired by our traditional ethos of living in harmony with the environment, and the commitment of my government, India has adopted low-carbon and climate-resilient development practices," he said.

Note:

- India is a signatory to the 2015 Paris Agreement under the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#).
- India has been taking concrete action with respect to tackling the issue of climate change.
- India has made LED lights popular in turn saving 38 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emission per year.

- It has set a 175 gigawatts renewable energy target to be achieved before 2022.
- India is also seeking to achieve the target of 450 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2030.

Category: SECURITY

1. 132 countries attend global meet on criminal finances

Context:

The 4th Global Conference on Criminal Finances and Cryptocurrencies was organised by the [Interpol](#), Europol and the Basel Institute on Governance.

Details:

- Representatives from 132 countries attended the virtual conference to shape international cross-sector solutions against the criminal use of cryptocurrencies.
- The conference's agenda included trends and investigations on cryptocurrency-related offences, exploring criminal flows and operations in the dark markets, ransomware and sextortion case studies, money laundering involving virtual assets, and the transfer of drug proceeds using cryptocurrencies.

Global Conference on Criminal Finances and Cryptocurrencies

- The conference is an initiative of the Working Group on Cryptocurrencies and Money Laundering established in 2016 by the three organisations Interpol, Europol and the Basel Institute on Governance.
- It was launched with the objective of strengthening knowledge, expertise and best practices for investigations into financial crimes and intelligence on virtual assets and cryptocurrencies.

Significance:

- Recently, there has been an increase in the number and quality of investigations in the field of cryptocurrency-facilitated crime and subsequent money laundering.
- Law enforcement and other public entities are continuing to enhance their level of knowledge and expertise in this crime area.

The conference serves as an opportunity to underline the need for countries and jurisdictions to increase the exchange of tactical information and best practices.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Chinese dam projects on Brahmaputra are a threat to lives and livelihoods downstream

This editorial has been taken from 'The Indian Express'.

Context

- China's dam constructions on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet.

About the Brahmaputra

- The 2,880 km-long Brahmaputra is a perennial river which originates in Tibet, where it is known as **Yarlung Tsangpo**.
- It flows eastwards through southern Tibet for a distance of 1,625 kilometers and at its easternmost point, it swings around to make a spectacular U-turn at the **Shuomatan Point or Great Bend** before it enters India's easternmost state, Arunachal Pradesh. Here it is known as **the Siang River**.

Issues faced by inhabitants along the river

- People living near the Brahmaputra region have to deal with two floods annually:
 - One caused by the melting of the Himalayan snow in summer.
 - The other due to the monsoon flows.
- Climate change has further intensified the frequency of floods in this region which has posed a major threat to lower riparian countries like India and Bangladesh, which is impacting their food security.
- The river is in itself dynamic as frequent landslides and geological activity force it to change course very often.

Why is China constructing more dams on the Chinese side?

- China is growing economically and demographically, which is resulting in increased water consumption.
- China, which is home to close to 20 per cent of the world's population, has only 7 per cent of its water resources.
- Rapid industrialization has polluted the surface and the groundwater.
- China's northern part is water-stressed and its southern part is water-rich. The southern region is a major food producer and has a significant industrial capacity as a consequence of more people living there.
- China has an ambitious plan to link its south and north through canals, aqueducts and linking of major rivers to ensure water security. In pursuit of these goals, China, being an upper riparian state in Asia, has been blocking rivers like the Mekong and its tributaries.

Impact

- It is affecting Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Dam construction has resulted in widely fluctuating river flow, threatening fish productivity, which is key to the region's people and economy.
- It has caused immense damage to the environment.

Why India is worried?

Water scarcity in India

- India is severely water-stressed as well.
- In summer, a vast majority of urban areas face water shortages. Similar to China, India has 17 per cent of the world's population and 4 per cent of water.

- While a majority of India's population reside in the Gangetic plains, the southern and western regions experience harsh and dry summer and the rainfall is scarce and erratic in the eastern coast.
- As in China, an equally ambitious north-south river-linking project has been proposed in India, though it has come under criticism for potentially disturbing fragile ecosystems.

Concerns

- First, they will eventually lead to degradation of the entire basin: Massive amounts of silt carried by the river would get blocked by dams leading to a fall in the quality of soil and eventual reduction in **agricultural productivity**.
- Second, the location of the dams in the Himalayas poses a risk. Seismologists consider the Himalayas as most vulnerable to earthquakes and seismic activity.
 - Landslides resulting from earthquakes pose a significant threat — the 2015 Nepal earthquake and the resultant landslides wiped out several dams and other facilities.
 - The sheer size of the infrastructure projects undertaken by China, and increasingly by India, poses a significant threat to the populations living downstream.
 - Close to a million people live in the Brahmaputra basin in India and tens of millions further downstream in Bangladesh. The projects in the Himalayas threaten the existence of hundreds of thousands of people.
- Third, for the Chinese, water is a key weapon in their expansionist designs. China believes dam building on the Brahmaputra helps it **assert a claim over Arunachal Pradesh**.
- Fourth, dams, canals, irrigation systems can turn water into a **political weapon to be wielded in war**, or during peace to signal annoyance with a co-riparian state.
 - Many feel low lying areas in India will be completely inundated if China suddenly releases all this stored up water.

Way forward

- Both sides must cease new constructions on the river and commit to potentially less destructive solutions.
- Building a decentralised network of check dams, rain-capturing lakes and using traditional means of water capture have shown effective results in restoring the ecological balance while supporting the populations of the regions in a sustainable manner.

Category: ECONOMY

1. No Minister, the trade agreement pitch is flawed

Reference:

[CNA dated Nov 20, 2020: India's mask of economic liberalism is off](#)

F. Prelims Facts

1. India, Thailand, Singapore naval exercise concludes

What's in News?

The second edition of the India, Thailand and Singapore trilateral naval exercise, SITMEX-20, concluded in the Andaman Sea.

This topic has been covered in the [22nd November 2020 PIB Summary and Analysis](#).

Also read about [SIMBEX-20](#).

2. Arogya Sanjivani

- Arogya Sanjeevani is a standardised health insurance policy designed by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority.
- Every general insurance or health insurance company is mandated to offer it from April 1, 2020.
- The [Insurance Regulatory Authority of India \(IRDAI\)](#) has made it mandatory for health insurers to introduce a standard product that offers basic coverage.
- The insurance policy offers coverage of between Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 5 lakh and will be for a period of one year. It will be available in multiples of Rs. 50,000.
- Anyone over the age of 18 can purchase an Arogya Sanjeevani Policy.
- The maximum age at which one can purchase this policy is 65 years.

G. Tidbits

1. Arunachal Pradesh CM pushes for highway along Tibet border

What's in News?

Arunachal Pradesh CM has opined that developing the Frontier Highway is the key in a conflict situation.

- Since the stand-off between the Indian and Chinese armies in Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh has been pushing for the ambitious Frontier Highway project along the “India-Tibet border” for facilitating faster movement of troops if a war-like situation arises.
- The project has gained momentum after having brought all armed forces, Border Roads Organisation and other stakeholder agencies on the same page for a coordinated approach to build the highway at Himalayan heights along the 1,100 km Line of Actual Control.
- However, the state is unable to get cheaper foreign funding because of Beijing's interference.

2. India set to launch deep sea mission

What's in News?

India will soon launch an ambitious ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ that envisages the exploration of minerals, energy and marine diversity of the underwater world.

Significance:

- The mission is expected to cost over ₹4,000 crore and will give a boost to efforts to explore India's vast [Exclusive Economic Zone](#) and Continental Shelf.

- The mission will also involve developing technologies for different deep ocean initiatives.
- The multi-disciplinary work will be piloted by the MoES and other government departments like the Defence Research and Development Organisation, Department of Biotechnology, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) will be stakeholders in this mission.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. "SITMEX" is a maritime exercise between the navies of which of the following countries?

1. India
2. Singapore
3. Thailand
4. Malaysia
5. Maldives

Choose the correct option:

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1, 2 and 3 only
- c. 1, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1, 3 and 5 only

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: b

Explanation:

- SITMEX is a trilateral maritime exercise between the navies of India, Singapore and Thailand.
- Commenced in 2019, the first exercise was hosted by India.
- The 2020 exercise is being hosted by the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN).

Q2. Consider the following pairs:

1. INS Kamorta - Anti-Submarine Warfare stealth corvette
2. INS Karmuk – Missile corvette
3. INS Kalvari - Scorpene-class submarine

Which of these is/are correctly matched?

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- INS Kamorta is the first of four anti-submarine Kamorta-class stealth corvettes which have been built for the Indian Navy.
- INS Karmuk is a missile corvette of the Kora class.
- INS Kalvari is a Scorpène-class submarine in service with the Indian Navy. It is a diesel-electric attack submarine.

All the pairs are correctly matched.

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):

1. It sets a framework for limiting the emissions of greenhouse gases by individual countries.
2. It is legally binding.
3. Nagoya Protocol is an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
4. Paris Agreement is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: c

Explanation:

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change sets a framework for limiting the emissions of greenhouse gases by individual countries. It is not legally binding.
- Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement linked to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Paris Agreement is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to River Brahmaputra:

1. It originates in Tibet and is known as the Yarlung Tsangpo there.
2. The river flows eastwards through southern Tibet and makes a U-turn at the Shuomatan Point before it enters Arunachal Pradesh.
3. The river also flows through Bangladesh.

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

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

CHECK ANSWERS:-

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The Brahmaputra is a perennial river which originates in Tibet, where it is known as the Yarlung Tsangpo.
- It flows eastwards through southern Tibet for a distance of 1,625 kilometers and at its easternmost point, it swings around to make a spectacular U-turn at the Shuomatan Point or Great Bend before it enters India's easternmost state, Arunachal Pradesh. Here it is known as the Siang River.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the concerns of India and other lower riparian countries with China's dam construction on the River Brahmaputra. What are the alternative solutions in the interest of all the stakeholders? (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 2, IR)
2. Kerala Government's law on social media posts violates the principles of free speech and individual liberty. Critically Analyze. (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS 2, Polity)