BYJU'S
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28 Nov 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. Mizoram Assembly Speaker disqualifies Lalduhoma

Context:

India's first Member of Parliament to have been disqualified from the Lok Sabha has now been disqualified as an MLA in Mizoram.

Details:

- Mizoram Assembly Speaker debarred Lalduhoma, a retired IPS officer from the 40-member House.
- The disqualification was on the ground that he had declared himself as a representative of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) despite being elected as an independent candidate from the Serchhip constituency.
    - Elected as an independent, he had breached Para 2(2) of the 10th Schedule of the Constitution by defecting to the ZPM.
    - In September, 12 legislators of the ruling party in Mizoram had petitioned the Speaker demanding his disqualification for allegedly violating the Constitution.
- Earlier, in 1988, he became the first MP to have been disqualified under the Anti-Defection Law for giving up membership of the Congress (I).
    - He was elected to the Lok Sabha uncontested in 1984 as the Congress candidate but fell out with the party leadership.

Read more on Anti-defection law covered in 26ᵗʰ June 2019 Comprehensive News Analysis.

2. Farmers stay camped on Delhi border

Context:

Tens of thousands of farmers are camped on the Delhi-Haryana border on their way to the national capital for a protest against the Centre's three new farm laws.

Details:

- The farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have mobilised under the Samyukt Kisan Morcha banner for this 'Dilli Chalo' agitation.
- They are demanding a repeal of three agricultural marketing reform laws, which they fear will affect the system of government procurement of crops at minimum support prices.
- They also want the Electricity Bill, 2020, which could remove free power for farmers, to be withdrawn.

Read about the Agricultural Reforms covered in 27ᵗʰ September 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Fiscal deficit reaches 120% of annual target

Context:

The Union Government's fiscal deficit further widened to ₹9.53 lakh crore, or close to 120% of the annual budget estimate, at the end of October of the current fiscal (2020-21).

Details:

- The deficit widened mainly due to poor revenue realisation.
- The fiscal deficit or gap between the expenditure and revenue had breached the annual target in July this year.

Fiscal Deficit:

- Fiscal deficit is the difference between the government's total expenditure and its total receipts (excluding borrowing). A fiscal deficit occurs when this expenditure exceeds the revenue generated.
- In India, the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act suggests that bringing the fiscal deficit down to about 3 percent of the GDP is the ideal target.
- However, successive governments have not been able to achieve this target.
- For the financial year, the government had pegged the fiscal deficit at Rs 7.96 lakh crore or 3.5 per cent of the GDP in the budget, presented by the Finance Minister in February 2020.

Read more on Fiscal Deficit in the linked article.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. 'Sea sparkle' has affected marine food chain: CMFRI

Context:

The Karnataka coast has been witnessing the bloom of *Noctiluca scintillans* that has displaced microscopic algae called diatoms.

Details:

- Diatoms form the basis of the marine food chain.
- The bloom of *Noctiluca scintillans* displacing diatoms has deprived food for the planktivorous fish.
- The toxic blooms of *N. scintillans* are linked to massive fish and marine invertebrate kills.
- Though the species does not produce a toxin, it is found to accumulate toxic levels of ammonia, which is then excreted into the surrounding waters, possibly acting as the killing agent in blooms.

- The ammonia makes *N. scintillans* unpleasant for most creatures. Only jellyfish and salps are known to prey on it.

- *N. scintillans* graze on other micro-organisms such as larvae, fish eggs, and diatoms.

- But the unicellular phytoplankton that lives inside *N. scintillans* can photosynthesise, turning sunlight into energy. They help their host cell survive even when food is scarce. Thus, *N. scintillans* acts as both a plant and an animal.

Note:

- *Noctiluca scintillans* are commonly known as "sea sparkle".

- The bioluminescent *Noctiluca scintillans* also brightens the seawater at night.

- Bioluminescence is the production and emission of light by a living organism and occurs due to a chemical reaction, involving a light-emitting molecule and an enzyme, called luciferin and luciferase.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. Stepping out of the shadow of India's malnutrition

Context:

Two recent reports: the annual report on "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020" by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and the 2020 Hunger report, "Better Nutrition, Better Tomorrow" by the Bread for the World Institute give out staggering facts about Indian food insecurity and malnutrition.

Details:

- Using two globally recognised indicators – the Prevalence of Undernourishment (PoU) and the Prevalence of Moderate or Severe Food Insecurity (PMSFI), the reports indicate India to be one of the most food-insecure countries, with the highest rates of stunting and wasting among other South Asian countries.
    - PoU measures the percentage of people who are consuming insufficient calories than their required minimum dietary energy requirement.
    - PMSFI identifies the percentage of people who live in households that are severely or moderately food insecure.

Understand the Distinction between PoU and PMS in the article covered in 24ᵗʰ August 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis.

Current Scenario:

- Going by official estimates available till 2011-12, the reduction in poverty has been substantial.
- However, malnutrition has not declined as much as the decline has occurred in terms of poverty.

Comparative Analysis:

- The reduction in India is found to be much lower than in neighbouring China, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.
- Except China, these are countries which had somewhat similar levels of PoU in and around the year 2000.
    - It must be noted that the decline in China is way higher than that of India, even though it had started with lower levels of PoU in 2000.
- Afghanistan that started with a higher base than India had experienced higher rates of decline.
    - Economically, while Afghanistan is relatively much poorer and has gone through several prolonged conflicts in last two decades, it has been more successful in reducing malnutrition than India.
- Pakistan and Nepal which had almost similar levels of PoU in the initial years, have also successfully reduced malnourishment at a rate that is much faster than India.
- Irrespective of the base level of PoU, most of these countries have done better than India on this dimension.

Food Insecurity Experience Scale survey:

- These findings also get substantiated through Food Insecurity Experience Scale survey.
    - It covers almost 90% of the world's population.
    - However, as it is not allowed to be conducted in India, direct estimates are not available.
- Estimates indicate that between 2014-16, about 29.1% of the total population was food insecure, which rose up to 32.9% in 2017-19.
- In terms of absolute number, about 375 million of the total population was moderately or severely food insecure in 2014, which went up to about 450 million in 2019.

Concerns:

- Despite the National Food Security Act – 2013 two crucial elements that still are left out are the non-inclusion of nutritious food items such as pulses and exclusion of potential beneficiaries.
- The COVID-19 pandemic would make the situation worse in general, more so for vulnerable groups.
- Though States have temporarily expanded the coverage in the wake of the crisis, the problem of malnutrition is likely to deepen with rising unemployment and the economic slump.
- The recently initiated "Hunger Watch" by the Right to Food Campaign also presents a very grim situation, with close to one out of every three respondents reporting low food consumption and massive compromise on food quality.

Way Forward:

- A major shift in policy has to encompass the immediate universalisation of the Public Distribution System.

- There is a dire need for the distribution of quality food items.

- Innovative interventions such as the setting up of community kitchens must be planned, among other things.

- The need of the hour remains the right utilisation and expansion of existing programmes to ensure that at least some part of this growing concern of malnutrition in the country is addressed.

Conclusion:

This year's Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the United Nations World Food Programme, which should bring some of the focus back on these pressing issues of undernourishment and hunger in India.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Tech tact

Context:

The government has blocked 43 more mobile apps, including major Chinese ones citing threat to national security, integrity and sovereignty.

Background:

- Following escalation of tensions with China at the border, India has blocked over 250 Chinese mobile apps, a bunch at a time, on the grounds that they have been engaging in activities which are prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order.

Details:

- The latest instance of app blocking comes at a time when the two sides have engaged in talks to come up with an agreement for disengagement along the Line of Actual Control.

Possible repercussions:

- In the short run, it may be useful for India to use its vast market for Internet services as a leverage in its attempts to keep China in check at the border.

- Indian app alternatives may also find the much-needed space to grow now, and initial reports indicate as much.

- But there are a few risks with this approach, especially given India's global ambitions in technology.

  - This approach runs the risk of triggering an unconventional battle in the larger technology realm. China, being an important player in the technology global supply chain, will be hard to sideline.

  - There is a risk that moves such as blocking apps would be perceived adversely by global investors and Internet companies.

Way forward:

- While it is true that there has been some push back against Chinese companies and technology globally, India must stick to a rules-based approach in regulating the Internet.
- There is a need to implement the long-pending data protection law.
- It is also important to provide clarity on these issues.

Read more on this topic covered in 2ⁿᵈ July 2020, 5ᵗʰ July 2020 and 14ᵗʰ Sep 2020 CNA.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Core sector contraction widens to 2.5%

What's in News?

Output at India's eight core sectors shrank 2.5% in October with the contraction widening from September's revised 0.1% decline as steel production slid again after a brief revival in the preceding month.

Core Sectors:

- The eight-core sectors of the Indian economy are:
  - Electricity
  - Steel
  - Refinery products
  - Crude oil
  - Coal
  - Cement
  - Natural gas
  - Fertilizers
- The core sectors account for about 40% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Read more about the Core Sectors and Index of Industrial Production.

2. GMRT accorded prestigious IEEE Milestone status

What's in News?

The Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) has been selected as a 'Milestone' facility by the U.S.-based Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

- IEEE is the world's largest technical professional organisation dedicated to advancing technology in all areas related to electrical and electronics engineering.
- This is the third such IEEE 'Milestone' recognition for an Indian contribution.

- The previous two Indian IEEE Milestones were for the pioneering work done by Sir J.C. Bose to demonstrate the generation and reception of radio waves in 1895 (recognised in 2012), and for the Nobel Prize-winning (in 1930) 'scattering of light' phenomenon observed by Sir C.V. Raman in 1928.

Read more on Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) covered in 17th October 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis.

G. Tidbits

1. Protect right of ordinary people to bail, SC tells judges

What's in News?

The Supreme Court gave a clarion call to judges to protect personal liberty and the right of ordinary people to bail, saying liberty is not a gift for the few.

- A Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra declared "Deprivation of liberty even for a single day is one day too many".
- Justice Chandrachud said that the State should not be allowed to use criminal law as a ruse to harass citizens.
- The Supreme Court reminded that the common citizens without means or resources to move the High Courts or the Supreme Court were languishing in jails as undertrials.
- It was highlighted that 91,568 bail pleas were pending in High Courts, while 1.96 lakh bail applications continued to wait for a hearing in the district courts.
- The judgment focused on the importance of the district judiciary.
  - Justice Chandrachud said the district judiciary was only "subordinate" in the hierarchy.
  - It was less to none when it came to saving the lives of citizens or doing justice for them.
  - He asserted that the district judiciary must be alive to the situation as it prevails on the ground – in the jails and police stations where human dignity has no protector.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) is located in:

- a. Devasthal, Nainital, Uttarakhand
- b. Narayangaon, near Pune, Maharashtra
- c. Indian Astronomical Observatory, Ladakh
- d. North Rhine-Westphalia region of Germany

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes.

- It is located in Narayangaon, near Pune in India.
- It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. Gross Value Added (GVA) provides for the value of the amount of goods and services that have been produced in a country, minus the cost of all inputs and raw materials that are directly attributable to that production.
2. Gross domestic product (GDP) is the monetary measure of the market value of all the final goods and services produced in a specific time period in a country.
3. Gross national product (GNP) is the value of all goods and services made by a country's residents and businesses, regardless of production location.

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

a. 1 only
b. 3 only
c. 2 and 3 only
d. None of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

All the statements are correct.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to *Noctiluca scintillans*:

1. They accumulate toxic levels of ammonia, which is then excreted into the surrounding waters.
2. They produce a toxin that acts as a killing agent in algal blooms.
3. They are commonly known as "sea sparkle".

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

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The bioluminescent *Noctiluca scintillans* also brightens the seawater at night.

- *Noctiluca scintillans* are commonly known as "sea sparkle".

- Though the species does not produce a toxin, it is found to accumulate toxic levels of ammonia, which is then excreted into the surrounding waters, possibly acting as the killing agent in blooms.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to exceptions under the Anti-defection Law:

1. The law allows a nominated member to join a party within six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.
2. The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least one-third of its legislators are in favour of the merger.
3. The law allows an independent candidate to join a political party within six months after the election.

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

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The anti-defection law seeks to provide a stable government by ensuring the legislators do not switch parties.

- The law allows a nominated member to join a party within six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.

- The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger.

- An independent candidate cannot join a political party after the election. In such a case he/she shall be disqualified under the anti-defection law.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. COVID-19 has exacerbated the existing issues of food insecurity and malnutrition across the world. In light of this statement, examine the current scenario in India in comparison with the other South Asian countries and suggest measures to check the growing problem of malnutrition in India. (15 Marks 250 Words) (GS 1 Social Justice).

2. Ban on Chinese mobile applications is not only a geopolitical move but also a strategic trade manoeuvre that can have a significant positive economic impact for India. Critically analyse. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 3 Economy).