

19 Mar 2020: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. Panels on homoeopathy, Indian system

Context:

- Two Bills to set up national commissions for the Indian system of medicine and homoeopathy have been passed by the Rajya Sabha.
- The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2019 and the National Commission for Homoeopathy Bill, 2019 had been introduced in the Rajya Sabha in January 2019, after which they were sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare.

National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill:

- The proposed legislation seeks to repeal the Indian Medicine Central Council Act, 1970.
- It provides for a medical education system to ensure availability of quality medical professionals of Indian System of Medicine, and adoption of the latest medical research, among other objectives.
- Another key feature of the bill is setting up a National Commission for Indian System of Medicine.

National Commission for Homoeopathy Bill:

- It seeks to repeal the Homoeopathy Central Council Act, 1973.
- It too proposes to constitute a National Commission for Homoeopathy.
- It is proposed that the Commission, among things, will frame policies for regulating medical institutions and homoeopathic medical professionals, and assess requirements of healthcare-related human resources and infrastructure.

Minister of State for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) said that the passage of the two bills will help the government to strengthen homoeopathy and other Indian medical system streams in the country. AYUSH medical systems are not only popular in India but are also gaining foothold across the world.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Plea against Gogoi's nomination

Context:

A petition filed in the <u>Supreme Court</u> conveyed the widespread disquiet and unease triggered by the nomination of the former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi to the Rajya Sabha and sought the court's intervention for extending the post-retirement restrictions imposed on the office of the Lokpal to former judges as well.



This issue has been covered in the 18th March Comprehensive News Analysis. Click here to read.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. IMF rejects Venezuela's \$5 bn virus aid request

Context:

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has rejected economically devastated Venezuela's request for a \$5 billion loan to help it cope with the onslaught of COVID-19.

Details:

- It was the country's first loan request to the IMF since 2001.
- The IMF said that the Fund is not in a position to consider this request, because there is no clarity on international recognition of the country's government.
- IMF said that its engagement with member countries is predicated on official government recognition by the international community, as reflected in the IMF's membership. And in this situation, there is no clarity on recognition.

Issue:

- A number of countries, including Britain and the US, recognise usurper Juan Guaido who declared himself interim President of Venezuela last year, shortly after Mr Maduro's inauguration.
- Mr Guaido has launched a number of failed coup attempts against President Nicolas Maduro, all of which
 have ended in embarrassing humiliation as he failed to win the support of the people and the country's
 armed forces.
- Opposition in the country believes that Mr. Maduro is taking advantage of the pandemic to obtain an international recognition that he does not have.
- The IMF said that the request could not be considered, claiming that there was no clarity among member states on who to recognise as Venezuela's leader. It asserted that the political problem has to be solved before the economic problem can be solved.
- The US has also been criticised for increasing sanctions on Venezuela.

Note:

- Venezuela's dire economic situation originated in the continuous fall of oil production that began during the oil industry strike in 2003 and the disappearance of much of the private sector in the last 20 years.
- Economic sanctions and the crash in oil prices to 18 year lows have only compounded Venezuela's economic crisis.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. The importance of 'contact tracing'

Context:



- In the wake of the outbreak of the pandemic COVID-19, it is explained how, from the second phase, when local transmission takes place, 'contact tracing' is an integral part of fighting the epidemic on the ground.
- If properly done, contact tracing and follow-up health interventions will ensure that the infection spread is limited and retard or stop the pace of the epidemic to the third stage community transmission.

What is contact tracing?

- Contract tracing is the process of identifying, assessing, and managing people who have been exposed to a disease to prevent transmission. As per ICMR guidelines, which are also directions that have sound public health sense behind them, people who may have been exposed to the virus are to be followed for 28 days from the date of the probable last exposure/arrival from affected countries.
- Any person who has had contact with the index patient under investigation/treatment for suspected, probable or confirmed case of SARS-COV-2, should be monitored for the appearance of symptoms.

Who is a contact?

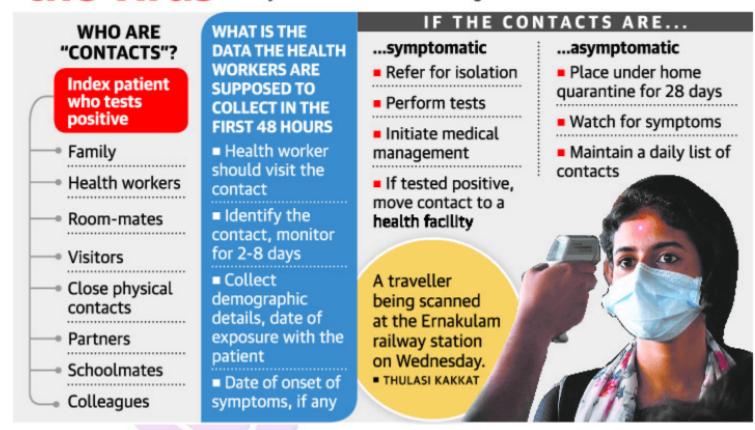
- Anyone who provided care for the suspect or confirmed case, including a health care worker (including
 those involved in cleaning, waste management, laboratory technicians, doctors) or family member, or any
 one who had close physical contact; anyone who stayed at the same place (lived with, or visited) while
 the index patient was symptomatic.
- If symptoms appear within the first 28 days following the contact, the individual should be considered a 'probable' case and reported through the Integrated Diseases Surveillance Programme network to the National Centre for Disease Control.



As soon as the single event (confirmed SARS-CoV-2) is detected, contact tracing must be aggressively implemented, and preferably to be completed within 48 hours.

the virus

Health workers identify, assess and manage people who have been exposed to a disease to prevent onward transmission. This part of their job is called "contact tracing"



2. NDRF puts contingency plans in place

Context:

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has trained more than 15,000 staff deployed at the air and land ports across the country on the protocols to be followed in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Steps taken to contain the pandemic:

- As a part of the awareness and acclimatisation drive, the personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force and the Bureau of Immigration posted at these ports have also been sensitised.
- Over 5,000 personnel of the NDRF, stationed in different states, have been kept on standby.
- Prime Minister-led National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has been coordinating with the State and District authorities for implementing measures on a war footing to check the spread.
- The National Crisis Management Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary, which is devising the strategy to deal with the outbreak, has held over half-a-dozen meetings.
- The NDMA's National Executive Committee (NEC), which ensures implementation of the policies on disaster management, has been constantly monitoring the situation.



- The NEC is headed by the Union Home Secretary.
- It comprises Secretary-level officials in all the key Ministries or Departments, and the Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
- Textiles Ministry has been roped in to ensure mass production of protective clothing. The government has also placed an order for about 1 million nasal swab pins from Germany.
- Taking into account a possible proliferation of the infection which impacts the respiratory system, the authorities are also preparing to make adequate arrangement for ventilators.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is monitoring the developments pertaining to testing labs.
 - The ICMR, which is coordinating with the <u>World Health Organisation</u> and the Indian Medical Association, is also in touch with over 50 private accredited labs for facilitating free-of-cost testing.

Category: ECONOMY

1. RBI to infuse ₹10,000 crore via OMO

Context:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to infuse ₹10,000 crore liquidity in the banking system by buying government securities through open market operations (OMO).

Details:

- With the heightening of COVID-19 pandemic risks, certain financial market segments have been experiencing a tightening of financial conditions as reflected in the hardening of yields and widening of spreads. It is important to ensure that all market segments remain liquid and stable, and function normally.
- Therefore, the central bank will conduct open market operations to purchase ₹10,000 crore of government securities through a multi-security auction using the multiple price method.

What is Open Market Operations?

- An Open Market Operation (OMO) is the buying and selling of government securities in the open market, hence the nomenclature.
- It is done by the central bank in a country (the RBI in India).
- When the central bank wants to infuse liquidity into the monetary system, it will buy government securities in the open market. This way it provides commercial banks with liquidity.
- In contrast, when it sells securities, it curbs liquidity. Thus, the central bank indirectly controls the money supply and influences the short-term interest rates.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. In Upper House nomination, a fall for 'aloofness'



Context:

Within five months of his retirement as Chief Justice of India, Justice Ranjan Gogoi has been nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the government.

Issues:

- Shortly before his retirement from the Supreme Court of India, he delivered several important verdicts with far-reaching political consequences that left the government pleased, including the Ayodhya judgment.
- Before that, Justice Gogoi dismissed a review of the Rafale fighter aircraft deal without substantially dealing with the grounds on which the original judgment, negating an independent investigation, had been challenged.
- During his tenure, Justice Gogoi also presided over and pushed through the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.
- Then there was the Sabarimala temple review. A Constitution Bench judgment of the Supreme Court held that excluding menstruating women from entering the temple was discriminatory, and therefore against "constitutional morality".
- Gogoi was one of the four judges, along with Justices J.S. Chelameswar, Madan B. Lokur and Kurian
 Joseph (all retired), who held an unprecedented press conference in January, 2018, to warn the nation
 about the perceived encroachments by the government on the Supreme Court, the highest judicial
 institution.
- His tenure was clouded by an employee's complaint of sexual harassment, which acquired greater credibility after she was reinstated following his exoneration by a committee of judges.
 - Justice Gogoi sat as a judge in his own cause in a case he titled "In Re: A Matter of Great Public Importance Touching Upon the Independence of the Judiciary".
 - The report absolving Justice Gogoi, was put out by the Supreme Court registry as a press release, but a copy of and substance of the report has not been made available even to the complainant.

A forgotten code:

- The 16-point code of conduct for judges or as it was called the "Restatement of Values of Judicial Life" (adopted at a Chief Justices Conference in May 1997) states:
 - "6. A judge should practice a degree of aloofness consistent with the dignity of his office;
 - 7. A judge shall not hear and decide a matter in which a member of his family, a close relation or a friend is concerned".
- "Aloofness" is a most essential trait needed from politicians or functionaries of the government.
- Unfortunately these values seem to have been forgotten by judges who invite politicians to their personal functions, eulogise them in public or call them for personal favours.
- It is incumbent on such judges not to hear and decide cases of those politicians who are their personal friends.
- Judges can also interact with functionaries of the government in their official capacity for official work. But we now see the repeated spectre of judges hearing and deciding cases of politicians with whom they have a personal camaraderie.
- This code of conduct also lays the basis of how post-retirement conduct ought to be.



• For example, if a judge after deciding politically sensitive cases involving particular political parties or politicians, soon after retirement seeks and gets a plum post such as a Rajya Sabha nomination by those very politicians or parties, it would obviously raise serious questions about his or her independence as a judge when he or she had decided those cases.

Conclusion:

- Justice Gogoi's appointment to the Rajya Sabha, raise serious doubts about the fairness of many critical judgments, including the ones mentioned above that were under Justice Gogoi's watch. It will be seen as a crass example of a regime rewarding a member of the judiciary for meeting its expectations during his tenure.
- It will be futile to argue that it is a well-deserved recognition for an eminent jurist. The gap of four months between his retirement and nomination, and the fact that a series of decisions in his court were in seeming conformity with the present government's expectations militate against such a justification.
- Argument that there have been instances of retired Chief Justices being nominated to the Upper House or appointed Governors, does not cut ice either, as it is nothing more than a dubious claim to the same level of impropriety.
- Gogoi's appointment cannot be seen, as he has sought to project, as a way of ensuring cohesion between the judiciary and the legislature. He no longer represents the judiciary, and his contribution will be limited to the expertise and knowledge he can bring to debates in Parliament. Any attempt to create cohesion between the two wings would necessarily encroach on the judiciary's role as a restraining force on the executive and legislature.
- The nomination of the former Chief Justice of India to the Rajya Sabha is considered by many as a blow against the judiciary's independence. It indicates an alarming intention to undermine judicial authority so that the elected executive is seen as all-powerful.

Also read: Indian Judiciary

2. An SC verdict violative of minority rightsContext:

- In the latest judgment on minority rights, a two-judge bench of Justice U.U. Lalit and Justice Arun Mishra upheld the West Bengal Board of Madrasah Education Act, 1994, and the West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission Act, 2008, both of which take away the autonomy of madrasas in the State.
- The appointment of teachers in these theological institutions shall now be made by a board nominated by the government.
- In the last one year, a new trend has emerged in the Supreme Court. Smaller benches now do not hesitate to overrule larger benches' decisions. Increasingly, judicial discipline is losing its charm.

Protection of minorities:

- Protection of minorities is the hallmark of a civilisation. Lord Acton added another dimension to this when he said: "The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities."
- The minorities in general, and Muslims in particular, accepted the pledge of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel that "our mission is to satisfy every interest and safeguard the interests of all the minorities to their satisfaction".
- Accordingly, special safeguards were guaranteed to the minorities and incorporated under Article 30 with a view to instil in them a sense of confidence and security.



• However, due to recent developments, this confidence stands eroded even though, in the Keshavananda Bharati case (1973), minority rights were held to be part of the <u>basic structure of the Constitution</u>.

Rights under Article 30:

- What is the importance of minority rights? Why is the judgment per incuriam, i.e. contrary to law?
 - As per Section 10 of the West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission Act, 2008, all appointments of teachers to the religious schools are to be recommended by the commission and the management committee shall be bound by such recommendations.
 - Section 11 says that anyone appointed in contravention of this Act shall not be considered a teacher and such an appointment shall be invalid.
 - Section 12 empowers the government to deny grants to the schools that refuse to make appointments in accordance with such recommendations. Further, government recognition and affiliation of such schools can be withdrawn.
 - A single judge of the Calcutta High Court in March 2014 struck down the above provisions as violative of Article 30 that guarantees religious and linguistic minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. In December 2015, a Division Bench of the High Court upheld that decision.
- Interestingly, the latest judgment notes that in 2019, a three-judge bench gave the Sikh minority institutions of West Bengal the right to appoint teachers.
 - In less than four months, a right given to Sikh minority institutions by the apex court has been denied to Muslim minority religious institutions.
- Framers of the Constitution in their wisdom did not include any restrictions under Article 30 (unlike in the case of other fundamental rights).
 - Hence, the Article 30 right is absolute though minority institutions are very much subject to health, sanitary and municipal regulations.
- The expression 'administer' in Article 30 has been interpreted by the larger benches of the court such as those of judges in Ahmedabad St. Xaviers College (1974) and 11 judges in T.M.A. Pai Foundation (2003).
 - The apex court has been consistent in holding that the term includes rights of minority institutions to select their governing bodies, teachers and staff and exercise disciplinary control over them and a right to fix reasonable fees and admit students in a fair and transparent manner.

The dual test criterion:

In Rev. Sidharjbhai (1963), a six-judge bench of the Supreme Court observed that every government regulation in respect of a minority institution shall be valid only when it satisfies the dual test, i.e.,

- 1. It is regulative and not destructive of the organisation's minority character and
- 2. It makes the minority institution an effective vehicle of minority education.

Other judgements:

• Justice Lalit, who authored the latest judgment, did refer to the Kerala Education Bill case (1957) of the Supreme Court but he overlooked the fact that a seven-judge bench had held that "the dominant word in Article 30 is 'choice' and the content of the right under that Article is as wide as the choice of a particular minority community will make it."



- Every minority community can thus make a choice in respect of its relationship with the government, the courses taught and the day to day administration, including the right to select its teachers.
- The government, under reasonable restrictions, can certainly prescribe the minimum qualifications.
 - Thus UGC regulations prescribing qualifications and experience are very much applicable.
 - But the government cannot impose its own selection of teachers on the minority institutions.
- Justice Lalit himself noted several judgments on the right to choose teachers.
 - A nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court explicitly held that minority institutions have the right to choose their teachers.
 - In T.M.A. Pai (2003), an 11-judge bench reiterated that the management of minority institutions should have freedom in day-to-day affairs of the institutions, for example, in appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff and administrative control. However, minimum qualifications, experience and other conditions may be fixed by the government.

Way forward:

- Justice Lalit overlooked the striking down of provisions where State governments had tried to take over or
 interfere with the selection of teachers and based his judgment on the broad and general observations in
 the earlier verdicts where the court had said government regulations are permissible.
- It is believed that, it would have been much better if the learned judge had relied on Bihar State Madrasa Education Board (1990), which he did cite.
 - Here, the court had observed that "under the guise of regulating educational standards to secure efficiency in institution, the state is not entitled to frame rules or regulations compelling the management to surrender its right to administration".
- The Chief Justice of India has now referred this judgment to a larger bench and one hopes that the apex court will restore the confidence of the minorities.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Over the cliff

Context:

The editorial talks about how the question whether the planet goes over the climate cliff or pulls back from the brink depends upon the decisions of the next U.S. President.

Details:

- Within the next decade, the world must reduce its annual greenhouse gas emissions by 55% to have a chance at curbing warming to within 1.5°C, or by 25% to have a chance at staying below 2°C, compared with average pre-industrial temperatures.
- Both these temperature guardrails have implications for adverse effects from warming, though the stricter threshold is expected to cause less harm.

Issues:

- Currently, it is not known where the planet is headed with regard to rising temperatures.
- Greenhouse gas emissions are still rising annually at around 1% -3% and financial pledges lie unfulfilled.



• The <u>Paris Agreement</u> commitments made in 2015, even if achieved, are inadequate to attain climate stability.

Second biggest emitter:

- Currently, the second biggest emitter after China, the U.S. is responsible for between one-third to one-fourth of all the anthropogenic carbon dioxide that was discharged into the atmosphere from 1750 to the present.
- Neither the Kyoto nor Copenhagen pledges were fulfilled by the U.S. The world's biggest contributor to anthropogenic greenhouse gases accumulated in the atmosphere made weak promises and did not keep them.
- Under President Donald Trump, the U.S. withdrew from the Paris Agreement and its voluntary commitment to reduce emissions.

Going beyond Paris:

- The 'Green New Deal' is a good beginning for measures within the U.S., but details have to be spelt out on what kind of support will be given to the poorest countries, which have emitted almost zero greenhouse gases but will suffer the most.
- Even the fulfillment of national pledges in the Paris Agreement relies on support from the U.S. and Europe.
- Unfortunately, since the atmosphere is one of the largest shared commons, countries do not have a choice but to work together. What each one of us does affects everyone.
- The bold ideas proposed by Senator Bernie Sanders and his team are especially promising in this regard.
 They call for transformative changes within the country and collaborative, responsible action with the rest of the world.
- Unless the next President can build on an ambitious platform, a planetary disaster is imminent.

Way forward:

- The role of the U.S. in sharply reducing its emissions, accepting responsibility and leadership, and persuading other countries to follow suit is indeed vital.
- The U.S. must, and can, do much more and provide finance and leadership along with deep decarbonisation domestically, while making technological and financial reparations to the rest of the world.
- The next President, cannot go back to old habits on global climate change policy. Far more is urgently needed for the planet even to have a chance at survival, and the U.S. is directly positioned to act as a planetary steward for climate action.
- The future President needs to be a galvanising force within the country and then use that moral leadership to spur change elsewhere.
- Transformations that call for fundamental changes in energy use, lifestyles, transport, housing and values are pivotal.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits



1. Pandemic could make another 25 million jobless

The United Nations has said that the COVID-19 pandemic will significantly increase global unemployment, leaving up to 25 million more people out of work, and will dramatically slash workers' incomes.

- The <u>International Labour Organization</u> warned that the economic and labour crisis sparked by the coronavirus will have "far-reaching impacts on labour market outcomes".
- It is no longer a global health crisis, it is also a major labour market and economic crisis that is having a huge impact on people.
- The UN agency's study suggested the world should prepare to see a "significant rise in unemployment and underemployment in the wake of the virus".
- It found that even in the best-case scenario, 5.3 million more people will be pushed into unemployment.
- At the high end meanwhile, 24.7 million more will become jobless, on top of the 188 million registered as unemployed in 2019.

2. Maternity benefits for second child in Rajasthan

What's in News?

The Rajasthan government has announced a maternity benefit scheme called Indira Gandhi Matritva Poshan Yojana for four districts in the State on a pilot basis under which it will offer ₹6,000 for the birth of the second child.

- The scheme will be implemented in Udaipur, Pratapgarh, Banswara and Dungarpur, where nutrition indicators among children and anaemia levels among mothers are worse than the average for the State.
- The State scheme will complement the Central government's <u>Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana</u> <u>Yojana</u> which offers ₹5,000 for the birth of the first child.
- The Rajasthan government scheme is called Indira Gandhi Matritva Poshan Yojana.
- Beneficiaries will receive cash in three or five instalments upon meeting certain conditions. However, unlike the Central scheme they will not have to submit an Aadhaar card for the State scheme and the money will be transferred directly to their bank accounts.

3. China to extend \$500 mn 'assistance' to Sri Lanka

What's in News?

China will extend financial assistance amounting to \$500 million to Sri Lanka to help the island nation combat COVID19.

- According to a press statement from the Chinese Embassy, the Finance Ministry of Sri Lanka and the China Development Bank (CDB) signed the agreement, with big concessional terms on both interest and tenure.
- The facility was urgently requested by the Sri Lankan government and supported by the Chinese side.
- The maturity period of 10 years is the longest tenure of financing facility for Sri Lanka, the statement said.

Note:



• Sri Lanka and China enjoy strong ties, including development cooperation in key infrastructure projects in the island.

4. Yes Bank back in business, extends hours

What's in News?

- The moratorium on Yes Bank, which came into effect from March 5, 2020 with cash withdrawals capped at ₹50,000, has been lifted, allowing the lender to resume all operations including digital payment channels such as Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT), among others.
- In order to handle the rush of customers to withdraw cash, the bank has decided to extend the branch banking hours for the next three days.
- Following the moratorium, RBI announced a reconstruction scheme under which State Bank of India picked up 48% in the bank.

This topic has been covered in the 18th March 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis. Click here to read.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Open Market Operations (OMO):

- 1. Through the Open Market Operations, central bank indirectly controls the money supply and influences the short-term interest rates.
- 2. When the central bank wants to infuse liquidity into the monetary system, it will sell government securities in the open market.

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

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

Answer

- •
- •
- •
- •

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to the International Monetary Fund (IMF):

- 1. IMF is the result of the Bretton Woods Conference.
- 2. IMF was established along with the World Bank.



3. Membership in the IMF is a prerequisite to membership in the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)

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

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

Answer

Q3. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Venezuela is bound by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean in the North.
- 2. Colombia and Brazil border Venezuela to the East and West of the country respectively.

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

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



Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is a statutory body and the apex body for disaster management in India.



- 2. NDMA is under the Ministry of Home Affairs and is headed by the Union Home Minister.
- 3. National Disaster Management Authority's National Executive Committee (NEC) is chaired by the Prime Minister.

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

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

Answer

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

- 1. Critically comment on the recent judgment on minority rights upholding the West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission Act, 2008, which says that the appointment of teachers in madrassas is to be decided by a commission. Is the judgement contrary to the law? (15 Marks, 250 Words).
- 2. The lure of post-retirement postings has plagued India's courts for decades. Discuss the need for a post-retirement conduct for Judges, which would keep judiciary's independence intact. (15 Marks, 250 Words).