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## B. GS2 Related

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Panel for Legislature in Amaravati, HC in Kurnool

##### Context:

The expert committee on development strategies for Andhra Pradesh has come out with its recommendations.

##### Details:

- The **expert committee on development strategies for Andhra Pradesh** has recommended the following:
- The Secretariat, the Chief Minister's camp office, summer Assembly and a High Court (HC) Bench be set up in the **Visakhapatnam** metropolitan region.
- The State Legislature, a HC Bench and the Governor and Ministers' quarters be set up in the '**Amaravati-Mangalagiri complex**'.
- The High court and allied courts be situated in **Kurnool**.
- This is in line with the government's proposal of setting up **legislative, executive and judicial**

- **capitals in Amaravati, Visakhapatnam and Kurnool respectively.**
- The expert committee has stated that its recommendations have been made as per the terms of **the Sribagh Pact**.
- Sribagh Pact is an agreement made between the political leaders of Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions during the “separate Andhra movement” in November 1937. The main aspect of the pact was that the Rayalaseema region would be granted either the capital city or high court as a symbol of decentralization to overcome any doubts regarding the neglect of the region from the dominant coastal political leaders.
- Another significant recommendation is setting up of **four commissionerates** comprising Visakhapatnam-Srikakulam-Vizianagaram (north coastal), East Godavari-West Godavari-Krishna (central coastal), Guntur-Prakasam-Nellore (south coastal) and Anantapur-Chittoor-Kadapa-Kurnool (Rayalaseema) regions for the sake of administrative convenience on the lines of the pattern followed in Karnataka.
- There have been protests against the Chief Minister’s proposal of three capital cities mainly by the farmers and people of the villages in and around Amaravati who had given up their lands for the proposed capital at Amaravati.

## 2. Updating of National Population Register put on hold in Kerala

### Context:

Following in the footsteps of West Bengal, the Kerala government has decided to put on hold the proceedings for **updating the National Population Register (NPR)**.

### Background:

- **The data for National Population Register was collected in 2010** along with the houselisting phase of Census of India, 2011.
- Following a decision to update the National Population Register, a **Gazette notification was issued by the Registrar General and the Census Commissioner of India on the updating of the NPR in connection with the 2021 Census** during April to September 2020 in all the States/UTs **except Assam**.
- It will be conducted in conjunction with the house listing phase, the first phase of the **Census, by the Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) under the Home Ministry for Census 2021**.
- The RGI has already begun a **pilot project** in over 1,200 villages and 40 towns and cities through 5,218 enumeration blocks, where it is collecting various data from people. The final enumeration will begin in April 2020 and end in September 2020.
- Unlike the NRC, **the NPR is not a citizenship enumeration drive**, as it would record even a foreigner staying in a locality, for more than six months.

### Concerns:

- The database would contain demographic as well as biometric particulars. This has led to **some concerns around privacy**. There is no clarity on the mechanism for protection of the vast amount of data that NPR would yield, as yet.
- Following the protests over a proposed nation-wide NRC, there are doubts being cast that the ongoing NPR is a prelude to the NRC.

### Government’s stand:

- While there are concerns around privacy, the government’s position on collection of the data is twofold.

- The first is the assertion that every country must **have a comprehensive identity database** of its residents with relevant demographic details. It is said that it will help the government **formulate its policies better and also aid national security**.
- The second, largely to justify the collection of data such as driving licence, voter ID and PAN numbers, is that it will only **ease the life** of those residing in India by cutting red tape. It will not only help target government beneficiaries in a better way, but also further cut down paperwork and red tape in a similar manner that Aadhaar has done.
- The government has argued that **NPR information is private and confidential**, meaning it will not be shared with third parties.

For more on this issue refer [20th December Comprehensive News Analysis](#).

### 3. Common documents enough to prove citizenship: MHA

#### Context:

Protests and concerns regarding the proposed national NRC.

#### Government's clarification:

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has stated that the **guidelines for the National Register of Citizens (NRC) are yet to be drafted** but Citizenship of India may be proved by giving any **document relating to date of birth or place of birth or both** to ensure that no Indian citizen is unduly harassed or put to inconvenience.
- Indian citizens **do not have to prove any ancestry** by presenting documents such as identity card, birth certificate etc, of parents/grandparents dating back to pre-1971 situation.
- **March 24, 1971 was the cut-off date for Assam's NRC** conducted under the supervision of the Supreme Court as per the Assam Accord, 1985, and it is **not related to countrywide citizens' register**.
- **According to the Citizenship Act, anyone born on or after 26 January, 1950, but before 1 July, 1987 was an Indian citizen by birth**. The people born after these years would inadvertently be **naturalised citizens** by 2019 and would be having some kind of document as a proof of their birth here.
- For illiterate citizens, who may not have any documents, **the authorities may allow them to produce witnesses or local proofs supported by members of the community**.
- No separate legislation was required to compile the **NRC**, as the provision existed **under the Citizenship Act when it was amended in December 2004**.

## C. GS3 Related

### Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

#### 1. Army to sign deal for six Apache attack helicopters

#### Context:

Proposed deal for the purchase of Apache attack helicopters for the army.

#### Details:

- The deal for six AH-64E **Apache attack helicopters** for the Indian Army, is likely to be signed in 2020. These are in addition to 22 Apaches being inducted by the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- In August 2017, **the Defence Acquisition Council, chaired by the then Defence Minister Arun Jaitley**, approved the purchase of six Apache attack helicopters **from the U.S.** for the Army.

- The IAF has recently inducted the first batch of eight Apaches based in Pathankot. The Apaches are expected to **replace the ageing Russian Mi-35 attack helicopters in service.**
- Currently, the Army Aviation Corps operates only smaller Cheetah and ALH (Advance Light Helicopters) that weigh less than five tonnes. All the bigger helicopters, including the Mi-35s and fixed wing aircraft are operated by the IAF.

## Category: ECONOMY

### 1. After Operation Twist, yields on govt. bonds drop

#### Context:

Operation Twist by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

#### Background:

##### Long term Bond yields:

- Long-term government bond yields remained sticky despite **surplus system liquidity and back-to-back policy rate cuts of 135 basis points by the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** between February-October 2019.
- Concerns on higher market borrowings by the government on risks of **likely fiscal slippage** have **weighed on the bond yields.**
- **The yields on the 10-year benchmark government bond had risen by around 40 basis points** since December 2019, when the Monetary Policy Committee took an unexpected pause on rate cuts on concerns of rising inflation.

##### Operation “Twist”:

- Market experts had suggested **unconventional steps by the central bank** as **policy rate cuts are unable to bring down the bank lending rates proportionately.**
- There were suggestions that the Indian central bank must resort to measures like **‘Operation Twist’ to ease the long-term rates.**
  - RBI’s **Open Market Operations (OMO)** mechanism allows it to manage liquidity conditions in the banking system by **sale or purchase of government bonds via open auctions.**
- Following the review of the liquidity status and market situation and an assessment of the financial conditions, the Reserve Bank has decided to conduct simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities under Open Market Operations (OMO) for 10,000 crore each.
- ‘Operation Twist’ is when the central bank **uses the proceeds from sale of short-term securities to buy long-term government debt papers, leading to easing of interest rates on the long term papers.**
- Under the OMO, RBI will sell four securities maturing in 2020 and will purchase the 6.45 percent government bond maturing in 2029.
- RBI said that it reserves the right to decide the quantum of the OMOs and may accept or reject any or all bids either wholly or partially without assigning reasons.

#### Details:

- **Yields on government bonds dropped** after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced “Operation Twist”.
- Operation Twist turned the market sentiment dramatically. RBI’s action led to easing of rates of long term 10-year bond yield by 2%. The yield on 10-year government benchmark bond dropped 15 bps to close at 6.60% – **the biggest fall since October 2019, thus narrowing the gap with the repo rate.**

- The yield on 2020 paper jumped 5 bps.
- The intention behind the Operation Twist is to manage the yields. This will **address the issue of liquidity. Liquidity was abundant at the shorter end but not so much at the longer end.** But by making liquidity available at the long end, the move will **help in monetary transmission.**
- Falling long-term bond yields also **aid rate-sensitive sectors like auto and real estate**, which have reacted positively to the move of the RBI.

## D. GS4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 1. Net loss

##### Context:

Recent instances of internet blockades.

##### Background:

##### Provisions:

- The state's order imposing the Internet ban are made under **the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017** under the **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**, or **Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.**
- This law requires the executive, among other things, **to provide a reasoned order** when it directs the withdrawal of the Internet.

##### Kashmir:

- Following **the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution**, most residents in the Kashmir Valley region have not had access to the Internet. A total communication and information blockade was placed on the region.
- While certain limited channels of communication have been opened up, access to the web remains elusive. By many accounts, this might well be one of the longest bans imposed on the Internet by a democratic government.
- Given the devastating **consequences it has had on daily life in the region** petitions have been filed by Kashmir Times Editor Anuradha Bhasin and Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad in the Supreme Court of India with respect to the imposition of communication and other blockades.

##### CAA protests:

- The Internet was shut down in **Delhi and several States** as a response to growing protests **against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019.** Meghalaya, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh were entirely cut off, and parts of Assam, West Bengal, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh were deprived of Internet access.
- After protests against the CAA began, other States are also experiencing shutdowns.

### Concerns:

- Given the **growing ubiquity of the Internet**, the state's increasingly whimsical use across India of blockades on the web is a concern.
- In spite of the fact that **only a "minuscule minority" are likely to commit violence**, the chosen medium to address the situation has been a **wide-ranging ban on the Internet** on an entire populace indicating an **action disproportionate with the intentions**.
- A recent report underscores that **67% of the documented cases of web shutdowns around the world last year took place in India**. Since 2015, internet shutdowns have been rising.
- To permit a blanket closure of the Internet, given its impact not only on free speech, but also on other rights, including on **people's rights to livelihood and health**, would amount to a virtual effacement of **civil liberty**.

### Effects in Kashmir:

#### Issue of right to freedom of expression:

- The blackout of the Internet impinges on the **right to freedom of expression**.
- Given the fact that Today, publishing a newspaper without access to the Internet is almost an impossible task, journalists have been hamstrung by the absence of the Internet.

Hence denial of access to the web poses a direct threat on the **liberties of the press**.

#### Access to Government schemes:

- There are also other deleterious results that have emanated out of the measure. These include a **denial of the right to health care** caused by people's inability, among other things, to access government schemes such as Ayushman Bharat given the need for internet for online verification of beneficiaries.

#### Economic Damage:

- The shutdown has inflicted startling economic damage on the region. Even conservative estimations released by the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry show that the State economy has suffered a loss of no less than ₹15,000 crore since the dilution of Article 370 and the subsequent shutdown of communication channels.
- A report shows that, with jobs already hard to come by in the region, has seen a **staggering 80% drop in employment among start-ups in Kashmir that rely on the Internet**.
- The connectivity blockade applied on J&K is proving **lethal to entrepreneurship**, crippling a new generation running start-ups and promoting women's employment.

#### Issue of rights:

- An even greater principle at stake is the **promise of free speech preserved in Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution**.
- As the Supreme Court has held, this **guarantee contains both an inherent and an instrumental value**.
- The first because it is important to **respect every individual's equal right to personal autonomy and dignity**, and the last because of the consequences of promoting free speech, better dialogue stimulates a more informed polity.
- It was the instrumental value of speech that prompted the court, in **Sakal Papers (1961)**, to hold that no policy of the state can so much as regulate the circulation of a newspaper, as any such programme will directly impinge on the right to freedom of expression.

- Today, publishing a newspaper without access to the Internet is almost an impossible task. Hence, much like the restrictions that were struck down in Sakal Papers, **a blanket ban placed on the web will also transgress the guarantee of free speech.**

#### Effects in other states:

- There have been concerns that routine shut down of the Internet is **directed to block criticism of the government.**
- A disrupted Internet is dealing **a blow to digital financial transactions** across several States, **to e-governance initiatives, and economic productivity.**

#### Government's stand:

- In its defence of internet shutdown in Kashmir, the government makes two primary arguments. First, it claims, that there is no obligation on it to disclose the orders through which the restrictions have been imposed.
- Second, it contends that judges must **grant the state substantial leeway in matters of national security.** Once the executive believes on the basis of "some material" that freedom ought to be restricted, the court must not review the validity of such measures, even when those actions involve a wholesale blocking of the Internet.
- **The terrorists have used internet** not only to radicalize the youth of Kashmir but also to communicate and shore finances for their activities. The internet shutdown would limit the abilities of the terrorist groups to launch attacks on the forces in the backdrop of the abrogation of Article 370.
- While justifying certain restrictions imposed in the region, the administration has held that least restrictive measures have been levied keeping in mind the inconvenience it may cause to people.
- In the case of recent internet shutdowns in the backdrop of CAA protests, the government claims that these drastic measures are necessary given that **countering rumours and false news require counteractive actions.** This measure will also **avoid inciting speeches being circulated.**

#### Way forward:

- Though there are concerns regarding restrictions, it does not mean that there can be no restrictions ever placed on the web.
- **Disruption of connectivity should be resorted to only in the face of specific threats.**
- A disruption is an extreme measure, and should be countenanced only for a specific threat, and as an interim measure only as it is **official communications that fill the information vacuum.** A case in point is the spreading of rumours on child lifters on social media, which resulted in several lynchings.
- **The judiciary needs to determine whether the executive has provided a reasoned order when it directs an Internet ban.**

#### Kerala High court case:

- **The Kerala High Court's decision holding access to the net a fundamental right that could not be denied arbitrarily** has stated that internet blockades affects education and skill-building.
- The law demands that any measure taken by the state in restricting a fundamental right is necessary and **proportionate to the goal that it seeks to achieve.**
- The court pointed out that the apprehension of a gadget being misused is not a legitimate ground for denial of service, and **the government should act on specific complaints.**



## 2. A premature denouncement of the Citizenship Act

### F. Tidbits

*Nothing here for today!!!*

### G. Prelims Facts

#### 1. Import cover rises to 10 months: RBI

- With foreign exchange reserves rising to \$429.84 billion as at end of June 2019 from \$412.47 billion as at end March 2019, the import cover rose to 10 months compared with 9.6 months, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a report.
- According to the latest data, India's foreign reserves stood at \$554 billion as on December 2019.
- The Foreign reserves of India consists of the following four categories (in decreasing proportion):
  - Foreign Currency Assets
  - Gold
  - Reserve Tranche Position
  - Special Drawing Rights(SDRs)
- **Reserve Bank of India Act and the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999** set the legal provisions for governing the foreign exchange reserves. The reserves are **managed by the Reserve Bank of India for the Indian government.**
- Foreign exchange reserves of India act as a **cushion against rupee volatility** once global interest rates start rising. Foreign-exchange reserves act as the first line of defence for India in case of economic slowdown, but acquisition of reserves has its own costs.

### H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Which of the following statements are correct?

1. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is a Central Armed Police Force in India.
2. CISF is directly under the Union Ministry of Defence.

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

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

**Answer: a**

**Explanation:**

- CISF was set up under an Act of the Parliament of India on 10 March 1969. CISF was subsequently made an armed force of the Republic of India by another Act of THE Parliament passed on 15 June 1983.



- CISF is directly under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and not the Ministry of Defence.
- The CISF provides security cover to 300 industrial units, government infrastructure projects and facilities and establishments located all over India.
- Industrial sectors like atomic power plants, space installations, mines, oil fields and refineries, major ports, heavy engineering, steel plants, barrages, fertiliser units, airports and hydroelectric/thermal power plants owned and controlled by Central Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), and currency note presses producing Indian currency are protected by CISF.
- CISF also provides consultancy services to private industries as well as other organisations within the Indian government.

**Q2. Which of the following statements are correct?**

1. The INS Arihant and INS Varsha are the two nuclear-powered submarines currently in service with the Navy.
2. Sagarika is a nuclear-capable submarine-launched ballistic missile.

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

**Answer: b**

**Explanation:**

- The Arihant-class submarines are nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines built under the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project. They will be the first nuclear submarines designed and built by India.
- INS Arihant is the lead ship of India's Arihant class of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines. The vessel is classified as a Strategic Strike Nuclear Submarine by India. The submarines are powered by a pressurised water reactor with highly enriched uranium fuel. The Arihant class is armed with nuclear capable missiles and is critical to India's second strike capability.
- INS Arighat is the second Arihant-class submarine. It is the second nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine being built by India.
- INS Varsha is a new naval base being developed under Project Varsha for the Indian Navy. This base will be the home of the navy's new fleet of nuclear submarines and ships. It was planned to be located within a radius of approximately 200 kilometres (124.27 statute miles) from Visakhapatnam, the headquarters of the navy's Eastern Naval Command.
- The INS Arihant and Chakra – on lease from Russia – are the two nuclear-powered submarines currently in service with the Navy.
- Sagarika also known by the code names K-15 or B-05, is a nuclear-capable submarine-launched ballistic missile with a range of 750 kilometres (466 mi). It belongs to the K Missile family and forms a part of India's nuclear triad, and will provide retaliatory

nuclear strike capability.

**Q3. Which of the following statements are correct?**

1. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 provides legal immunity to juveniles under 18 years of age in all cases.
2. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 does not deal with adoption and associated issues.

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

**Answer: d**

**Explanation:**

- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 replaces the Indian juvenile delinquency law, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, and allows for juveniles in conflict with Law in the age group of 16–18, involved in Heinous Offences, to be tried as adults. The crime will be examined by the Juvenile Justice Board to ascertain if the crime was committed as a 'child' or an 'adult'.
- The Act also sought to create a universally accessible adoption law for India, overtaking the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act (1956) (applicable to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs) and the Guardians and Wards Act (1890) (applicable to Muslims), though not replacing them.
- A separate chapter on Adoption provides detailed provisions relating to adoption and punishments for non-compliance. Processes have been streamlined with timelines for both in-country and inter-country adoption including declaring a child legally free for adoption.
- To streamline adoption procedures for orphan, abandoned and surrendered children, the existing Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been given the status of a statutory body to enable it to perform its function more effectively.

**Q4. Which of the following constitute the Foreign Reserves of India?**

1. Foreign Currency Assets
2. Gold held with Bank of International settlements
3. Reserve Tranche Position with World Bank
4. Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) with International Monetary Fund

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

- a. 1, 3 and 4
- b. 1 and 4 only

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

**Answer: c**

**Explanation:**

- The Foreign reserves of India consists of below four categories (in decreasing proportion):
  - Foreign Currency Assets
  - Gold (The RBI holds around 618 tonnes of gold, of which around 325 tonnes are held abroad with the Bank of England and the Bank for International Settlements.)
  - Reserve Tranche Position with IMF
  - Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) with IMF

## I. Practice Questions for UPSC Mains Exam

1. In the backdrop of increasing instances of internet blockades in India, discuss the associated concerns and the governments reasoning for such blockades. Discuss suitable suggestions in this regard. (250 words, 15 marks)
2. What are the monetary policy tools used by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to manage liquidity or money supply in the Indian economy? (150 words, 10 marks).