06 July 2021: 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. SC aghast that Section 66A of IT Act is still used

Context:

The Supreme Court found it distressing that people were still booked and tried under **Section 66A of the Information Technology (IT) Act** even **six years after it struck down** the provision as **unconstitutional** and a **violation of free speech.**

Section 66A of IT Act:

- Section 66A gave authorities the power to arrest anyone accused of **posting content on social media that could be deemed 'offensive'.**
- It provided punishment for **sending offensive messages through communication services.**
- Under the section, a **conviction** could fetch a maximum of **three years in jail and a fine.**
- In **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015),** the Supreme Court in 2015 had **scrapped Section 66A** of the IT Act, 2000.
- 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.**

Way Forward:

- The **number of cases** registered under Section 66A had actually **increased post the judgment.**
  - A mechanism needs to be set in place to disseminate the Shreya Singhal judgment to **every police station and trial court in the country.**
- There is **no clear definition of** what constitutes **"hate speech" in the IPC.**
- Legally, **for criminal sections to be invoked against a speech** it has to lead to **violence or disturbance of law and order.**
- Given the increasing threat posed by hate speech, the need of the hour is to **define "hate speech".**

2. 'ONORC scheme in Delhi, Bengal soon'

Context:

'One Nation One Ration Card' (ONORC) scheme.

Details:

- Delhi and West Bengal are expected to roll out the **'One Nation One Ration Card' (ONORC) scheme by the end of July 2021.**
- **Chhattisgarh** has started the **process for procurement of ePOS [electronic Point of Sale].**
- The **low penetration of Aadhaar in Assam** due to concerns linked to the **National Population Register (NPR)** is hampering the implementation of ONORC there.

- ONORC plan **aims to empower all National Food Security Act migrant beneficiaries** to access foodgrains from any Fair Price Shop [FPS] of their choice anywhere in the country by using their same/existing ration card with biometric authentication.

Read more on the One Nation One Ration Card Scheme (ONORC).

Note:

These are the only four States **yet to come on board the ration card portability scheme** that the Centre has been pushing as the solution for migrant workers' difficulty to access subsidised food, especially during the pandemic.

Category: EDUCATION

1. Survey of Class 3 students to set baseline for literacy goals

Context:

The Ministry of Education has launched **National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN).**

Details:

- The vision of the NIPUN Bharat Mission is to **create an enabling environment to** ensure the universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy.
- It is to ensure that **every child achieves the desired learning competencies in reading, writing and numeracy** by the end of **Class 3, by 2026-27.**

This topic has been covered in PIB Summary & Analysis for 5th July 2021.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. Facial recognition used to verify jab beneficiaries: govt.

Context:

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has admitted to the use of **facial recognition technology (FRT)** for **online verification of beneficiaries at vaccination centres** in a recent RTI query.

Concerns:

- The ministry has failed to provide any **legislative or legal order authorising the use of such technology.**
- It said that **no privacy impact assessment of the use of FRT was conducted** prior to its deployment.
- The government was also unable to provide **any information related to the accuracy of the FRT used.**

Facial Recognition Technology:

- Facial recognition is a **biometric technology** that uses **distinctive features on the face to identify and distinguish an individual.**
- Facial recognition technology has been introduced primarily for two purposes:
    - As a **compare and contrast tool** meant for **identification** based on existing information or,
    - To **create a repository** on the basis of which the **process of identification can be enhanced.**

Read more on the concerns related to Facial Recognition Technology covered in December 31st, 2020 CNA.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Cities along rivers urged to include conservation plans

Context:

Policy document from the National Mission for Clean Ganga has set out norms for river conservation plans.

Guidelines:

- The policy spells out **provisions in the National Water Policy**.
- It says that the **cities situated on river banks** will have to **incorporate river conservation plans** when they prepare their Master Plans.
- It has been instructed that the **"river-sensitive" plans** must be **practical and consider questions of encroachment and land ownership.**
- A key aspect of conserving and protecting rivers and riverine resources involves **increasing green cover in the vicinity of the river** by creating green buffers, removing concrete structures and employing green infrastructure.
- The Master Plan **should not mandate specific technologies**, but it can **create an environment for facilitating the use of state-of-the-art technologies** for river management.

Technologies being used across the world successfully for river management:

- Satellite-based monitoring of water quality
- Artificial intelligence for riverine biodiversity mapping
- Big data and citizen science for river-health monitoring
- Unmanned aerial vehicles for floodplain mapping.

Note:

- The recommendations are currently for towns that are on the main stem of the Ganga.
- As per the policy document, there are **97 towns encompassing five States** — Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Policy black holes spook space investors

Context:

Concerns of potential foreign investors in India's space sector.

Issue:

- The **Department of Space is both the sectoral regulator and a service provider by way of its role in overseeing the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).**
- The potential foreign investors in India's space sector are unsure if their **licence applications would get fair consideration.**
- They are concerned about a possible **conflict of interest.**

Details:

- In a significant **departure from the 'virtual monopoly' of the state-controlled ISRO and allied entities in the space sector,** reforms were announced in 2020 to open the sector to private investors.
- **Foreign Direct Investment of up to 100%** has been allowed under the **government route in satellite establishment and operation**, subject to the sectoral guidelines of the Department of Space and ISRO.
- **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe),** the newly created regulatory body, has received at least 26 applications from Indian and foreign firms that include proposals to set up ground stations and make and launch satellites.

Read more on space sector reforms announced in 2020 and their significance on PIB dated Dec 14, 2020, under the heading 'PM interacts with industries'.

Way Forward:

- The Department of Space acts as the regulator, but since it is a major service provider through ISRO, there is **scope for a conflict of interest.**
- The **regulatory structure needs to be refined and there is a need for more clarity** in terms of the processes for authorisation to launch a satellite, the frequency allocation mechanism and even the details of different agencies involved in these clearances.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Crafting a unique partnership with Africa

Context:

- In the light of the **recent visit of the Indian External Affairs Minister to Kenya**, the article analyzes **the potential of India-Africa cooperation in agriculture** even as China has been exponentially deepening its relationship with African nations.

Background:

- The relations between India and Africa have long historical roots right from ancient times up until the anti-colonialism struggle. This historical solidarity has today grown into a modern partnership.
- **Africa is considered a foreign policy priority by India** for many reasons and its engagement with the African continent has been multifaceted.

For a detailed analysis of the India-Africa relations, refer to the following article:

UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 25th June 2021

India-Africa agricultural cooperation:

- Africa supplies a **vast basket of agricultural goods to India** dominated by items such as fruits, nuts, grains and pulses.
- India's outreach to African nations in terms of agricultural cooperation currently includes the following **institutional and individual capacity-building initiatives**.
    - India-Africa Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development in Malawi
    - Supply of machinery and provision of soft loans
- Indian farmers have **purchased over 6,00,000 hectares of land for commercial farming** in Africa.
- There is a substantial presence of **Indian entrepreneurs in the African agricultural ecosystem**.
- A unique example of cooperation and partnership in the agricultural sector is the case of the Kerala government trying to meet its requirement for raw cashew nuts from countries in Africa. There are also proposals to create a **jointly-owned brand of Africa-Kollam cashews.**

Significance of the cooperation:

- With **65% of the world's uncultivated arable land**, employing over 60% of the workforce, and accounting for almost 20% of Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP, **agriculture is critical to Africa's economy**.
- **African agriculture is plagued by obsolete methods and technologies**. India's cooperation and partnership through sharing of necessary resources and knowledge can go a long way in providing a much-needed boost to the critical agricultural sector in Africa.
- This cooperation is also crucial given the possible **business prospects** that they can give rise to and to provide credible alternatives to the increasing involvement of Chinese stakeholders in the sector.
- The putting to use of the unexplored potential of Africa in the agricultural sector will go a long way in ensuring **not only Africa's food security but also global food security.**

Chinese engagement in Africa:

Deepening of Chinese influence in Africa:

- Currently, **China is among Africa's largest trading partners and its single biggest creditor**.
- Chinese companies have been implementing critical infrastructure projects in Africa and its venture capital funds are investing in African fintech firms, while other smaller enterprises are expanding across the width and breadth of Africa.

Reasons for Chinese interest in Africa:

- The exponential growth in the China-Africa economic ties and its **attempts to emerge as an alternative to traditional western powers** is primarily driven by the following factors:
    - Ensuring access to **Africa's natural resources and its untapped markets.**
    - Chinese-built industrial parks and economic zones in Africa are emerging as new destinations for low-cost, labour-intensive manufacturing units that are relocating from China. Thus they seem to be **new avenues for Chinese production centres.**
    - Chinese operations in Africa are important to accumulate global experience in management, risk and capital investments. This would be a valuable experience as China's model, if successful here, could be heralded as a **replica for the larger global south.**
    - The Chinese engagement will help them dominate the market in the long run thus offering a unique opportunity to **build 'brand China'.**

Engagement in the agricultural sector:

- Though Chinese entities have been active in Africa's agricultural landscape for decades now, the nature, form and actors involved have undergone substantial change.
    - Chinese firms are **introducing advanced agri-tech** like drone technology in countries like Zambia.
    - Over 20 **Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers (ATDCs)** have been set up in Africa. These centres are involved in developing new crop varieties and increasing crop yields. These ATDCs partner with local universities, conduct workshops and classes for officials and provide training and lease equipment to smallholder farmers.
    - Chinese companies are **purchasing large-scale commercial farms.**
    - Chinese corporations are also entering the agri-infra sector.
    - African agriculture experts, officials and farmers are provided **opportunities to augment skills and be trained in China.**

Challenges in the relation:

- The highly insular Chinese diaspora in Africa, the **large trade imbalance mainly in favour of the Chinese, looming debt,** increasing competition with local businesses and a negative perception around China have had a negative impact on the relations between China and African nations.
- Larger commercial farms run by Mandarin-speaking managers and the presence of small-scale Chinese farmers in local markets have further aggravated these stresses.

Recommendations for India:

Prioritizing agricultural cooperation:

- The future of India-Africa cooperation is agriculture.
- Indian congruence with African countries in the agriculture sector is expanding. It is vital to **prioritize and channel resources into augmenting partnerships in agriculture**.

Countering Chinese moves in the region:

- While India's Africa strategy exists independently, it is important to be **cognizant of China's increasing footprint in the region** and India should desist from neglecting Chinese engagement in African agriculture.
- India should frame appropriate policies and implement them to counter the Chinese moves in the region.
    - State governments and civil society organisations need to be encouraged to **identify opportunities and invest directly in the agricultural sector of Africa**.
    - Indian industries need to be incentivized to tap into African agri-business value chains and measures need to be taken to **link Indian technology firms and startups with partners in Africa.**
    - A thorough impact assessment needs to be conducted of the existing capacity-building initiatives in agriculture being taken up by India in Africa. The **development partnership needs to be in line with African priorities.**

Category: POLITY

1. Will a national judiciary work?

Background:

- Many law commissions and the judiciary in many cases have called on the administration to consider and implement **All India Judicial Services (AIJS).**
    - The idea for an 'All India Judicial Service (AIJS)' was first proposed by the **14th Report of the Law Commission of India in 1958**, aimed at creating a centralised cadre of District Judges.
    - In the **All-India Judges case in 1992** the apex court had opined that the recommendations of the Law Commission on the setting up of AIJS should be examined and implemented. Similar opinions were expressed in the All India Judges Association Vs. Union of India (2002) case as well.
- **In 2019 there had been a consultative process for the creation of the All India Judicial Service (AIJS).**
    - While a few states and high courts supported the proposal, most rejected it or are yet to respond.
- In this context, the article analyzes the feasibility of the All India Judicial Service.

All India Judicial services:

- The AIJS envisages **recruiting officers for subordinate courts through a national entrance test.**
- Those who clear the pan-India test would be appointed by high courts and the State governments.

Constitutional perspective:

- **Article 233(1) of the Constitution** states that appointments, posting and promotion of, district judges in any State shall be made by the Governor of the State in consultation with the corresponding High Court.
- **Article 312 (1)** empowers Parliament to make laws for the creation of one or more All-India Services, including an AIJS, common to the Union and the States.
- **The 42nd Constitutional amendment** in 1976 shifted the domain of administration of justice constitution and organisation of all courts, except the Supreme Court and the High Courts into the concurrent list from the previous state list.

Arguments in favour of AIJS:

- The AIJS will help **remove any scope for judicial or executive intervention in the appointments to the lower judiciary** and result in increased transparency in the appointment process.
- It will help **streamline the appointment process** of the lower judiciary. This will allow the vacancies to be filled without any unnecessary delay.
- AIJS will give an opportunity for induction of suitably qualified fresh legal talent selected through a proper all-India merit selection system and will thus help **strengthen the overall justice delivery system in India.**

Concerns with respect to AIJS:

- The article expresses concerns over certain aspects of the proposed AIJS:

Against the principle of federalism:

- Under the envisaged AIJS, the fundamental power of the States to make rules and govern the appointment of district judges would rest with the union government.
- The AIJS would lead to a scenario where the Union government's powers would increase at the cost of the state governments.
- This will go **against the principle of federalism and the basic structure doctrine.**

Concerns for the subordinate judiciary:

- Another aspect of concern is that the operationalization of the AIJS could **severely curtail the promotional avenues of the subordinate judiciary.**
- Currently, fifty per cent of the posts of district judges are to be filled by promotion from the subordinate judicial service. This will decrease with direct recruitment under the proposed AIJS.

Concerns over language proficiency:

- Another fundamental concern would be **the language barrier.**
- Since cases in lower courts are argued in local languages, there are apprehensions as to how a person from a particular state can hold a hearing in another state that has a completely different language.

- Judges recruited through a centralized process may not know the local languages of the States in which they are posted. The lack of understanding of the local language and customs **could affect the quality of judgments.**

Fears over social implications:

- Most States have a reservation policy in force for marginalised and deprived sections of society in the lower judiciary. The reservation in these states is higher than that envisaged in the AIJS, thus there are fears that such sections may lose by the implementation of the AIJS.
  - Tamil Nadu provides for a roster-based reservation of 69%, of which 30% is for women.

For more related information refer to:

UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 4th Jan 2020

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. CoWin made open source: PM

What's in News?

CoWin Global Conclave.

- India has endeavoured to share the tech-enabled vaccination platform COWIN as a free public good with the world.
- The Prime Minister has said that the **CoWin platform is being made open source** and it will be available to all countries.

CoWIN:

- **COVID Vaccine Intelligence Network (CoWIN) system** is a digitalised platform to be used to effectively roll out and scale up the mechanism for COVID Vaccine Distribution System, nationally.
- It is a **digital platform launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)** to help agencies keep a track of Covid-19 vaccination and allow Indians to apply for the vaccine.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the following differences between Debt and Equity is/are correct?

1. In Debt the maturity is for a fixed period, whereas in Equity it is mostly undetermined.
2. In Debt the returns are calculated by Dividend/increase in the price, whereas in Equity it is by Coupon Rate.

Options:

a. 1 only
b. 2 only
c. Both
d. None

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Funds that a company owes to another party is known as Debt. Funds raised by the company by issuing shares is known as Equity.

- In Debt, the returns are calculated by the coupon rate or the interest rate (charged against the profit). Whereas the returns on Equity is the dividend (appropriation of profit)/increase in the price of the share.

- Funds raised through debt financing are to be repaid after the expiry of the specific term. Equity is the source of permanent capital.

- Term loan, Debentures, Bonds, etc are the examples of Debt.

- Equity is shares and stocks.

Q2. Consider the following statements about Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair:

1. He had served as a President of the Indian National Congress.
2. Sankaran Nair was an advocate who defended Bhagat Singh.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both
4. None

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair served as a President of the Indian National Congress in 1897.

- He was the advocate who fought against the Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer for the atrocities at the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

- He served as a judge of the Madras High Court.

Q3. Consider the following pairs:

Portal	Objective

1. **AMAR**   Online public access catalogue for more than 12000 Indian medical heritage books
2. **E-Medha**   Showcases inscriptions, archeo-botanical information and advanced archeo-genetic studies
3. **SHAI**   Digitized information on rare and hard to find manuscripts and catalogues of Ayurveda

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

a. 2 only
b. 1 and 3 only
c. 1, 2 and 3
d. None

Answer: d

Explanation:

Five portals of importance have been launched by the Union Minister of Ayush.

1. **AMAR (Ayush Manuscripts Advanced Repository) Portal:** It has digitized information on rare and hard to find manuscripts and catalogues of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa in libraries or in individual collections across India or in other parts of the world.
2. **E-Medha (electronic Medical Heritage Accession) Portal:** Online public access catalogue for more than 12000 Indian medical heritage books through NIC's e-granthalaya platform.
3. **SHAI (Showcase of Ayurveda Historical Imprints) Portal:** It showcases inscriptions, archaeo-botanical information, sculptures, philological sources and advanced archaeo-genetic studies.
4. **CCRAS-Research Management Information System (RMIS):** RMIS is a one-stop solution for Research and Development in Ayurveda-based studies. The portal offers free reference material, research tools, and guidance by scientists and clinicians. It was developed jointly by the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
5. **Ayurveda Dataset on Clinical Trial Registry of India (CTRI):** CTRI is a primary Register of Clinical Trials under the WHO's International Clinical Trials Registry Platform. The creation of an Ayurveda Dataset in CTRI facilitates the usage of Ayurveda terminologies to record clinical study based on Ayurveda interventions. This will enhance worldwide visibility for Ayurveda-based clinical trials.

Q4. With reference to Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. OPEC has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.
2. Venezuela is the only country from South America which is part of OPEC.

Options:

a. 1 only

b. 2 only
c. Both
d. None

Answer: b

Explanation:

- OPEC is an acronym for the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. It is a permanent, intergovernmental organization, created at the Baghdad Conference in September 1960 by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
- OPEC had its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, in the first five years of its existence. Due to Switzerland not extending diplomatic assurances, this was moved to Vienna, Austria, in 1965.
- Venezuela is the only country from South America which is part of OPEC.

Read more on Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Q5. Consider the following statements: (UPSC 2017)

1. Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) to Reduce Short Lived Climate Pollutants is a unique initiative of G20 group of countries.
2. The CCAC focuses on methane, black carbon and hydrofluorocarbons.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC) was launched by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and six countries — Bangladesh, Canada, Ghana, Mexico, Sweden, and the United States in 2012.
- Short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) are agents that have a relatively short lifetime in the atmosphere – a few days to a few decades – and a warming influence on climate.
- The CCAC focuses on methane, black carbon and hydrofluorocarbons.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. The continued usage of Section 66A of the Information Technology (IT) Act, even after it was struck down as unconstitutional, is distressing. Examine. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Polity and Governance]

2. Evaluate the feasibility of setting up the All-India Judicial Service. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Polity and Governance]