BYJU'S
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08 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. Indemnity issues hold up U.S. vaccine donation

https://byjus.com

Context:

Despite the announcement by the USA to donate 80 million doses of American-made COVID-19 vaccines to dozens of countries including India, the **vaccines are being held up** by **regulatory issues over indemnity (waiver of liability).**

Details:

- The U.S. had announced the distribution of 80 million doses as part of its **"COVID-19 Global Response and Recovery Framework".**
- The indemnity would be used as a **legal defence to protect the U.S. firms**, which have pointed out that they cannot take responsibility for cold-chain lapses and transportation problems within India.

Read more on this issue covered in June 5th, 2021 CNA.

2. Give details on information panel, says SC

Context:

The Supreme Court has directed the Central government to provide details on the **appointment of Information Commissioners, vacancies and pendency of cases in the Central Information Commission (CIC).**

Issue:

- **The pendency of cases** in the CIC is as high as 36,000.
- Activists have raised concerns that the **appointments** to CIC have been made in an **opaque manner** despite a **direction from the court in 2019 that the appointment process should be transparent.**

Central Information Commission:

- It is the apex adjudicatory body for disputes under the **Right to Information (RTI) Act.**
- The CIC was constituted with effect from 12th October 2005 under the RTI Act 2005.
- It **is not a constitutional body.**

Read more on Central Information Commission.

3. Judge recuses from Mamata's election case

Context:

Justice Chanda has **recused himself from hearing the petition** filed in the Calcutta High Court by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee **challenging the Assembly poll result in Nandigram** but **imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh on her.**

Recusal

- Recusal is the **act of abstaining from participation in an official action** such as a legal proceeding due to a conflict of interest of the presiding court official or administrative officer.

- It is the **withdrawal of a judge, prosecutor, or juror from a case on the grounds that they are unqualified to perform legal duties because of a possible conflict of interest or lack of impartiality.**

As noted by the Supreme Court in the NJAC judgment, a judge may be required to step down in one of two scenarios:

- **Cases of presumed bias**, where the judge has a pecuniary interest in the outcome of a case (extended, through the Pinochet judgment to other similar non-pecuniary interests); or
- **Cases of apparent bias**, where a reasonable, fair-minded observer would believe there is a real possibility that the judge is biased.

Read more on "Recusal" comprehensively covered in the Editorial "When can a judge opt out of a case?" in 16ᵗʰ February 2020 Comprehensive News Analysis.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: SECURITY

1. New platform maps Pegasus spread

Context:

Forensic Architecture of Amnesty International and Citizen Lab launched an **online database about the use of the spyware Pegasus** to document attacks against human rights defenders.

Spyware:

Spyware is software with **malicious behaviour** that aims to **gather information about a person or organization** and send it to another entity in a **way that harms the user.**

Details:

- Amnesty stated Pegasus had been used in some of the "**most insidious digital attacks**" on **human rights activists in the world.**
- In 2020, Amnesty and Citizen Lab revealed that the spyware was used on **nine human rights defenders who were accused in the Bhima Koregaon case.**

Pegasus spyware:

- Pegasus is a spyware tool from **Israeli firm NSO Group.**
- In 2020, WhatsApp's report stated that 1,400 of its users were **hacked by Pegasus.**
    - It was used to **spy on journalists and human rights activists** across the globe, including in India.
- Pegasus works by **sending an exploit link**, and if the target user clicks on the link, the malware or the code that allows the surveillance is installed on the user's phone.
    - A presumably newer version of the malware does not even require a target user to click a link.
- Once Pegasus is installed, the **attacker has complete access to the user's phone**. Every call, message, can be intercepted and monitored. It can also access any document stored on the phone.

- Pegasus can also **control the phone's camera and microphone** and has access to the device's location data.
- The Pegasus delivers "a chain of **zero-day exploits** to penetrate security features on the phone and installs Pegasus without the user's knowledge or permission".
  - "zero-day exploit" is a completely unknown feature (vulnerability). There is no fix for it as even the manufacturer is not aware of it.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Challenging negative social norms

Context:

- In the context of the upcoming **World Population Day on July 11**, the article analyzes the challenges for India in terms of demographic management and suggests certain measures in that direction.

Background:

- India is currently enjoying what is referred to as a **demographic dividend. Half of India's population is under 29 years of age.** This significant proportion of young people in the total population will help drive India's economic growth.
- However, for India to be able to enjoy the fruits of this demographic dividend the young population must not only be healthy, knowledgeable and skilled but must also be provided with the rights and choices to develop to their fullest potential, including, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR):

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights or SRHR is the **concept of human rights applied to sexuality and reproduction.**
- Apart from ensuring **good sexual and reproductive health via access to quality healthcare facilities**, the definition of SRHR would also encompass a broader range of issues such as violence, stigma and **respect for bodily autonomy**.
  - SRHR include issues like abortion, HIV and other STIs, maternal health and rights, contraceptive access, gender-based violence, discrimination and stigma, and more.
- SRHR is a **critical aspect of human well being** given that it greatly impacts the psychological, emotional and social well-being of individuals.

India's progress:

- **India's population growth has been stabilizing**. The overall fertility rate has been decreasing. The **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)**, presently at 2.2 children, will soon reach replacement level (2.1).

  - Notably, despite the decline in overall fertility, the population will continue to grow because of the effect of 'population momentum'.

- In the last two decades, India has made **substantial gains with SRH indicators.**

  - There has been a marked **improvement in the rate of institutional delivery.**

  - There has been a **decline in maternal mortality ratio (MMR)** from 327 in 1999-2001 to 113 per 100,000 live births in 2016-18.

- Data from the National Health Family Survey 5 for the year 2019-20 (NFHS-5) notes **improvement in contraceptive prevalence in most States**. This marks a significant shift in family planning methods considering the earlier emphasis on forced sterilization efforts.

Concerns:

Lack of universal access to SRHR:

- **Pervasive negative social norms, health system barriers and gender inequality have hindered universal access to SRHR.**

  - As per a 2021 report from the Guttmacher Institute, around two million adolescent girls (15-19 years) each year had a pregnancy, and of these, nearly 63% were unwanted or unintended. This points to **inadequate information and access to SRH services** for this age group.

  - According to NFHS-4, in girls aged 15-19 years, 22.2% had an **unmet need for contraception.**

Uneven progress:

- The TFR remains higher than the national average of 2.2 children among **women who live in rural areas** and a majority of them living **in the poorer States.**

  - This is indicative of the poor social status of rural women who have very little formal education and economic power given their poor income levels.

Social norms as an impediment:

- **Early marriage of girls** is a big challenge in India. 26.8% of women aged 20-24 years are married before they turn 18.

- Many girls and women face **gender-based violence and harmful practices** that are socially sanctioned and rooted in social norms, beliefs and practices that deny women their bodily autonomy.

Challenges posed by the pandemic:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to serious gaps and challenges in the provision of information and services on sexual and reproductive health (SRH).

Recommendations:

Universal access to SRHR:

- There is the need to ensure universal access to SRHR as envisioned under the **Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).**

Avoiding coercive methods:

- Prescriptive or coercive methods, such as one- or two-child norms, have rarely worked well anywhere for long as is evident from the experience of China in demographic management. Rather, the people should be empowered to take suitable measures.

For related information refer to:

UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 2nd June 2021

Placing the youth and women at the centre of policymaking:

- Youth, women and girls must be placed at the centre of policymaking and services given the positive ripple effect that it can generate. **Turning the focus on women and youth** could lead to better health outcomes.
    - Young people, and adolescent girls, in particular, must be provided access to education, relevant skills, information and services to make healthy choices, including those related to SRH.
    - Women must be empowered to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health.

Recognizing women rights:

- India's population stabilisation strategy must be formulated **keeping in mind the rights of women and girls.** Women must have a greater say in choosing their family size.
- Empowerment to make their own choices will lead to better health outcomes among women and girls as this will allow them to prevent unintended pregnancy or give birth with the help of a skilled birth attendant.
- **Changing social norms** would be the biggest challenge to address in this direction.
- Governmental programmes like **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP),** has played a significant role in challenging the existing regressive social norms and similar efforts should be taken going ahead.

Additional information:

- India has slipped to 140th rank among 156 countries in **the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Report.**

2. A long road for migrant workers

- The article analyzes the **guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court in the migrant labourers case.**
    - The court had laid down guidelines to provide relief to migrant workers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This topic has been previously discussed in the following article:

UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 30th June 2021

F. Prelims Facts

1. Delhi gets own genome sequencing lab

What's in News?

Chief Minister of Delhi inaugurated the **SARS CoV-2 genome sequencing facility** at Delhi.

- It will help in the **timely identification of COVID-19 variants** and aid **strategies to counter them.**

What is a genome?

- A genome is the **complete set of genetic information of an organism**. It contains all the **instructions for creating and maintaining life**.
- A human genome consists of **nuclear and mitochondrial DNA.**
- The genome of a virus comprises **RNA as the genetic material.**

Genome Sequencing:

- Genome sequencing is **figuring out the order of DNA nucleotides, or bases, in a genome.**
  - The order of **As, Cs, Ts, and Gs** that make up an organism's DNA.

2. HC: submit report on black fungus drug

What's in News?

The Delhi High Court has directed the Centre to submit a status report on the **availability of Liposomal Amphotericin B**, used for **treating patients of mucormycosis (black fungus).**

Mucormycosis:

- Mucormycosis or black fungus is primarily **affecting people recovering from COVID-19.**
- It is a complication caused by a **fungal infection.**
- Mucormycosis affects the **sinuses, brain, and lungs, and is life-threatening.**

Read more on Mucormycosis [Black Fungus].

3. Only traditional food items to be served at Assam govt. events

What's in News?

The State Cabinet headed by the Chief Minister has decided that **only traditional food items will be served at government programmes in Assam.**

- The decision has been taken in sync with **the Prime Minister's maxim of 'vocal for local'** for promoting indigenous food products.

Details:

Gamosa:

- Gamosa is a symbol of Assamese culture, an important **marker of cultural identity for the Assamese.**
- This small piece of cloth has **high esteem and wide usage in Assamese culture.**
- It is also known as **'Bihuwaan'**, as it is an essential part of the Bihu festival of Assam.
- It is generally a white rectangular piece of cloth with primarily a red border on three sides and red woven motifs on the fourth.
- Although cotton yarn is the most common material for making/weaving gamosas, there are special occasion ones made from **Pat silk.**
- Assam has traditionally had two types of gamosas – **the uka and the phulam.**
    - The uka or plain kind is used to wipe sweat or dry the body after a bath.
    - The phulam is decorated with floral motifs to be gifted as a memento or during festivals such as Bihu.

Note:

- Handloom (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985 **reserves certain articles for exclusive production by handloom.**
- These include the **gamosa, angavastram and the Manipuri phanek.**

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. With reference to Council of Ministers, which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

1. The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Parliament.
2. The nature of advice tendered by ministers to the President can be enquired by the courts.
3. President can remove a minister only on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of India.

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.

- The nature of advice tendered by ministers to the President cannot be enquired by any court. This provision emphasizes the intimate and confidential relationship between the President and the ministers.
- President can remove a minister only on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of India.

Read more on Chief Minister & Council of Ministers – Relation, Appointment, Powers

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Q2. Which of the following is/are correctly matched?

1. Gunboat Diplomacy – Use of Limited Naval Force as a threat to advance foreign policy.
2. Shuttle Diplomacy – Diplomatic negotiations conducted by an official intermediary who travels frequently between the nations involved.
3. Track-one Diplomacy – Formal methods of conflict resolution involving diplomats, ministers, heads of states and representatives of international organisations.

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

Types of diplomacy in international politics.

- **Gunboat Diplomacy** – Use of Limited Naval Force as a threat to advance foreign policy.
- **Shuttle Diplomacy** – Diplomatic negotiations conducted by an official intermediary who travels frequently between the nations involved.
- **Track-one Diplomacy** – Formal methods of conflict resolution involving diplomats, ministers, heads of states and representatives of international organisations.

Q3. Pegasus recently seen in news is a

a. Theft tactic that allows hackers to create a fake credit card by stealing the information off an individual's actual card
b. Malware that can initiate total surveillance on the targeted device
c. Virus capable of slowing down internet traffic
d. Ransomware attack which has hit hundreds of US companies

Answer: b

Explanation:

Pegasus is a spyware tool from Israeli firm NSO Group. It is a malware that can initiate total surveillance on the targeted device. Once Pegasus is installed, the attacker has complete access to the user's phone.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. This region is surrounded by the Gulf of Aqaba.
2. The Strait of Tiran connects two water bodies.
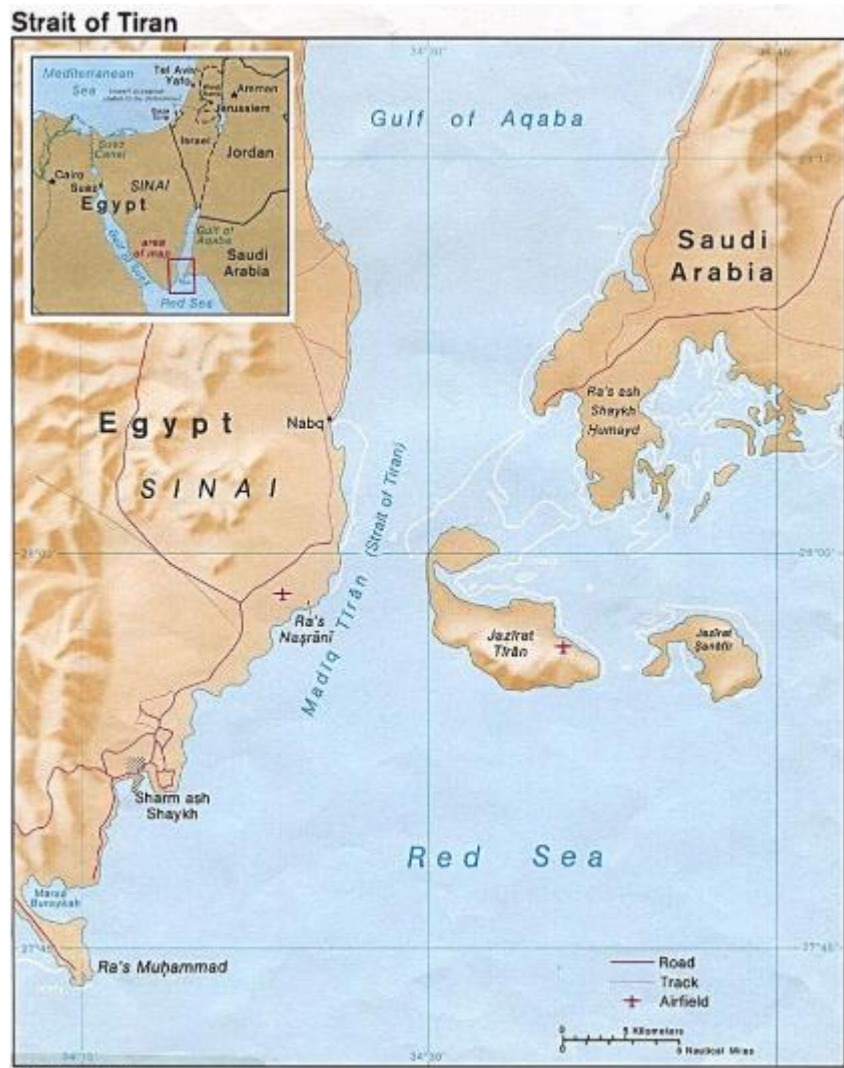3. Its coastlines touch the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.

The country in question is:

a. Jordan
b. Egypt
c. Syria
d. Israel

Answer: b

Explanation:

The coastline of Egypt touched both the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea that is connected by the Strait of Tiran. Egypt is bordered by the Gulf of Aqaba.

Strait of Tiran

Source-Wikipedia

Q5. Which of the following has/have occurred in India after its liberalization of economic policies in 1991? (UPSC 2017)

1. Share of agriculture in GDP increased enormously.
2. Share of India's exports in world trade increased.
3. FDI inflows increased.
4. India's foreign exchange reserves increased enormously.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Post the liberalization of economic policies in 1991, the share of agriculture in GDP did not increase.
- Some of the positive impacts of LPG reforms are:
    - Increase in share of India's exports in world trade.
    - Increase in the inflow of Foreign Direct Investment.
    - Increase in India's foreign exchange reserves.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. With the Taliban making rapid advances in Afghanistan, what does the future hold for the country and the region? Examine. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, International Relations]
2. India has entered a demographic sweet spot. So it is time for our population stabilization strategy to be adjusted keeping in mind the rights of women and girls. Discuss. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS-2, Governance]