

15 July 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Drop cases filed under Section 66A: Centre

Context:

- The Union Home Ministry advisory to States and Union Territories on **Section 66A** of the [Information Technology Act](#).

Background:

- The Supreme Court had recently expressed **concerns over the continued usage of Section 66A** despite it having been struck down 6 years ago by the Supreme Court in the Shreya Singhal case.

For more information on this development refer to the following article:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 14th July 2021](#)

Details:

- The Union Home Ministry has issued an advisory asking the authorities in the States and the Union Territories to direct all police stations **not to register cases under the repealed provision of Section 66A of the IT act**.
- It has also asked the States and the Union Territories to immediately **withdraw the cases** registered under the repealed Section.

2. SC to examine plea challenging sedition

Context:

- A Supreme Court bench led by CJI N.V. Ramana has agreed to examine a **petition challenging the validity of section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code**.

Background:

- The Supreme Court in its **1962 judgment in the Kedar Nath case had upheld the constitutional validity of Section 124A**.
- The court had reasoned that without Section 124A, the state would be in jeopardy if the government was subverted. It also placed certain restrictions on its usage by emphasizing that Section 124A would apply only to expressions that either intended to or had the tendency to cause violence.

For more information on this topic refer to:

[Sedition Law in India – What is Section 124A of IPC?](#)

Details:

Petitioner's claims:

- The major argument of the petitioner for a relook of Section 124A is the fact that the Kedar Nath Singh judgement being almost 60 years old fails to accommodate more recent doctrines such as **'chilling effect' on free speech** in its analysis on the impact of sedition provisions.
 - The doctrine of 'chilling effect' on speech considers the probability of a legal provision causing psychological barriers in the free exercise of the right to speech and expression.
- The petitioner also claims that Section 124A criminalized expressions based on **vague terms such as 'disaffection towards government' and 'contempt towards government'**. The lack of a clear definition makes it **liable for misuse by the administration**.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India, Russia to hold 2+2 Ministerial meet

Context:

- Russian envoy's statement on the [India-Russia bilateral relationship](#).

Background:

- Despite India's increasing strategic alignment, India's bilateral relation with Russia remains high on India's agenda as is evident from **the recent visit of the Indian External Affairs Minister to Moscow**.
- India and Russia enjoy a **special and privileged strategic partnership**.

Details:

- India and Russia intend to hold the first **2+2 Ministerial meeting** before the planned **leader's summit** between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin.
- There are also plans for both **trade and economic as well defence intergovernmental commissions** between the two nations.
- Apart from the bilateral engagements, India and Russia would also engage in **multilateral forums like BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the G20**.

2. 'LAC impasse is affecting bilateral ties'

Context:

- Meeting between India's External Affairs Minister and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the **meeting of the council of foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation** in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Background:

- Previously, India and China had agreed on a **five-point agreement for resolving the issues at the LAC**, when the two foreign ministers last met in Moscow in September 2020.

Details:

- India has expressed its displeasure over the **lack of progress in the disengagement process** apart from the initial withdrawal of troops around the Pangong lake area in February 2021.

- China continues to maintain a large troop presence in other **contested areas like Depsang, Gogra and Hotsprings areas in Ladakh.**
- India has also pointed out the impasse between Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) **impacting the bilateral ties negatively** and has made it clear that bilateral relations on other issues with China could not proceed successfully unless the present LAC situation is resolved.

Also read: [India – China relations](#)

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. WPI inflation remains 'high'

Context:

- **Wholesale price inflation has been recorded at 12.07% for June 2021.**
 - This follows another month of high wholesale price inflation of 12.94% in May 2021.

Responsible factors:

- The wholesale price inflation is being attributed to a low base effect along with the **rise in prices of petrol, diesel, naphtha and ATF**, as well as those of **basic metals and food products.**

Concerns:

- The high wholesale prices could **push up the production costs** and **render Indian products uncompetitive in the global markets.**
- The increase in raw material and fuel and power prices would result in a **squeeze on the working capital of the already struggling small businesses.**
- The wholesale price inflation will invariably have a **spillover effect on retail inflation** and this could **cramp any monetary policy intervention** to revive the economy in the post-pandemic scenario.
- The high inflation rates could **hamper the demand in the economy** which in turn will affect the economic revival in the predominantly domestic consumption-based Indian economy.

For related information refer to:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 14th July 2021](#)

Recommendations:

- The government could consider **bringing petroleum products into the ambit of GST to rationalise prices.**

2. Rs. 9,800 crore support for livestock development

Context:

- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** has approved to spend ₹9,800 crore on livestock development over the next five years.

Details:

- All schemes of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying will be merged into three broad categories – **Indigenous cows and dairy development, Livestock health and Infrastructure development.**

Significance:

- This move by the central government will help attract almost ₹55,000 crore of outside investment into the animal husbandry sector.
- This would involve spending by State governments and cooperatives, financial institutions and external funding agencies.
- The planned expenditure will help **boost growth in the animal husbandry sector which engages around 10 crore farmers.**

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Making welfare conditional is a stamp of coercion

Context

- On World Population Day, Uttar Pradesh chief minister unveiled the new population policy for 2021-2030
 - It is an annual event, observed on July 11 every year
 - The day is dedicated to focusing on the importance of population issues.

Details

- In the new population policy, a target has been set to bring the birth rate to 2.1 per thousand population by 2026 and to 1.9 by 2030.
- It promotes a two-child policy, violation of which would mean people will be debarred from contesting local body elections, applying for government jobs or receiving any government subsidy.
 - The Uttar Pradesh government will give promotions, increments, concessions in housing schemes and others perks to employees who adhere to population control norms, and have two or less children.
 - For those who are not government employees and still contribute towards keeping the population in check, will get benefits in like rebates in taxes on water, housing, home loans etc.

- As per the policy, efforts will be made to increase accessibility of contraceptive measures under the family planning programme and provide a proper system for safe abortions.
- Care of the elderly, and better management of education, health, and nutrition of adolescents between 11 to 19 years has also been ensured in the policy

Implementation

- The Uttar Pradesh government plans to set up a state population fund to implement the measures.
- The provision of this legislation shall apply to a married couple where the boy is not less than 21 years of age and the girl is not less than 18.

Concerns

- The policy is in conflict with the central Government submission in the Supreme Court where it said “international experience shows that any coercion to have a certain number of children is counter-productive and leads to demographic distortions”.
 - The Government further confirmed that India was committed to its obligations under international law, including the principles contained in the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, 1994.

Supreme Court's view

- In *Suchita Srivastava & Anr vs Chandigarh Administration* (2009), the Court found that a woman's freedom to make reproductive decisions is an integral facet of the right to personal liberty guaranteed by Article 21.
 - “It is important, to recognise that reproductive choices can be exercised to procreate as well as to abstain from procreating”.
- Multiple judgments have also pointed that a person's autonomy over their body as an extension of the right to privacy

Aborting the girl child

- In a hope to have a male child, families may abort the daughters to comply by the two child policy.
- It may lead to a proliferation in sterilisation camps, illegal abortion clinics, which may further harm the mothers.

Alternative Strategies

- The success of southern states in containing population growth indicates that economic growth as well as attention to education, health and empowerment of women work far better to Disincentivize larger families than punitive measures.
 - In areas with high poverty, low economic growth and fewer educated women, fertility levels tend to be higher.

Conclusion

- Any government interested in supporting fertility decline, thus, must work on the education and empowerment of women

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Five years later, Brexit continues to divide

Brexit:

BREXIT – An Overview

Good Friday Agreement

- It is also known as the Belfast Agreement and was signed on Good Friday, 10th April 1998.
- It provided a framework for political settlement in Northern Ireland
 - It was an agreement between the British and Irish governments, and most of the political parties in Northern Ireland, on how Northern Ireland should be governed.
- The aim was to establish a new, devolved government for Northern Ireland in which unionists and nationalists would share power.

Concerns

- Brexit threatens the fragile peace imposed by the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which formally ended the Troubles, or decades of bitter sectarian violence.

Scottish nationalism

- **Brexit has reinvigorated Scottish nationalism.**
- **In the 2016 Brexit referendum, Scotland voted 62-38 to stay in the European Union. Scottish demands for independence may resurface.**



NORTHERN IRELAND AT A GLANCE

Area 5,456 square miles (about the size of Connecticut)	Form of Government A legislature and an executive with powers devolved from the United Kingdom, a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy
Population 1.9 million	GDP €51 billion
Primary Language English	GDP Per Capita €24,400
Primary Religion Protestantism, Roman Catholicism	

Sources: European Commission; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

COUNCIL OF
FOREIGN
RELATIONS

F. Prelims Facts

<https://byjus.com>

1. Cabinet nod to continue Ayush Mission

National Ayush Mission:

- The **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of National AYUSH Mission (NAM) is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of AYUSH.
- The basic objective of NAM is to **promote AYUSH medical systems** through cost-effective AYUSH services, strengthening of educational systems, facilitate the enforcement of quality control of **Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani & Homoeopathy (ASU &H)** drugs and sustainable availability of ASU & H raw materials.
- The National AYUSH Mission (NAM) envisages better access to AYUSH services through an increase in the number of AYUSH Hospitals and Dispensaries, and ensuring the availability of AYUSH drugs and trained manpower.

Context:

- The Union Cabinet has approved the **continuation of the National Ayush Mission for another five years till 2026.**

G. Tidbits

1. India's neurological disease burden rising

- The **contribution of non-communicable neurological disorders and injury-related neurological disorders to the total disease burden has more than doubled** between 1990 and 2019, with Stroke alone causing 6,99,000 deaths in India in 2019 accounting for 7.4% of the total deaths in the country.
- The increasing neurological disorders' burden could be mainly attributed to the **ageing of the population** apart from **air pollution, dietary risks** and high body-mass index.

Context:

- First comprehensive estimates of disease burden due to neurological disorders and their trends published in The Lancet Global Health.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements about Wholesale Price Index (WPI):

1. It covers both the goods and the services.
2. It does not include taxes in order to remove the impact of fiscal policy.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both

d. None

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The Wholesale Price Index covers only goods.
- The Wholesale price Index calculated with 2011-12 base year does not include taxes in order to remove the impact of fiscal policy. This also brings the new WPI series closer to the Producer Price Index and is in consonance with the global practices.

Q2. Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Contribution of any amount directly or indirectly to any political party shall be considered as CSR activity.
2. Expenses incurred by companies for the fulfillment of any Act/Statute of regulations would count as CSR expenditure under the Companies Act.
3. India is the first country in the world to make CSR mandatory.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- On April 1, 2014, India became the first country to legally mandate corporate social responsibility. The new rules in Section 135 of India's Companies Act make it mandatory for companies of a certain turnover and profitability to spend two percent of their average net profit for the past three years on CSR.
- As per Section 135 of the Act and rules issued thereunder, CSR norms are applicable on companies that has –
 - net worth of Rs 500 Crore or more;
 - turnover of Rs 1000 Crore or more; or
 - net profit of Rs 5 Crore or more.
- Contribution of any amount directly or indirectly to any political party under section 182 of the Act shall not be considered as CSR activity.
- Also, expenses incurred by companies for the fulfillment of any Act/Statute of regulations would not count as CSR expenditure under the Companies Act.

Q3. Which of the following are Percussion Instruments?

1. Tabla
2. Mridangam
3. Ghatam
4. Kanjira

Options:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Tabla, Mridangam, Ghatam and Kanjira are all percussion instruments.
- The Kanjira is a South Indian frame drum. As a folk and bhajan instrument, it has been used in India for many centuries.

Q4. Consider the following statements:

1. Almost the whole of South Africa is a high plateau sloping towards the west.
2. The Orange and Vaal Rivers flow from the Drakensberg mountains eastward to the Indian Ocean.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Almost the whole of South Africa is a high plateau sloping towards the west.
- The Orange River flows westward into the Atlantic Ocean.
- The Vaal River is the largest tributary of the Orange River in South Africa.



Q5. What are the significances of a practical approach to sugarcane production known as 'Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative'?

1. Seed cost is very low in this compared to the conventional method of cultivation.
2. Drip irrigation can be practised very effectively in this.
3. There is no application of chemical/inorganic fertilizers at all in this.
4. The scope for intercropping is more in this compared to the conventional method of cultivation.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Conventional sugarcane cultivation is found to be seed, water, and space intensive. Issues like high input costs, disease infestation, low yields, varietal degeneration, drought and waterlogging are the major limiting factors for achieving optimum profits.
- Thus the conventional method of sugarcane cultivation has become unviable for small and marginal farmers.

Major principles of SSI:

- The farmers are also being encouraged under the programme to practice inter-cropping of soybean and groundnut with sugarcane cultivation. This would help ensure the effective utilization of land.
- Installing a drip irrigation system is a major component of the Sustainable Sugarcane Initiative (SSI).
- The SSI emphasizes the in-house preparation of seedlings. This would help cut the seed costing.
- SSI does not rule out the usage of chemical fertilizers but emphasizes optimal usage of such fertilizers.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. BREXIT continues to divide Europe, even five years after the referendum. Analyse. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-2, International Relations]
2. Examine the 'doctrine of chilling effect' on free speech in the Indian context. (15 marks, 250 words)[GS-2, Polity and Governance]