

21 Aug 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Elopements most prosecuted under child marriage law: study

Context:

- “**Child Marriage Prosecutions in India**” report brought out by Partners for Law in Development (PLD).

Details:

- The study notes with concern on how **legal proceedings against child marriages are commonly undertaken against elopements whereas forced child marriages often go unpunished.**
 - The study found that legal prosecution of child marriages was twice as much against elopement or self-arranged marriages by girls as against forced child marriages (such as those that involved kidnapping, enticement or forcible marriage by parents).

Lacunae:

- The report points to the **increasing misuse of the law by the parents** to seek custody of their daughter who had eloped or to prosecute the husband. The study terms this “**weaponisation of the law to settle family dishonour**”.
- Also there seems to be an **inherent bias in the law** with there being huge difference between the punishment for elopement versus forced and arranged child marriages.

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. Arrest is not always a must, says Supreme Court

Context:

- Supreme Court bench’s observation on the **issue of unwarranted arrests of accused during investigation process.**

Details:

- The Supreme Court criticizing the rampant misuse of the powers to arrest even in situations where it is not necessary has held that **merely because law allows arrest it does not mean the State can use the power indiscriminately.**
- The Supreme Court bench has called for a distinction between the existence of the power to arrest and the justification for exercise of it.

Concerns with unwarranted arrests:

- Unwarranted arrests can cause **great harm to the reputation and self-esteem of a person.**
- It goes **against the right to personal liberty** which is an important aspect of the Indian constitution under Article 21.

Legitimate grounds for arrest of an accused:

- Custodial investigation being necessary
- If the accused has committed a heinous crime
- There being a possibility of the accused influencing the witnesses or tampering evidence
- Possibility of the accused going absconding

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. MPC's Varma flags risks of policy stance

Background:

- The Reserve Bank of India's [Monetary Policy Committee \(MPC\)](#) in its latest meeting had decided to **keep the repo rate unchanged at 4%**.
- The majority of the members of the MPC also agreed to **retain the accommodative stance** as long as necessary to help the economy recover from the economic shock of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#).

For more detailed information on this topic refer to the following article:

[UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 07th Aug 2021](#)

Details:

- Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Jayanth Varma has expressed serious **reservations about the RBI's protracted "accommodative" policy stance** and has argued that the MPCs forward guidance and stance were in fact becoming "counter productive" for the Indian economy based on the following arguments.
 - The easy monetary policy has given rise to **persistent inflationary pressures** in the economy.
 - The MPC's accommodative stance despite the relatively high inflation levels would create the erroneous perception that the MPC is no longer concerned about inflation and is focused exclusively on growth. This could lead to the **risk of inflationary expectations being disanchored**.
 - There seems to be **limited ability of the monetary policy to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic**. The monetary policy is much less effective than fiscal policy for providing targeted relief to the worst affected segments of the economy.
 - Also given the high possibility of the COVID-19 pandemic persisting for another 3-5 years through the mutations, **keeping monetary policy highly accommodative for such a long horizon would be unviable and counter-productive**.
- The MPC member's line of argument has been that at a time when the economic recovery is still nascent, it is extremely **important that monetary policy serves as an anchor of macroeconomic stability**. That would reduce the inflation risk premium and stabilise long-term rates in the economy which is a necessity for sustainable economic recovery.

For more related information refer to the following article:

UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 09th Aug 2021

2. Palm oil plan enthruses farmers

Background:

- Approval of the **National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)** by the Cabinet.
 - The objective of the NMEO-OP mission is **to reduce import dependence on edible oils from 60% to 45% by 2024-25**, by **increasing domestic edible oil production** from 10.5 million tonnes to 18 million tonnes, a 70% growth target.
 - As part of the palm oil-related targets, the Mission hopes **to increase oil palm acreage by an additional 6.5 lakh hectares by 2025-26** and grow production of crude palm oil to 11.2 lakh tonnes by 2025-26 and up to 28 lakh tonnes by 2029-30.

For detailed information on the provisions of the NMEO-OP refer to the following article:

UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of 19th Aug 2021

Significance of the mission for the state of Kerala:

- Kerala already has plantations, factories, seed farms and research facilities related to the Palm Oil sector. The National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) will help bring **better growth prospects for the palm oil industry in Kerala**.
 - Notably, in a bid to encourage oil palm cultivation in north-eastern India and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Centre will bear an additional cost of 2% of the crude palm oil prices in these States under the NMEO-OP mission.
- The special assistance offered for the rejuvenation of old gardens under NMEO-OP will help **generate more employment in the sector**.
- Given the incentives being offered under the mission, cultivators of rubber in Kerala have evinced interest in making a switch to palm oil plantations. Potential sites for cultivation for palm oil have been identified in Wayanad and Palakkad districts of Kerala.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Faith and marriage

Issue:

- In the recent past, several states have enacted laws that criminalise inter-faith marriages.
- For instance, Uttar Pradesh enacted a law criminalising inter-faith marriages.

Read more on this issue covered in [November 27th, 2020 CNA](#)

Context:

- In its interim order protecting parties to inter-religious marriages from needless harassment, the Gujarat HC has made it clear that the rigours of the State's amendments will not apply to marriages that do not involve any fraud, force or allurement.
- Thereby it has stopped the initiation of criminal proceedings against those who have married across religious faiths, unless there was any of these illegal elements.
- The court said, "A plain reading of Section 3 would indicate that any conversion on account of marriage is also prohibited."
 - The wording of the amendment, makes conversion "by marriage" or "by getting a person married" or "by aiding a person to get married" an offence.
- A Bench has rejected the State government's attempt to adopt an innocent reading of the provisions of the Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021, by claiming that inter-faith marriages that did not involve fraud or coercion and leading to conversion would not attract the penal provisions.

Concerns:

- A regressive feature of recent anti-conversion laws enacted by different States is the criminalisation of inter-faith marriages by treating them as a means to convert one of the parties from one religion to another.
- While anti-conversion laws, euphemistically called in some States as laws on 'freedom of religion', have always sought to criminalise conversions obtained through fraud, force or allurement.
- The recent acts or amendments have created "conversion by marriage" as one of the illegal forms of conversion.
- Such laws mock the right to privacy and violates the right to life, liberty and dignity.
- It vilifies all inter-faith marriages and places unreasonable obstacles on consenting adults in exercising their personal choice of a partner.
- The consequence of such laws range from intimidation, bullying to arbitrary arrests.

Vague legislations must not be used to criminalise inter-faith marriages. Interference by the State in consenting adults' rights in exercising their personal choice to love and marry will have 'chilling effect' on their freedoms.

For in-depth understanding, watch [Love Jihad Laws Explained](#)

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The fall of Kabul, the future of regional geopolitics

This issue has been covered on [Aug 17th, 2021 CNA](#), [Aug 18th, 2021 CNA](#).

For in-depth understanding, watch [Explained: The Return of the Taliban](#).

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. The rumbling hills of Himachal Pradesh

The article throws light upon how hydropower projects, dams and construction activities are affecting the fragile Himalayan region making them susceptible to disasters.

Context:

In the recent past, several landslides have been reported in Himachal Pradesh, especially in the tribal districts of Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur which have seen incessant rains.

Issue:

- Deforestation, landslides, land degradation, desertification and Glacier Lake Outbursts Floods are some of the common but critical environmental issues in the Himalayan region and the environment is facing major challenges given the escalation of such issues due to changes in the atmosphere and anthropogenic activities.
- While the dams and hydro power projects have brought prosperity to the region, they have also brought suffering.
- During the construction of power projects and dams, the use of rock blasting and heavy machinery in construction sites, besides tree felling, have damaged the fragile hills.
- Besides, scientific disposal of construction debris is not followed.
 - The entire stretch of the Sutlej is filled with debris that is thrown into the river from construction sites of power projects, dams and roads.
- There are 932 hydropower projects in Himachal Pradesh, which include mini, small, large, and mega projects. Most of these projects are in Kinnaur, Chamba and Shimla districts.
 - While there is plenty of evidence on how these calamities are not natural but such evidence is not considered in policy decisions. Which is why governments continue pushing for more hydro power projects and four-lane highways.

This issue has been comprehensively covered in [Aug 13th, 2021 CNA](#).

Way Forward:

- Though a small Himalayan State, Himachal Pradesh, is playing a very crucial role in sustaining the livelihoods of downstream areas.
- The conservation, sustenance of these ecologically fragile regions is the biggest challenge being faced at the moment which can get further aggravated due to financial constraints and limited resources.
- Development has become a double-edged sword.
- While it is a fact that road connectivity is the key for the tourism sector to flourish, converting single roads into double lanes could not be the best way forward.
- Additionally, when roads are constructed, debris is thrown into the valley and falls into the rivers.
 - The government should focus on the maintenance of existing roads instead of opting for unregulated development.
 - Scientific disposal of debris is also very important.
- The government to review its policy on [hydro power projects](#).

- While the decision to set up power projects is taken in national interest, the concerns of people are to be understood and addressed. A balance has to be struck between national interest and the concerns of the local people. There is a need for a consensus with the locals before setting up a project.

F. Prelims Facts

1. RBI, IRDAI nod must for FDI in bank-led insurance

- A recent bill passed by Indian Parliament raises the **foreign direct investment (FDI) limit in the insurance sector from 49% to 74%**.
- Applications for foreign direct investment in an insurance company promoted by a private bank would be henceforth **cleared by the RBI and IRDAI** to ensure that the 74% limit of overseas investment is not breached.

G. Tidbits

1. Delta variant driving infections in India: report

- India is currently adding about 35,000 new cases a day, with about 75% coming from only two States: Kerala and Maharashtra.
- As per the **Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG)**, the Delta variant remains most responsible for the continuing spread of infections in India.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which of the given statement/s with respect to Green Hydrogen is/are INCORRECT?

1. Hydrogen is labelled Green Hydrogen when the carbon emission generated from the production process is captured and stored.
2. Pyrolysis is the process followed for its production.
3. This is the cleanest form of hydrogen generation since the by-products are just water and water vapour.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Green hydrogen – also referred to as “clean hydrogen” – is produced by using clean energy from surplus renewable energy sources, such as solar or wind power, to split water into two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom through a process called electrolysis.
- This is the cleanest form of hydrogen generation since the by-products are just water and water vapour.
- Green hydrogen is produced in a climate-neutral manner and it could play a vital role in global efforts to reduce emissions to net zero by 2050.
- Pyrolysis process is the thermal decomposition of materials at elevated temperatures in an inert atmosphere (absence of Oxygen)

Q2. Which of these UNESCO World Heritage Sites in are known for the Stone Chariots?

1. Mahabalipuram
2. Konark Sun Temple
3. Pattadakal
4. Hampi

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Mahabalipuram, Konark Sun Temple and Hampi are known for the stone chariots.
- Pattadakal, is a complex of 7th and 8th century CE Hindu and Jain temples in northern Karnataka. Pattadakal represents the high point of an eclectic art which, in the 7th and 8th centuries under the Chalukya dynasty, achieved a harmonious blend of architectural forms from northern and southern India.

Q3. Which of the following steps have been taken by the Government to promote indigenization in the defence sector?

1. Up to 51% FDI is allowed through the Automatic Route in the Defence Sector.
2. Up to 100% FDI is allowed by Government Route in the Defence Sector.
3. Setting up of Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework.
4. Notifying positive indigenisation list.

Options:

- a. 3 and 4 only

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

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Central government has increased the foreign direct investment (FDI) limit in the defence sector from 49 to 74 per cent under automatic route and beyond 74 per cent through the government route
- In order to promote indigenization in the defence sector, the government has also introduced the Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework and also come out with a positive indigenisation list for defence products.
 - The Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework aims at the creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging industries including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes & academia.
 - It provides them grants/funding and other support to carry out R&D which has good potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs.
 - iDEX will be funded and managed by the 'Defence Innovation Organization (DIO)'.

Q4. Which of the given statements with respect to Majuli Island is/are correct?

1. It is the nerve centre of neo-Vaishnavite spiritualism.
2. It is the only geo-heritage site in Assam.
3. It is one of the smallest inhabited islands in the Brahmaputra and a floating wildlife habitat.

Options:

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Majuli is a river island in the Brahmaputra River, Assam and in 2016 it became the first island to be made a district in India.
- It is among the world's largest. The island is also the hub of spiritualism in Assam because of a number of 'satras' or Vaishnav monasteries established by the 15th-16th century saint-reformer Srimanta Sankaradeva and his disciples.

- There are two geo heritage sites in Assam. Other than Majuli it includes the **Umananda island**. It is one of the smallest inhabited islands in the Brahmaputra. The island is actually an inselberg, composed of the rocks of the Assam-Meghalaya gneissic complex.

Q5. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, consider the following statements:

1. It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
2. It, among other things, will also impart training in soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial and digital literacy.
3. It aims to align the competencies of the unregulated workforce of the country to the National Skill Qualification Framework.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

ESSAY TOPICS

(Marks: 125 each; Word limit: 1000 –1200 words)

1. Changes call for innovation, and innovation leads to progress
2. Urbanisation and its hazards