

07 Dec 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India, Russia renew military pact

Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Prelims: Countries with which India conducts “2+2” ministerial meetings; Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement.

Mains: India- Russia relationship - major domains of cooperation and importance of this relationship in the rapidly changing dynamics of global geopolitics.

Context:

- **21st annual India-Russia summit** meeting between the Indian Prime Minister and Russian President.
- Russian and Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers took part in the first “2+2” **ministerial meeting between India and Russia** held ahead of the annual summit.

Also read: [India - Russia Relations](#)

Major highlights of the Annual Summit:

- The Indian Prime Minister noted how despite the several geopolitical changes having taken place in the world, the India-Russia friendship had remained unchanged and had stood the test of time.
- The two countries despite having built robust relationships with other countries (often at differences with the other) have continued to not only cooperate with each other but have also paid the necessary attention to each other's sensitivities.
- The Russian President referred to the common fight against organised crime, drug trafficking and terrorism.
- The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the sustained progress in the ‘**Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership**’ between both countries.
- The leaders underscored the need for **greater economic cooperation** and called for long term predictable and sustained economic cooperation.
- The two leaders emphasized the importance of **connectivity projects** like the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the proposed Chennai - Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor.
- The two leaders have called for **greater inter-regional cooperation** between various regions of Russia, in particular with the Russian Far East, with the States of India.
- Important Government-to-Government Agreements and MoUs, as well as those between commercial and other organizations of both countries, were signed in different sectors such as trade, energy, science & technology, intellectual property, outer space, geological exploration, cultural exchange, education, etc. Both sides concluded around **28 agreements** with most of them in the defence and energy domains.

- India and Russia have **renewed the military-technical cooperation agreement until 2031** and also signed the deal for the manufacture of AK-203 assault rifles in India.
- A bilateral logistics support deal, **Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS)**, as well as a Navy-to-Navy cooperation MoU were also on the agenda.
- The Joint Statement titled **India-Russia: Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity** was released.

Major highlights of the 2+2 meeting:

- During the 2+2 ministerial meeting, the Indian defence minister highlighted the **emerging security challenges confronting India** like “unprovoked aggression” on its northern borders from China along with the increasing militarisation and expansion of armament in the region. In this regard, the Indian Defence Minister called for **closer military-to-military technical collaboration with Russia**.
- The Indian Defence Minister sought **greater engagement between the two countries in Central Asia and the Indian Ocean Region**.
- The Russian counterpart stated that security agencies from both countries would collaborate with each other to increase “regional trust and global security”.
- The Indian Foreign Minister, noting the time tested nature of the India - Russia bilateral relationship, called for deepening of this relationship amid the turmoil in the geopolitical environment, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. The Indian Foreign Minister called for multipolarity in world affairs.
- The Russian Foreign Minister pointed out the **commonalities between Indian and Russian positions on international issues**.

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Facial recognition tech in Indian airports

Government Policies and Interventions and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Prelims: Digi Yatra initiative; Functioning of FRT

Mains: Concerns with biometric-based technology and suggestions to overcome these concerns

Context:

- Under the **Digi Yatra initiative**, Varanasi, Pune, Kolkata and Vijayawada airports are going to implement a facial recognition technology (FRT)-based boarding system for passengers.

Digi Yatra initiative:

- Digi Yatra initiative aims to make air travel paperless and hassle-free in the country, and proposes to simplify passenger-related processes at various checkpoints at the airport by using **FRT-based biometric scanning**.
- Under this system, a camera scans the passenger's face, and takes measurements of their facial features to build a biometric profile of them.
- Air travellers won't have to show their tickets, boarding passes, or physical identity cards at several points at the airport. This in turn would reduce queue waiting time and accelerate processing time.
- As part of the initiative, the Ministry of Civil Aviation would build an identity management platform - '**Common Digi Yatra ID**' platform that will enable biometric-based scanning across all airports in India.

Concerns surrounding the biometric technology:

- The adoption of FRT raises concerns related to the possibility of the technology's potential to **undermine the right to privacy**.
- Notably, India's recently adopted [Personal Data Protection Bill \(PDPB\), 2019](#), falls short of the standards set by the Justice Srikrishna Committee and also fails to build a legal structure on the landmark [Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India judgment](#) on the **right of digital privacy**.
- The growing body of research shows that biometric scanning technologies coupled with AI have an **inherent bias** and are found to discriminate based on classes like race and gender.

Safety measures proposed for passengers' data privacy:

- Data shared by the passenger is to be used for the purpose defined and would not be shared with any other external stakeholders.
- Passengers' biometric information will be deleted 24 hours after flight departure.
- The FRT deployed will comply with India's data privacy and protection practices.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Naga peace talks at an impasse

Role of External State and Non-state Actors in creating challenges to Internal Security.

Mains: Naga insurgency issue and Naga peace talks

Context:

- The killing of 13 civilians by the Armed forces in Nagaland has put the spotlight back on the Naga Peace talks.

Naga Peace talks:

- More than a hundred rounds of talks spanning over 24 years have taken place so far.
- The Government is engaged in discussions with the **Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM)** and seven **Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs)** to find a solution to the Naga political issue.
- Post the signing of the framework agreement, there has been a stalemate in the Naga Peace talks between the NSCN-IM and seven NNPGs with the Union of India.

Know more about the [Naga Insurgency Issue](#) in the linked article.

Why is there a stalemate?

- The NSCN-IM has been demanding '**Greater Nagaland**' or '**Nagalim**', an extension of Nagaland's borders by including Naga-dominated areas of neighbouring Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. But, the Union government has stated that there will be no disintegration of the States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur to merge Naga-inhabited areas with the existing State of Nagaland.
- While the NSCN (IM) has called for the **co-existence of the two entities (two sovereign powers)**, the government's position has been the provision for some degree of autonomy under the Indian constitutional framework without undermining the **sovereignty and integrity of India**.
- The stalemate in the talks is also being attributed to the NSCN (IM)'s **demands of a separate flag and constitution**.
- NSCN (IM) has blamed the former chief negotiator of trying to bring in a divide between the Naga groups by making NNPGs a party in the Naga peace deal. They have also criticized the tweaking of the wording of the framework agreement. In 2020, the NSCN(I-M) alleged that the original agreement was tweaked to mislead other Naga groups which resulted in a breakdown of talks.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY**1. End the impunity**

Challenges to internal security, Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

Prelims: *Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA Act).*

Mains: *Critical Evaluation of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA Act) - Arguments in favour and Against*

Context:

The recent killings of civilians by security forces in Nagaland is seen as an outcome of impunity accorded by the [Armed Forces \(Special Powers\) Act \(AFSPA\)](#).

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA Act)

- **What is AFSPA?**
- AFSPA is a unique law that grants armed forces special powers to regulate "disturbed regions" specified by the government.
- The Central Government, the Governor of the State, or the Administrator of the Union Territory can declare a disturbed area in whole or part of the State or Union Territory.
- The military forces have been given the authority to open fire, enter and search without a warrant, and arrest anybody who has committed a criminal offence, all while being immune from prosecution.
- AFSPA is now in effect in Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur (with the exception of seven Imphal assembly seats) and parts of Arunachal Pradesh.

Critical Evaluation of AFSPA: -

Arguments in Favour of AFSPA:

- The AFSPA is described as a law that takes a straightforward approach to control criminal activity in disturbed areas.
- Fascist techniques and all groups, private and public, that engage in violence and attempt to pressure the government by organised violence must be controlled.
- As a result, the AFSPA is vital.

Arguments Against AFSPA:

- **Symbol of Hatred:** The Jeevan Reddy Committee, which was founded in 2004, criticised AFSPA as a symbol of hatred, persecution, and a tool of oppression.
- **Immunity to Security Forces:**
 - AFSPA has been dubbed a "draconian Act" for the unrestricted authority it grants the military forces and the impunity that security officers have for their acts performed under the law.
 - Under AFSPA, the "armed forces" have the authority to shoot to kill or demolish a structure based solely on suspicion.
- **Human Rights Issue:**
 - The AFSPA's activities have been criticised because people have died as a result of them.
 - It's been a contentious issue, with human rights organisations condemning it as being too forceful.
- **Prolonged continuation:** Despite a nearly 25-year ceasefire accord, the Union Government has been chastised for renewing the "disturbed region" tag on Nagaland every year to keep the AFSPA alive.
- **Concerns of AFSPA in Manipur:**
 - Many protests over suspected extrajudicial executions by the security forces have taken place in Manipur throughout the years.
 - The bullet-riddled body of Thangjam Manorama, who was reportedly raped and killed by a group of Assam Rifles troops in 2004 sparked outrage across the state.
 - Irom Sharmila, often known as the Iron Lady of Manipur, is a towering figure who is well-known for her 16-year hunger strike in protest of AFSPA atrocities.

What the Supreme Court has said about AFSPA?

1997 Supreme Court judgment on AFSPA:

- In *Naga People's Movement for Human Rights vs Union of India* 1997, a Constitution Bench ruled that the ability to use deadly force under Section 4(a) of the AFSPA should only be used in "certain circumstances."
- A 1997 Supreme Court judgment advocated "caution and use of minimum force against our own people" in AFSPA regions.

Extra-Judicial Execution Victim Families Association (EEVFAM) v Union of India 2017:

- The Supreme Court addressed the extrajudicial executions in 2016, clarifying that the bar under Section 6 of the AFSPA does not offer officers "complete immunity" from any investigation into their alleged misconduct.
- The government received severe criticism from the Supreme Court in 2016 for the continuance of AFSPA.

Constitutionality of AFSPA

- The Act's constitutionality has been challenged on the grounds that it violates the [right to equality](#) and the federal framework of the Constitution because law and order is a state responsibility.
- The Supreme Court affirmed the validity of AFSPA in Naga People's Movement of Human Rights v Union of India in a majority ruling in 1998, finding that the Act does not provide arbitrary powers to label a region a "disturbed area."
- The Court concluded that, while the Constitution permitted the deployment of military troops to assist civil authorities, such deployment could only be temporary until normalcy was restored.
- It further said that the Central government should contact state governments before declaring an area a "disturbed area," and that the authorised official should use the least amount of force necessary for successful action.

Recommendations to repeal AFSPA

- Review Committee on the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (2004): The Committee headed by Justice B.P.Jeevan Reddy recommended that AFSPA be repealed. Additionally, it recommended that appropriate provisions be inserted in the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967 instead.
- 5th Report Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) on 'Public Order': Reiterating the recommendation of the Jeevan Reddy Commission, the report recommended that AFSPA be repealed. It also stated a need to add a new Chapter VIA to the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967.
- Justice Verma Committee: The issue of violation of human rights by actions of armed forces came under the consideration of the Committee on Amendments to Criminal Law set up in 2012 to review laws against sexual assault.

Conclusion:

- The recent Nagaland killings, according to Binalakshmi Nepram, activist and founder of Manipur Gun Survivors' Network, is a reminder of how the AFSPA was a stain on India's pride as the world's greatest democracy.

- The continuing use of AFSPA to maintain public order must come to a stop, and the long-overdue demand for its repeal must be granted.
- "Killing an 'enemy' is not the sole acceptable remedy, as the Geneva Conventions and norms of international humanitarian law remind us," the Supreme Court said in a 2016 judgment.

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. A docket full of unresolved constitutional cases

Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary

Prelims: Supreme Court of India; Constitutional Values

Mains: Role of Supreme Court; Delays in resolution of cases

Context:

This article takes a look at the Supreme Court of India's docket and reveals that there are a number of constitutional cases long-pending without any sign of resolution around the corner.

Introduction:

- It was recommended during the formulation of the Indian Constitution that every petition alleging a violation of basic rights by the state be determined by a court within one month. The suggestion was not incorporated into the Constitution's text.
- This said that there is a significant power imbalance between the person and the state.

Need of Resolution of Pending cases:

- Power and accountability are at the heart of issues such as the federal government's structure, elections, and many others.
- The longer it takes for courts to resolve such cases, the more we move away from accountability and toward impunity.
- All of these cases raise important issues of governmental authority, accountability, and impunity.
- The longer they are left hanging without a ruling, the more harm our constitutional democracy's dedication to the rule of law suffers.

Significant Cases Pending Before Supreme Court:

- **Case 1: Constitutional challenge to the Presidential Orders that effectively diluted [Article 370](#) of the Indian Constitution, and bifurcated the State of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories.**
 - The case highlights several fundamental issues about constitutional authority and responsibility.
 - It raises the question of whether the Centre can use Article 356 in a state to impose permanent and irrevocable changes to the state's structure.
 - The case addresses the question of whether the Union Legislature has the right under the Constitution to downgrade a State into a Union Territory.
- **Case 2: Constitutional challenge to the electoral bonds scheme.**
 - The [electoral bonds](#) concept allows corporations to make unlimited, anonymous contributions to political parties.
 - The influence of anonymous political donations is felt not just on the integrity of the electoral process, but also on individuals' fundamental right to vote.
- **Case 3: 2013 Gauhati High Court Judgement against CBI.**
 - According to the Gauhati High Court, the [Central Bureau of Investigation \(CBI\)](#) was not constituted under any statutory authority.
 - CBI continues to operate despite a constitutional court ruling even though the decision was appealed to the Supreme Court but it has never been heard.
- **Case 4: Challenges to the Section 43(D)(5) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.**
 - Section 43(D)(5) section practically prohibits the granting of [bail](#) and has resulted in the detention of some persons for years. It is still used on a daily basis as in the Bhima Koregaon case.

What is the Impact of the Delays in Resolution?

- The Court's inaction plays as significant a role on the ground as does its action.
- Delays help the state party that gains from the status quo in such big situations.
- This type of judicial avoidance is also harmful to the judiciary's capacity to hold itself accountable.
- The rule of law suffers greatly when there is no choice and no logic.
- It must be remembered that the Chief Justice of India is exclusively responsible for forming benches and scheduling cases, particularly those that are going to be heard by bigger Benches.

Conclusion:

The present CJI has spoken out about the significance of the rule of law and the judiciary's independence. Hearing the significant constitutional cases currently before the Court might be one method of displaying that in action.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Expanding India's engagement envelope with Russia

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Prelims: India-Russia Relations, 2+2 Dialogue

Mains: Aspects of India-Russia Relations; Areas of Convergence and Divergence.

Context:

The Russian President's visit to India highlights the constant efforts by both leaders to provide impetus to the 'India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership'.

Background:

- The robust alliance between India and Russia has broken free from the Cold War's restraints.
- India has evolved as an economic powerhouse and a vital player in today's global debates, whether it is about climate change, international commerce, or the threat of terrorism, in the post-Cold War era.

Significant Aspects of India-Russia Relationship:

- **Strategic Partnership**
 - The remarkable resilience of India-Russia ties is based on a solid foundation of strategic national interest and geopolitical synergy.
 - 2000: "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" unlocked new opportunities in strategy, science and technology, space, energy, etc.
 - 2010: A new chapter in India-Russia relations when the Strategic Partnership was elevated to the level of a "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership".
- **Significance of 2+2 dialogue:**
 - The '2+2' technique has become the conventional framework. The '2+2' discourse has the potential to breathe fresh life into this unique and privileged strategic collaboration.

- This method is unusual in that it assures result-oriented collaboration while simultaneously debating regional and global issues of mutual concern and interest.

Areas of Convergence

1. **Bilateral trade:** Bilateral trade has seen the two countries progressing from defence and energy to IT, pharmaceuticals, agro-industries, mineral and metallurgy, fertilizers, and infrastructure projects.
2. **India-Russia defence cooperation:** Russia is the key and principal supplier of arms and armaments to the Indian armed forces accounting for over 60% of weapons. India recently inducted the S-400 Triumf missile systems.
3. **Military-technical collaboration:** The BrahMos missile system was a successful collaboration of joint research, development, and production. Science and technology, nuclear energy, and space have been key driving forces.

Areas of Divergence

- The distance between India and Russia is expanding due to shifts in interests and capabilities fueled by geopolitical disagreements.
- In terms of geostrategic alignment, Russia is aligned with China, whereas India is more associated with the US. The Indian and Russian approaches to Afghanistan reflected this divergence.
- At a time when global politics is in upheaval, compatibility with geopolitical and geoeconomic realities, as well as leadership trust, is more vital than ever.

Ways to strengthen India-Russia Relations:

- In Southeast Asia and Central Asia, India and Russia must collaborate in a trilateral way or through other flexible structures.
- Their expanding cooperation can be a stabilising influence, resulting in the growth of multilateralism.
- Youth exchanges, as well as deeper linkages in many domains such as athletics, cultural, spiritual and religious studies, are also needed by the two nations.
- [Buddhism](#) may be a place where both countries can deepen their cooperation, and where peace and sustainability can serve as a cure in this turbulent world.

Conclusion:

- It is critical for trustworthy partners to maintain long-term awareness of their shared interests in the new syntax of multipolarity and globalisation.

- The India-Russia conference, taking place in the midst of tremendous regional and global developments, will undoubtedly add to the energy of this long-standing partnership.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Highly invasive snail spotted in Kerala

- Researchers have spotted **acute bladder snail** *Physella acuta* in the Edappally canal in **Kochi**. This is the first time this snail has been reported in Kerala.
 - *Physella acuta* is considered native to North America but is now found in all continents except Antarctica.
- This snail has been globally branded as a **highly invasive species**. Its **rapid growth rate**, air-breathing capability, and **tolerance to pollution** makes the *Physella acuta* a potential competitor to native fauna and hence it could play havoc with native ecosystems.
- This snail species plays **host to worms that can cause food-borne diseases** and skin itches in humans.

G. Tidbits

1. Will deepen ties with Bangladesh: Modi

- Speaking on the occasion of **Maitri Divas** that commemorates the day when India recognised Bangladesh as an independent country in 1971, the Indian Prime Minister recalling the 50 years of the relationship stated that **India would further “expand and deepen” ties with Bangladesh.**
- The Bangladesh Prime Minister noted with great gratitude the sacrifices of the members of the Indian armed forces and its people in Bangladesh’s liberation war.

2. Change has to come also from within to end evil of dowry: SC

- Noting that criminal law provisions introduced in the [Indian Penal Code](#), the **Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961** and the formation of the **National Commission for Women** have all proved to be

ineffective in addressing the dowry issue in India, the Supreme Court has requested the Law Commission of India to consider bringing “more teeth” to the law against dowry.

- Lamenting the **ineffectiveness of laws in addressing the issue of dowry**, the Supreme Court noted that just laws won’t be sufficient and there is the need for people to also change from within and learn to treat a woman with respect to end the social evil of dowry.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Which amongst the following correctly describes an ‘invasive species’?

- a. It is an introduced organism that becomes overpopulated and negatively alters its new environment.
- b. It is an organism that helps define an entire ecosystem.
- c. These are species selected for making conservation-related decisions, typically because protecting these species indirectly protects many other species.
- d. None of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

- An invasive species is an organism that has been brought into a new ecosystem and has grown overpopulated, adversely altering its surroundings.
- Invasive species have a negative impact on the habitats and bioregions they invade, inflicting ecological, environmental, and/or economic harm.
- **Hence Option A is correct.**

Q2. Consider the following statements with regards to OBC reservation in Maharashtra:

1. The Maharashtra government set up a 27 percent quota in local bodies for OBCs in 1994.
2. The 27 percent reservation was applicable to all urban (Municipal Corporations, Councils and Nagar Panchayat) and rural bodies (Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat) across the state.
3. 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts make it compulsory to provide OBC reservation in local bodies of the state.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2 & 3 only
- c. 1 & 3 only

- d. All of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

- In 1994, the Maharashtra government established a 27% quota for OBCs in local bodies. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- All urban (Municipal Corporations, Councils, and Nagar Panchayat) and rural (Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti, and Gram Panchayat) entities in the state were eligible for the 27% reservation. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**
- The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment acts **do not** make it compulsory to provide OBC reservation in local bodies of the state. **Hence Statement 3 is incorrect.**

Q3. Consider the following statements with regards to the AFSPA law:

1. It was first introduced by Viceroy Linlithgow in the form of an Ordinance in the wake of the Quit India Movement of 1942.
2. Post Independence, AFSPA was first enacted to deal with the Naga insurgency in the Assam region.
3. Section 4 gives the Army powers to search premises and make arrests without warrants, to use force even to the extent of causing death, destroy arms/ammunition dumps, fortifications/shelters/hideouts and to stop, search and seize any vehicle.

Which of these statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2 & 3 only
- c. 1 & 3 only
- d. All of the above

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Lord Linlithgow, India's viceroy, issued the Armed Forces Special Powers (Ordinance) on August 15, 1942, in response to Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India Movement. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- After independence, Jawaharlal Nehru's government passed the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (1958) in the Indian parliament in the wake of the Naga insurgency in Assam. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**

- Section 4 in the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 stands for Special Powers of the armed forces. It empowers the Army to search and arrest anyone without a warrant, to use lethal force, to demolish weapons and ammunition depots, fortifications, shelters, and hideouts, and to stop, search, and seize any vehicle. **Hence Statement 3 is correct.**

Q4. India observes 'Maitri Divas' with reference to which of the following nations?

- a. Bhutan
- b. Bangladesh
- c. Sri Lanka
- d. Nepal

Answer: b

Explanation:

- To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, India and Bangladesh are celebrating 'Maitri Diwas.'
- Bangladesh was formally recognised as a new country by India on December 6 1971.
- Every year, the two countries observe this day as 'Maitri Diwas,' or 'Friendship Day.'
- Hence **Option B is correct.**

Q.5. With reference to the management of minor minerals in India, consider the following statements:

1. Sand is a 'minor mineral' according to the prevailing law in the country.
2. State Governments have the power to grant mining leases of minor minerals, but the powers regarding the formation of rules related to the grant of minor minerals lie with the Central Government.
3. State Governments have the power to frame rules to prevent illegal mining of minor minerals.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **Statement 1: Correct.** Sand is a minor mineral, as defined under section 3(e) of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act).
- **Statement 2: Incorrect** Section 15 of the MMDR Act empowers state governments to make rules for regulating the grant of mineral concessions in respect of minor minerals and for purposes connected therewith. The regulation of grant of mineral concessions for minor minerals is, therefore, within the legislative and administrative domain of the state governments.
- **Statement 3: Correct.** As per Section 15 of the MMDR Act, 1957, State Governments have been empowered to frame rules in respect of minor minerals for regulating the grant of quarry leases, mining leases or other mineral concessions in respect of minor minerals and for purposes connected therewith. Both as a consequence of this, and the fact that the States have been granted powers to frame rules regarding illegal mining in terms of Section 23C of MDMR Act, 1957, this is a subject which is entirely under the legislative and administrative jurisdiction of the States.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. India-Russia relations have withstood the test of time and the ever-shifting nature of national interests. In the light of this statement, examine India's expanding engagement with Russia. (250 words; 15 marks) [GS II (IR)]
2. What is the Digi Yatra scheme under which Facial Recognition Technology is being implemented? What are the concerns surrounding biometric technology? (250 words; 15 marks) [GS II (Polity) & GS III (S&T and Security)]