

27th June 2022 Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. [Indian laws on abortions](#)

Syllabus: Mechanisms and laws constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections

Prelims: Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act.

Mains: Critical evaluation of laws on abortions in India.

Context:

As the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade judgement of 1973, the laws governing abortion in India have come under the spotlight.

What is Roe v. Wade judgement, 1973?

- The Supreme Court's landmark judgment in Roe vs Wade case made abortion a constitutional right in the US
- It had extended the women in America the right to have an abortion before the foetus is viable outside the womb or before the 24-28 week mark.

To learn more about Roe v. Wade judgement and the impact of overturning the judgement refer

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis dated 06 May 2022](#)

Background of abortion laws in India

- Abortion was considered illegal in India except in cases where abortion was carried out to save the life of the woman under the **Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 312**.
 - Further, **Section 313 of the IPC** provided for the punishment for a person who causes a miscarriage without the consent of the pregnant woman, whether or not she is in the advanced stages of her pregnancy.
- In the 1960s, a high number of induced abortions were reported in the country and the union government then constituted a **Shantilal Shah Committee** in 1964 to look into the issue of abortions and find out if there was a need to formulate a law on abortions.
 - The Committee conducted a detailed study on the medical, legal, and socio-cultural aspects of abortion in the country
 - The Committee recommended the legalisation of abortion and comprehensive law on abortions to address the issues of unsafe abortions and maternal mortality rates.
- Based on the recommendations, the government formulated the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act in 1971**.

Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971

- The act provided an exception to the provisions of the IPC Sections 312 and 313 and prescribed rules on how and when a medical abortion can be carried out.
- The Act allowed only for the medical termination of pregnancies.
- The MTP Act provided a legal framework for making Comprehensive Abortion Care (CAC) services available in India.
- Abortions were permitted;
 - If the prolongation of the pregnancy has a **significant risk to a woman's health**.
 - If there is an apprehension that an **infant born** out of the pregnancy would be **vulnerable to adverse well-being** and will be impaired.
 - where a pregnancy has occurred due to **rape** or **failure of contraceptives**.
- Termination of pregnancy was allowed for up to **20 weeks of gestation** with a broad range of conditions where in:
 - The opinion of **one registered doctor** was required to access MTP for up to **12 weeks of pregnancy**

- The opinions of **two doctors** were required to access MTP for up to **20 weeks**.

Evolution of the MTP Act

- **New rules were introduced in 2003** which allowed the use of newly discovered abortion medicine pills, mifepristone and misoprostol to medically terminate a pregnancy up to seven weeks into it.
- Broader amendments to the original Act were introduced through the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act** that came into force in September 2021.

Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021

- This amendment act **increased the upper limit** of the gestation period to which a woman can seek a medical abortion to **24 weeks** from 20 weeks permitted in the original Act of 1971. However, this increased upper limit can be exercised in specific cases only wherein:
 - A woman is either a survivor of sexual assault or rape or incest
 - A woman is a minor
 - If the woman's marital status has changed during the ongoing pregnancy (either widowed or divorcee)
 - If a woman has major physical disabilities or is mentally ill
 - On the grounds of foetal malformation incompatible with life or if the child is born, it would be seriously handicapped
 - If the woman is in a humanitarian setting or disaster or emergency situation as declared by the government.
- Further, the opinion of **only one doctor** will be required **up to 20 weeks** of pregnancy and **two doctors** for the termination of pregnancy of **20 to 24 weeks**.
- Pregnancy can be terminated **beyond the 24-week** gestational age, only on the grounds of **foetal abnormalities** and if a **four-member Medical Board** set up in each State under the Act, provides permission to do so.

To read more about [Medical Termination of Pregnancy \(Amendment\) Act, 2021](#)

Judicial interventions in cases of abortions

- It is noted that several women approach the Supreme Court and High Courts when medical boards disapprove their application to access MTP beyond the gestational upper limit (now 24 weeks), seeking permission to abort a pregnancy, mostly in cases of sexual assault or if there is a foetal abnormality.
- A report by an advocate for the Pratiya Campaign pointed out that in the 15 months leading up to August 2020, High Courts across the country were hearing over 243 petitions of women seeking permission for abortions.
- In the landmark **Puttaswamy judgement**, the Supreme Court said that the decision by a pregnant person on whether "to continue a pregnancy or not" is part of such a person's **right to privacy** and hence it is also a part of **right to life and personal liberty** guaranteed under the **Article 21** of the Constitution.
- In the **Suchita Srivastava v Chandigarh Administration** case a woman was **impregnated because of rape** and the high court ordered that her pregnancy be terminated but she wanted the child.
 - The SC allowed her to exercise her choice and held that "a woman's right to privacy, dignity and bodily integrity should be respected".

- In 2015, the Gujarat high court rejected a petition seeking to terminate the pregnancy of a 14-year-old rape victim who was in the 24th week of her pregnancy as the original MTP Act of 1971 permitted abortion only until 20 weeks.
 - However, the Supreme Court squashed the HC order and allowed the individual to opt for an MTP when she was nearly 26 weeks pregnant.
- In February 2022, the Uttarakhand High Court ordered a rape survivor to terminate a 28-week foetus.
- Further, the Calcutta High Court in February 2022, allowed a 37-year-old woman, who was 34 weeks into her pregnancy, to avail an MTP as the foetus was diagnosed with an incurable spinal condition.
 - This judgment allowed abortion for the furthest gestational in India so far.

Criticisms against the abortion law

- **Shortage of doctors**
- The MTP Act mandates that abortion has to be performed only by doctors with specialisation in gynaecology or obstetrics.
 - A study by Lancet in 2018 found that over 1.56 crore abortions occurred annually in India as of 2015.
 - However, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's 2019-20 report on Rural Health Statistics shows a 70% shortage of obstetricians or gynaecologists in rural India.
- **Challenges of unsafe abortions**
 - Critics feel that since the law does not permit abortion at will, it forces women to access illegal abortions under unsafe and unhygienic conditions.
 - Reports show that about eight lakh unsafe and illicit abortions are performed in India annually and many of them have resulted in maternal mortality.

To read more about the concerns regarding the MTP Act refer:

[UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis dated 08 April 2021](#)

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Making sense of New Delhi's Taliban rapprochement

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

Mains: *India's re-orientation of ties with the Taliban and arguments for and against this move*

Background:

- India has recently sent a **senior diplomatic delegation to the Taliban-occupied Kabul**.
- This is being viewed by the international observers with surprise given the stand that India had taken after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. India had cut out all diplomatic ties and in fact India was the first country to immediately ban all Afghans travelling to India after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.
- Hence the move to send a senior diplomatic delegation is being seen as India's **apparent reorientation with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan**.
- This development can be seen as a culmination of India's quiet diplomacy and signalling in the last few months. Notably, India has abstained from directly criticizing the Taliban regime and has also abstained from crucial UN votes against the Taliban regime and has continued to remain silent about a worsening situation in Afghanistan.

Possible factors behind India's reorientation with the Taliban regime:

- India's apparent reorientation can be described and understood as an example of
- Realpolitik is a system of politics or principles based on practical rather than moral or ideological considerations.
- India is putting its national interest before its international obligations and values. Having a diplomatic foothold in the Taliban occupied Afghanistan will allow India to secure its interests not only in Afghanistan but also in the larger Central Asian region as well. Also it will allow India to curtail Pakistan's leverage with the Taliban regime and its strategic depth in Pakistan to some extent.
- India's ties with the Taliban may allow India to attain its **key strategic interests in Afghanistan in the domain of security and trade and commerce** as well.

Arguments against India's rapprochement with Taliban:

Overlooking of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan:

- The Taliban have excluded all non-Taliban Pashtuns from public space and there are also systematic violations of the human rights of the non-Pashtun communities which amount to crime against humanity, and **ethnic cleansing** which borders on genocide.
- India's rapprochement with the Taliban regime comes across as India neglecting the plight of these sections of the Afghan society and this would undermine the hard earned goodwill that India has historically enjoyed among the Afghan population for its developmental and assistance work in the region.
- India is seen as an ideational and trustworthy partner nation by the Afghan population. India's recent move could prove to be counter-productive as this could lead to the loss of trust and goodwill of Afghans toward India.

Affect India's global standing:

- This move also comes across as India being a **bandwagoning, transactional and opportunistic nation** and does not augur well for India's aspiration to become a global power. This will thus affect India's global standing to a great extent.

Doubts over the benefits of this move:

- Though India's move is being viewed as an attempt to create an India-friendly faction within the Taliban, given the way Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment has dealt with dissidents in

Taliban, the move to reorient ties with the Taliban comes across as just wishful thinking on the part of India.

- Hence there are serious doubts over whether a potential India-Taliban rapprochement advance India's interests in Afghanistan.

Antithetical to "India First" policy:

- Afghanistan remains a major security-centric concern for India, in particular, the nexus of extremism and terrorism, illicit drugs and proxy warfare. **India happens to be the primary target for the extremist and terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan.**

Nut Graf:

The move to send a senior diplomatic delegation to the Taliban-occupied Kabul by the Union government is indicative of India's intentions to re-orient its ties with the Taliban regime in a bid to sustain India's interests in Afghanistan and the Central Asian region. However there are serious doubts over the efficacy of this move.

2. How Hanoi and New Delhi are fortifying defence ties

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

Mains: India's defence partnership with Vietnam and its significance

Context:

- The **Indian Defence Minister's visit to Vietnam** saw the signing of a number of important agreements between the two countries.
- The **Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030** was signed during the visit.
- The Joint Vision Statement is aimed at boosting the scope and scale of the existing defence cooperation between the two nations pertaining to both regional and global issues.
- The two countries also signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Mutual Logistics Support**.
- This is the first such agreement signed by Vietnam with any other country.

Background:

- Vietnam shares a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** with India.
- Defence partnership between India and Vietnam has been growing steadily over the years.
- The **Defence Protocol** was signed in 2000 and currently India-Vietnam defence relationship includes extensive **navy-to-navy cooperation** spanning the exchange of intelligence, production and logistical support for Vietnam's defence requirements, development of **naval facilities such as Nha Trang** as well as the supply of warships and cruise missiles to Vietnam by India.

Significance of the India-Vietnam defence relationship:

Maritime domain:

- For India and Vietnam, the maritime domain in particular has occupied a central focus due to the following reasons.

- A substantial volume of **maritime trade** passes through sea lanes of communication in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The region also holds promise of **large energy reserves**.

China factor:

- The enhanced geostrategic prominence of China and its increasingly assertive behaviour in the region has resulted in an increase in emphasis on cooperative mechanisms and frameworks across the region.
- India and Vietnam have been developing strong bonds in this context. Vietnam has been critical of China's periodic transgressions in the **South China Sea**. India has supported Vietnam's position in the South China Sea. India has also not backed down from continuing ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL)'s oil exploration project in Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone despite China's protests.

Convergence of views:

- Both Vietnam and India find convergence in their approaches in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **India's Act East Policy, Indo-Pacific policy** and maritime multilateralism and security outreach across the Indo-Pacific make Vietnam a natural partner for India.
- Both countries support the **freedom of navigation and uphold sovereign maritime territorial rights** as enshrined under international maritime law.

Recommendation:

- The early finalisation of the \$500 million **Defence Line of Credit** extended by India to Vietnam and the implementation of existing defence and security projects/agreements between the two nations should be a top priority for both sides. This will help India cement its place as a net security provider in the region and also complement its 'Make in India, Make for the world' vision on the one hand while on the other hand it will help strengthen Vietnam's defence capabilities.

Nut Graf:

The deepening of India-Vietnam ties is significant for both the countries as it will help Vietnam strengthen its defence capabilities and also help India position itself as a net security provider in the region and also strengthen its presence in the vital Indo-Pacific region amidst the increasing assertiveness of the Chinese.

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Odisha to install siren to caution elephant movement in forest

- The Forest Department of Odisha is exploring a siren system, which detects elephant herds approaching National Highway by its infrared sensor system and go off automatically after sensing elephants crossing thereby alerting the traffic.
- This move is expected to reduce human-elephant encounters.
- As the cropping season has started, wild elephants are expected to come out of forests and the Dhenkanal forest division has identified five crossing points for elephants

- Further, the Khadi Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is undertaking an **apiculture programme** to keep elephants at bay in Angul district.
 - KVIC in collaboration with Athmallik Forest Division, has set up about 100 bee boxes at the border of Laxmipur village in Angul district.
 - Elephants are expected to be stung by bees if their boxes are hit, thereby driving them away and preventing them from straying into the village and damaging large crop areas.

2. Centre asks firms to arrange Tricolour

- The Union government is set to launch a large-scale campaign that encourages citizens to fly the National Flag at their homes to mark the 75th Independence Day
- As part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the Culture Ministry is planning on celebrating August 11 to 17 as "Independence Week" across the country and 26 crore households in the country would be encouraged to hoist the Tricolour flag as part of the '**Har Ghar Tiranga**' campaign.
- In order to facilitate the campaign, the Union Home Ministry amended the **Flag Code** in 2021 to allow flags to be polyester and machine-made which earlier permitted only hand-woven or hand-spun flags to be made.
- The Centre has reached out to manufacturers and e-commerce sites to boost the availability of the Tricolour.
- The Government-e-Marketplace (GeM) portal, through which Government Departments and Ministries procure products, has also shown interest to take orders for flags.

3. G7 **proposes** **\$600-bn** **global** **infra** **plan** **to** **rival** **China**

- The G7 group announced an attempt to compete with China's Belt and Road Initiative by raising \$600 billion for global infrastructure programmes in poor countries.
- The Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, unveiled by the U.S. President and G7 allies from Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan and the European Union, aims to fill a huge gap left as China uses its economic might to increase its diplomatic influence across the world.
- The programme aims to fund projects aimed at bettering wide range of infrastructure such as roads and harbours in far-flung corners of the world
- Unlike China's state-run BRI initiative, this proposed G7 funding would depend largely on private companies being willing to commit to massive investments and is therefore not guaranteed.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to Indian classical dance forms.

(Level - Medium)

1. Bharatnatyam is the oldest among all classical dance forms in India and traces its origins to sadir- the solo dance performance of temple dancers or devadasis in Tamil Nadu.
2. Odissi dance is accompanied by Hindustani music and the tribhanga posture is innate to it.
3. Kathak is the traditional dance form of Uttar Pradesh and an important feature of it is the development of different gharanas.

Which of the given statements are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, Bharatnatyam is the oldest among all classical dance forms in India and it originated in the temples of Tamil Nadu
- **Statement 2 is correct**, The tribhanga posture is innate to Odissi dance and the Hindustani music is popular in Odissi dance.
- **Statement 3 is correct**, Kathak dance originated from Uttar Pradesh and an important feature of it is the development of different gharanas.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to Ranji trophy, the domestic first-class cricket championship. (Level - Difficult)

- 1. The Ranji Trophy sees participation from all 28 states and eight union territories of India
- 2. Maharashtra has won the Ranji Trophy the most times.
- 3. Madhya Pradesh has won the 2021-22 Ranji Trophy by beating Karnataka in the finals.

Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, The Ranji Trophy is a domestic first-class cricket championship played in India and it currently consists of 38 teams, with all **28 states in India and four of the eight union territories** having at least one representation.
- **Statement 2 is not correct**, Team **Mumbai** has won the tournament the most times
 - Mumbai and Maharashtra are considered as individual cricket teams, not a state and there is no restriction that only one team should play from one state.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, Madhya Pradesh has won the 2021-22 Ranji Trophy by beating **Mumbai** in the finals

Q3. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to Mithun (Gayal)? (Level - Difficult)

1. It is a semi-domesticated bovine species considered to be a descendent from the wild Indian Gaur.
2. It is found only in North-eastern states of India.
3. It is the state animal of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur.

Options:

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

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct**, Mithun which is a semi-domesticated bovine species is considered to be descended from wild Indian Gaur.
- **Statement 2 is not correct**, Mithun is found mainly in north-eastern hill region of India and also in China, Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh.
- **Statement 3 is not correct**, Mithun is the state animal of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.
 - The state animal of Manipur is **Sangai**.

Q4. Consider the following pair of cities/towns and the associated industries.

(Level - Medium)

City/Town	Associated Industry
1. Tiruppur	Textiles and garments
2. Jalandhar	Sports goods
3. Surat	Diamond
4. Titagarh	Paper

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a. One only
- b. Two only
- c. Three only
- d. All four pairs

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Pair 1 is correct**, Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu is a hub of the textile processing and knitting industry.
- **Pair 2 is correct**, Jalandhar in Punjab is well known for the production of sports equipment, leather and rubber goods.

- **Pair 3 is correct**, Surat in Gujarat is famously called as the “diamond city of the world” and it is a hub for diamond cutting and polishing
- **Pair 4 is correct**, Titagarh in West Bengal is famous for paper manufacturing

Q5. In India, the use of carbofuran, methyl parathion, phorate and triazophos is viewed with apprehension. These chemicals are used as (Difficulty level- Difficult)

- a. Pesticides in agriculture
- b. Preservatives in processed foods
- c. Fruit-ripening agents
- d. Moisturising agents in cosmetics

Answer: a

Explanation:

- Carbofuran, methyl parathion, phorate and triazophos are **banned pesticides used in agriculture**.
- To promote organic farming in Kerala, the state agriculture department had ordered a ban on the use of these categories of pesticides.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. India's move to send a multi-member team of senior diplomats to Afghanistan to interact with Taliban is a step in the right direction. Do you agree? Justify (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS 2 International Relations)
2. Discuss the conditions under which Indian women can safely terminate pregnancies. (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS 2 Social Justice)