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Nothing here today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Why is Kerala protesting the Supreme Court's ESZ Notifications?

Syllabus: Government policies and interventions aimed at development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Prelims: Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ)

Mains: Impact of ESZ notification on Kerala's development

Context: Recently, the Kerala State Assembly unanimously passed a resolution pressing the union government to exclude the Kerala's public institutions, human habitations and farmlands from the scope of the Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ), recently notified by the Supreme Court of India, to be set-up around all protected forests in the country.

Supreme Court's Order:

- In its order on 3rd June, a 03-judge bench of the Supreme Court, said wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and such protected areas must have an Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) of minimum one-km from their boundaries.
- The apex court asked the concerned states and authorities to strictly adhere to the 2011 guidelines issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, which have either banned or regulated a bunch of activities within the ESZ.

Present status of ESZ in Kerala:

- Kerala has 23 protected forest areas, of which twelve are wildlife sanctuaries, three bird sanctuaries, 05 national parks and 02 tiger reserves.
- 20 out of 23 protected areas in Kerala are notified as ecologically sensitive zones in a draft notification by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- Final notification of the Mathikettan Shola National Park was issued in December 2020.
- However, the draft notification of the Periyar National Park is yet to be published though the State government had submitted the proposal earlier.
- The Kerala government is yet to present the draft ESZ for the newest Wildlife sanctuary, Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary Located in Malappuram district.

Impact of the Supreme Court order for Kerala:

- As per data available from 2019-20, Kerala's forest cover is 11,521 square km, which forms 29.65 per cent of the state's total geographical area. This ratio of forest to total geographical areas is much higher than the national average of 6.09 per cent.
- With Western Ghats occupying 48% of the State, it has a unique landscape.
- Besides, there is a network of canals, wetlands, lakes and the 590-kilometer-long coastline, which all comes under the ambit of a series of environmental conservation and protection laws and regulations, leaving little room for its 35 million population to occupy.]
- Kerala's population density with 900 per square kilometer fares much higher than national average of 382 per square kilometer. This puts immense pressure on the remaining land out of notified ESZ areas.
- According to the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council, the order will effectively turn 04 lakh acres around the 23 protected areas in Kerala into buffer zones, thus impacting around 1.5 lakh families.
- The State Government worries that the recent notification by the supreme court may worsen the ground situation as it would adversely impact the interests of the State besides upsetting the lives of crores living near the protected areas.

Way Forward:

- The Kerala state assembly has called upon the union government to notify the zones by considering the State government's proposals that marked the ESZ as zero around 10 protected areas of the State, urging the union government to enact laws for the purpose.
- As directed by the Supreme court in its order, the Kerala government can also approach the Central Empowered committee to convince the forum of the need to maintain zero ecologically sensitive zones in the areas of human habitation.
- It may also approach the Supreme Court court requesting an exception from the 01 kilometer ESZ regime and to limit it to zero wherever required.

***Nut Graf:** when it comes to an integrated mix of conservation and development, bottom-up programmes and region specific solutions can be the solution for participatory forest management in India.*

2. Karnataka's PSI recruitment scam and the rot at the top

***Syllabus:** Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.*

***Prelims:** Prevention of corruption act*

***Mains:** Corruption results administrative inefficiency and obstruction in the path of national*

Development.

Context: The Crime Investigation Department (CID) of Karnataka probing one of the biggest recruitment scams (for Police sub-inspector (PSI)) in the State unearthed lakhs given in bribe and made arrests of over 60 candidates, local politicians and top police officials in the Karnataka Police recruitment cell, including its then chief Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Amrit Paul.

What the probe says:

- As per the initial investigation, 30 aspirants had paid between rupees 30 lakh to rupees 1 crore to help tamper the OMR sheets and get into the final list.
- As per the preliminary investigation, On the day of the examination, the aspirants left the OMR sheet empty as instructed by the agent and were asked to hand over the OMR sheet to the agent, who were then supposed to hand it over only on the result day after taking the remaining payment by the candidate.
- The OMR sheet was reportedly forged at the examination center itself. The probe also revealed that the CCTV cameras installed in the college were dysfunctional to destroy any kind of evidence. Besides that, there have been complaints of students using bluetooth devices in certain examination centers.

Rot at the top:

- The inquiry revealed the systematic way in which the whole recruitment process was rigged, tracing the rot all the way to the top of the chain.
- Those arrested include the candidates, the kingpin, the invigilators, the middlemen, police personnel and officers at recruitment cell.
- The extensive nature of the scam shows the amount of corruption at the higher levels of the police force.
- Recently, Karnataka high court opined that, the proof of alleged involvement of senior level police officials in the scam is a case of the “fence eating the crop”.
- Lack of political willingness to bring effective reforms like changes in prevention of corruption act, RTI, WPA and Lokpal suggest strengthening the government officials at the cost of public interest.
- Conviction rate in corruption cases continues to be minimal in almost all states.

Impact on recruitment

Karnataka State Police has been suffering with over 30% vacancies, and has taken up an aggressive recruitment drive since 2016, with an aim to have no vacancies by 2023-24. However, the scam has halted the recruitment drive causing inconvenience to both aspirants and the department.

Nut Graf: *Corruption can result in poor public trust in political institutions, reduced political*

participation, distortion of the electoral process, limited political choices available to voters and loss of legitimacy of the democratic system. Corruption can be tackled effectively with the homegrown solutions.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Forest Fire rage in Southwest Europe

Syllabus: Environmental pollution and degradation, Disaster Management

Mains: Impact of Climate change on Heat Waves and forest fires

Context: South Western European countries have been facing the worst of the heat wave resulting in wildfires. Around 14000 people have been forced to flee their homes and camps and thousands of hectares of forest land burned down.

Reason behind Increasing Wildfires:

- Wildfires need right climatic conditions, inflammable fuel and a spark. These conditions are being fulfilled by rising temperatures which suck moisture out of plants, creating plenty of dry plants as fuel.
- Drought and high heat can kill plants and dry out dead grass, and other material on the forest floor that fuel the fire once it starts spreading through a forest.
- The spark for these dry vegetation is sometimes caused by lightning, at other times by accident due carelessness of the local people.
- As for Europe, due to climate change, an uncommon dry, hot spring left the soil parched. Addition to this, fires are being fanned by earlier-than-usual severe temperatures and drought conditions in some parts.

How does climate change affect wildfires?

- Climate change has intensified heat waves 5 to 10 times compared to heat waves about 100 years ago.
- Extreme weather events like famines, hotter temperature, rain, droughts, and floods are the result of global warming.
- First heatwave in 2022 in Europe increased the temperature to around 40 degrees Celsius.
- With rising forest fires, the frequency of lightning strikes increases.
 - Lightning ignition is the dominant spark to of massive wildfires in the boreal forests of North America and northern Siberia

Impact of Heat waves and Wildfires:

- It is the second heatwave engulfing parts of southwest Europe in weeks.
- In Portugal and Spain, heat waves have claimed around 1000 deaths so far.
- While fire poses a direct risk to people's property and life, smoke, particularly the particles with size 2.5 microns and less, can also affect the respiratory and cardiovascular systems.
- It has affected the tourism sector in many countries.
 - Authorities in the French Alps urged climbers bound for Europe's highest mountain, Mont Blanc, to postpone their trip due to repeated rock falls caused by "exceptional climatic conditions" and "drought".

Way Forward: Ways to Monitor and manage wildfires

- A preventive approach, in place of reactive approach by involving vulnerable groups, will help adapt to the wildfires,
- Indigenous fire management techniques will help in quicker resolution.
- Focus on long-range weather forecasting
- Effective use of remote-sensing technologies like satellites, ground-based radar, and lightning detection should be focused upon.

Nut Graf: *Frequency and the intensity of wildfires across the world is getting bigger. Approach to fight these events has to change from fighting to mitigation. While improving the firefighting capabilities, there is a need to address factors that make these fires escalate and become worse.*

Category: AGRICULTURE**1. Only 50% of farmers benefited from loan waivers**

Syllabus: *GS3- Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices, Banking sector and NBFcs*

Mains: *Pros and cons of Farm loan Waiver*

Context: As per the recent study by State Bank of India, only about 50% of the intended beneficiaries of farm loan waivers announced by 09 States since 2014 have actually received debt write offs.

Findings of the study:

- The study was based on the result of ten farm loan waivers worth about rupees 2.53 lakh crore announced by 09 States, starting with Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in 2014.
 - Almost 92% of Andhra Pradesh's 42 lakh farmers eligible for loan waivers had benefited, while it is just 5% for Telangana.
- As of March 2022, the poorest execution of farm loan waiver schemes in terms of proportion of

eligible farmers who had received the announced benefits was in Telangana (5%).

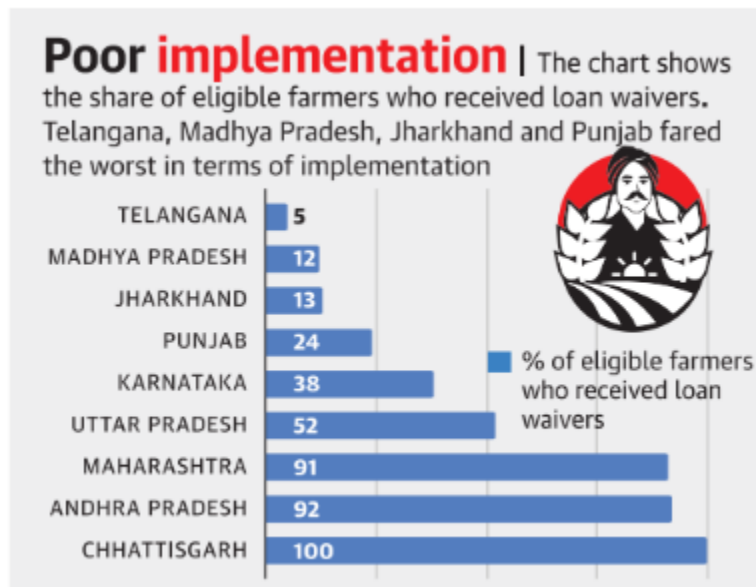


Image Source: The Hindu

- Whereas 100% of the eligible farmers in Chhattisgarh and 91% in Maharashtra received loan waivers in 2018 and 2022 respectively.
 - A similar promise announced by the Maharashtra government in 2017 worth rupees 34,000 crore has been implemented for 68% of beneficiaries.
- “Since 2014, out of around 3.7 crore eligible farmers, just around 50% of the farmers received the amount of loan waiver till March 2022.

Possible reasons behind these poor performances:

- Study identifies following reasons,
 - Rejection of beneficiaries' claims by governments,
 - Limited fiscal capacity to meet promises and
 - Change in ruling party in subsequent years.

Issues behind the farm loan waiver:

- Apart from benefits not reaching the beneficiary farmers, the study highlighted the concerns about achieving the intended target of helping distressed farmers
 - Of the total accounts eligible for farm loan waiver, around 80% of the accounts were in the standard category, raising the question on final beneficiaries.
- Loan waivers ruin the credit culture which may damage the farmers' interest in the medium to long term.

- They also reduce fiscal space of administration and divert the funds from productive investment in agriculture infrastructure.

Nut Graf: *In Spite of all the hype and political patronage, loan waivers by State governments have failed to bring reprieve to distressed farmers and destroyed credit discipline thus creating further pressure on banks and financial institutions regarding further lending. This can be termed as a “self goal” inflicted by the State on its subjects.*

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Biden in West Asia

Syllabus: *Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests*

Mains: *U.S.'s West Asia foreign policy and its implications for India.*

Context:

The U.S. President's first official visit to West Asian region.

Details:

Priorities for the foreign policy under the current U.S. President:

- During the visit, the U.S. President primarily sought to strengthen U.S.'s traditional partnerships and alliances in the region, involving Israel and Sunni Arab countries.
- In Israel, the U.S. reiterated its resolve to stop Iran from getting a nuclear bomb, which has been a major demand from Israel in the recent past. The U.S. President during his visit to Palestinian territory though promised aid for Palestine he did not criticise the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.
- In Saudi Arabia, the U.S. President met Mohammed bin Salman, the Crown Prince who has been accused of killing Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi. This move seems to be indicative of the end of U.S.'s early attempts to isolate Prince Mohammed for his gross human rights violations.
- Speaking at a summit with Arab leaders in Jeddah, The U.S. President assured American allies that the U.S. would not walk away from West Asia. This could leave a power vacuum in the region which China, Russia or Iran would try to fill.

Issues on the back burner:

- As against earlier times when the Israel-Palestine issue dominated U.S.'s foreign policy agenda towards West Asia, in the recent past, the U.S. has shifted focus away from the Palestine question and Palestinians.
- The Iran nuclear talks which received priority during the Presidency of Barack Obama, has not been a priority for the current U.S. administration.

Objectives of U.S. foreign policy:**Regional balance:**

- The U.S. wants to guard against any increasing influence of Russia, China in the region either directly or through proxies such as Iran. In this regard, normalisation of ties between Israel and Sunni Arabs has been a major aspect of U.S. foreign policy in West Asia. This was mainstreamed through the Abraham Accords and seems to be wholeheartedly embraced by the new U.S. administration as well.
- This is all the more relevant amid the Iran nuclear talks hitting an impasse and the U.S. seeking to build a bloc against Iran.

Energy security:

- The U.S. led sanctions against Russia has disrupted the oil supply chains globally and has pushed the crude oil prices to historically high prices.
- The U.S. is looking to get Saudi Arabia to produce more oil into the international market, to offset any disruption caused by western oil sanctions on Russia.

Nut Graf:

The U.S. foreign policy in West Asia under the new administration is seeking to strengthen U.S.'s partnerships with traditional allies- Israel and Sunni Arab countries in the region and isolating countries such as Iran based on the objective of ensuring regional balance and energy security.

Category: POLITY**1. Preserving democracy in India**

Syllabus: Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Mains: Threats to Indian democracy

Background:

- The article written by Dushyant Dave, Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court of India and former President of the Supreme Court Bar Association, expresses concerns with respect to the following developments in the recent past.
- Toppling of governments in states such as Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra through questionable tactics such as the encouragement to defections from the parties in power.
- Selective targeting and arrests of Opposition members.
- This the author terms as efforts to terminate all opposition to the government and warns that such developments are not in the interest of the country.

Significance of a opposition:

Feature of democracy:

- The presence of a one party-government though brings in stability for the executive, it reduces the scope for diverse views and opinions in the functioning of such a government and this does not augur well for a democracy.
- Democracy is the basic feature of the Constitution.
- Without an effective Opposition, democracy will become dull and hence the presence of an Opposition is necessary for a vibrant democracy.

Feature of parliamentary democracy:

- India has adopted the parliamentary system of government to ensure that there is a responsible executive in India. Such a system provides for the assessment of responsibility of the executive on a daily basis.
- The daily assessment is done by members of Parliament, through questions, resolutions, no-confidence motions, adjournment motions and debates.
- Without an effective Opposition, legislature will become submissive. This can degrade the public trust in the legislature and the Indian democracy in general.

Recommendations:

- The Judiciary should step up to check against any ill motivated moves to stifle opposition in the country.
- The Opposition should also seek to up its credibility by seeking to work constructively with the government rather than merely attacking the government on all issues.

Nut Graf:

Given the key role played by opposition in the functioning of a parliamentary democracy like India, any move to stifle opposition must be resisted to ensure that India has a vibrant democracy.

F. Prelims Facts

1. Indian Navy decommissioned submarine INS Sindhudhvaj

Syllabus: GS3 , Various Security forces and agencies and their mandates

Context: The Indian Navy's Kilo class submarine INS Sindhudhvaj was decommissioned from service at Visakhapatnam after 35 years in service.

INS Sindhudhvaj:

- It was one of the ten Kilo class submarines India obtained from Russia between 1986 and 2000.
- It was commissioned into the Navy in 1987.
- INS Sindhudhvaj has many firsts to her credit which includes operationalisation of the indigenised sonar USHUS, indigenised satellite communication system Rukmani and MSS, inertial navigation system and indigenised torpedo fire control system.
- It was the only submarine to be awarded the Chief of Naval Staff rolling trophy for Innovation.
- With the transfer of INS Sindhuvir to Myanmar in 2020 (Myanmar's first submarine) the Navy now has 15 conventional submarines in service.

2. Packed curd, paneer, atta to attract 5% GST

Syllabus: GS3, Mobilization of resources-Taxation

Context: Recently, the GST Council altered the exemption list and imposed the tax on many goods and services.

Changes made to Duty Structure:

- 5% Goods and Services Tax is imposed on pre-packed, labeled food items such as atta, paneer and curd.
- Hospital rooms with rents above rupees 5,000 will also attract 5% GST.
- Hotel rooms with tariffs of up to rupees 1,000 a day, maps and charts, including atlases, will attract a 12% GST.
- 18% GST will be charged on cartons and fees charged by banks for the issue of cheques.
- Duty inversion for goods where the taxes on inputs were higher than those on the output is removed based on an interim report of the Group of Ministers.
- The tax on services such as work contracts for roads, bridges, railways, metro facilities, effluent treatment plants and crematoriums will go up to 18% from the current 12%.

Reduction & exemptions:

- GST on ostomy appliances and on transport of goods and passengers by ropeways is reduced to

5% from present 12%.

- Services provided by organizations like RBI, the IRDA and the SEBI will be taxed at 18%.
- Biomedical waste to be taxed at 12%
- 5% Gst will be levied on non-ICU hospital room rents exceeding rupees 5,000 a day, without input tax credit, to the extent of the amount charged for the room.
- Individuals can claim GST exemption for training or coaching in recreational activities relating to arts, culture or sports.
- Electric vehicles (With or without battery pack) will be eligible for the concessional GST rate of 5%.

G. Tidbits

Nothing here today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. The “State of the economy” report is released by (Medium)

1. Ministry of Finance
2. Financial Stability and Development Council
3. Reserve Bank of India (A)
4. NITI Aayog

Answer: c

- In the report, it cautioned that the surging commodity prices are causing inflation risks, especially through the surging of imports.
- As per the report, Retail inflation has gone up to 6.95 per cent in March driven mainly by inflation in food and beverages.
- Report attributed war and related retaliatory sanctions as one of the main reasons for rise in inflation.

Q2. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct? (Medium)

1. While India has had a woman President, there has been no women Vice President thus far in India.
2. The Vice President can be removed from office by a resolution passed by the joint sitting of the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha.

Options:

- a) 1only

- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: a

- Pratibha Devisingh Patil served as the 14th President of India from 25 July 2007 to July 2012 and was also the first and, to date, only female president of India.
- As per article 67 of the Indian constitution, the Vice-President may leave office before the end of his term by resigning to the President, or he/she may be removed by a resolution of the Council of States passed by a majority of all the then members of the Council and agreed to by the House of the People.
- Hence option a is correct.

Q3. The 'Sanda' Method of cultivation is associated with which of the following crops? (Difficult)

- a) Sugarcane
- b) Rice
- c) Wheat
- d) Pulses

Answer: b

- 'Sanda' method of cultivation is a traditional way of paddy farming .
- In this method, the seedlings of 18-20-day-old paddy nurseries are planted densely in different field.
- As it does not require enough water and the seedlings can survive for the 20-25 days till the arrival of monsoon. Later, these seedlings are sowed in the fields.
- This method uses less water and also increases production by 30-35 per cent.

Q4. Consider the following pairs of local festival and associated state. (Difficult)

Festival	State
1. Bonalu	Telangana
2. Losar	Nagaland
3. Kharchi	Puja Tripura
4. Gangaur	Festival Gujarat

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a) One pair only
- b) Two pairs only

- c) Three pairs only
- d) All the four pairs

Answer: b

- Bonalu is a traditional festival of Hindu Goddess Mahakali. It is celebrated annually in Telangana, especially in cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.
- Losar is also known as Tibetan New Year, is a festival celebrated by Tibetan Buddhists. The holiday is a new year's festival, celebrated on the first day of the lunisolar Tibetan calendar.
- Kharchi Puja is a Hindu festival celebrated in the state of Tripura which involves the worship of the 14 gods forming the dynasty deity of the Tripuri people.
- Gangaur is a festival celebrated in the Indian state of Rajasthan and certain parts of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and West Bengal.
- Hence option b is correct.

Q5. Consider the following:

1. Deification of the Buddha
2. Treading the path of Bodhisattvas
3. Image worship and rituals

Which of the above is/are the features/features of Mahayana Buddhism? (Medium)

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

Answer: d

- Mahayana Buddhism considers Buddha as God rather than a leader hence they concentrate on image worship and rituals.
- Teachings of Mahayana Buddhism focuses on treading the path of Bodhisattvas.
- Hence option d is correct

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. [A strong and constructive opposition is necessary for the functioning of a government in a democracy. Discuss.](#) (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS-2, Polity)
2. [What do you understand by Eco-Sensitive Zones \(ESZ\)? Why are there protests in Kerala against the recent Supreme Court's order to establish ESZ around protected areas?](#) (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS-3, Environment)

