

13th August Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Category: INDIAN SOCIETY

1. The 'NAMASTE' Project

Syllabus: Social Empowerment

Mains: Government policies on eradicating manual scavenging

Context: The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is planning for a nationwide survey to enumerate all people engaged in hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

About the Project:

- The NAMASTE project is a joint venture of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs towards bettering the lives of sanitation workers in India.
- The project aims to achieve zero fatalities of sanitation workers and empower them with relevant skills and strengthened monitoring systems. It also aims to provide access to alternative livelihoods to the workers.
- As a part of this project, the government is planning for a nationwide survey to list all sanitation workers.

Manual Scavengers v/s Sanitation Workers:

- Sanitation workers are those who do various tasks such as cleaning toilets and spaces; cleaning and emptying, septic tanks and sewers; collecting, segregating and disposing of different types of waste; operating sewage treatment plants, etc.
- Manual scavenging is one of the most undignified and inhuman forms of sanitation work, wherein in absence of adequate sanitation systems and mechanization and protective gear, workers who clean insanitary dry latrines, empty septic tanks, clean railway tracks, etc., come in direct contact with human faeces, without any protective gear or required support measures.
- The Union Social Justice Ministry has drawn a distinction between sanitation work and manual scavenging and insisted that the practice of manual scavenging no longer takes place in the country as all manual scavengers had been accounted for and enrolled on the rehabilitation scheme.
- The enumeration exercise is planned to be conducted across 500 [AMRUT](#) (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) cities to streamline the process of rehabilitating sanitation workers and eventually merge with and replace the Self-Employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS), which was started in 2007.
- As per the Ministry's data, hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks has led to at least 351 deaths since 2017.

Nut Graf: Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is working towards data collection on sanitation workers to streamline the recognition and rehabilitation of the disadvantaged group. The government should also put the data collected to good use by implementing adequate schemes and policies to help improve the lives and dignity of the sanitation workers.

B. GS 2 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INDIAN SOCIETY

1. Moving policy away from population control

Syllabus: Population and associated issues

Prelims: World Population Prospects 2022

Mains: Highlights of World Population Prospects 2022 and the implications of population growth for India

Details of World Population Prospects 2022:

- The [United Nations' World Population Prospects \(WPP\)](#), 2022, forecasted that India will become the most populous country by 2023.
- India will surpass China, with a population of 140 crores in 2023, and will reach 150 crores by 2030 and 166 crores by 2050.
- This is four times the population India had at the time of Independence in 1947 (34 crores).
- India is currently at the third stage of the demographic transition.
- India is experiencing a slowing growth rate because of:
 - Low mortality
 - Exponentially declining fertility
- India had a population growth rate of over 2% in the 1960s. At the current growth rate, it is expected to fall to 1% by 2025.

Total Fertility Rate and its current status:

- India had a [TFR](#) of six in the 1950s.
- For the first time, India's total fertility rate (TFR) slipped to two, below the replacement level fertility (2.1 children per woman), according to the [National Family Health Survey 5](#) (NFHS - 5).
- Many states have reached a TFR of two except for Bihar, Jharkhand, Manipur, Meghalaya and Uttar Pradesh.
- The factors behind low fertility rates in these states are:
 - high illiteracy
 - rampant child marriage
 - high levels of under-five mortality rates
 - low female workforce participation

- low contraceptive usage compared to other States
- women in these States have low autonomy in economic or personal matters

Demographic dividend:

- A larger population translates to better human capital, higher economic growth and improved standards of living.
- The share of the working-age population has grown from 50% to 65%, resulting in a remarkable decline in the dependency ratio.
- As per WPP 2022, India will comprise the largest workforce globally in the next 25 years with one in five working-age group persons living in India.
- This working-age bulge will grow constantly till the mid-2050s.

Concerns associated with rising population:

- The population is set to grow for three to four decades due to the population momentum (large cohorts of women in their reproductive age groups).
- Another demographic concern of independent India is the male-dominant sex ratio.
- One out of three girls missing globally due to sex selection is from India — 46 million of the total 142 million missing girls.
- Challenges in harnessing demographic dividend:
 - Absence of women from the workforce with only a fourth of women employed.
 - The quality of education is not up to the mark.
 - Inadequate basic skills for the modernized job market.
- Poor health parameters:
 - Every second woman in the reproductive age group in India is anaemic.
 - Every third child below five is stunted.
 - The rising share of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) causes 62% of deaths.
 - More than a quarter of global deaths owing to air pollution occur in India.
 - India's healthcare structure is highly inadequate and inefficient.
 - Moreover, public health expenditure is low, varying between 1% and 1.5% of GDP, which is among the lowest percentages in the world.
- India's share of the elderly is expected to reach 12% by 2050.

India's achievement in 75 years:

- Improved sex ratio: In 2011, the sex ratio was 943 females per 1,000 males which is expected to be 950 females per 1,000 males approximately in 2022.
- Life expectancy at birth remarkably improved from 32 years in 1947 to 70 years in 2019.
- The infant mortality rate fell from 133 in 1951 (for the big States) to 27 in 2020.
- The under-five mortality rate declined from 250 to 41.
- The [maternal mortality ratio](#) reduced from 2,000 in the 1940s to 103 in 2019.

Way Ahead:

- Improvement of sex ratio as some communities face severe challenges from a marriage squeeze (an imbalance between the number of men and women available to marry in a specific society)

and eventual bride purchase.

- Improving the status of women with economic as well as social empowerment.
- Advance investments in the development of a robust social, financial and healthcare support system for older sections of the population.
- A robust system of conducive social welfare schemes and enhanced investment in quality education and health is the need of the hour.

Nut Graf: *It is time to focus on extensive investment in human capital, older adults living with dignity, and on healthy population ageing. The policies should move beyond population control to augment the overall standard of demography on a priority basis.*

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. No holds barred

Syllabus: *India and its neighbourhood relations.*

Prelims: *About UNSC's 1267 Committee and sanctions on individuals designated as terrorists*

Mains: *Impact on the India-China relations due to China's actions of blocking the terror listing.*

Context: China placed a “technical hold” on the joint India-U.S. proposal to designate Jaish-e-Mohammad deputy chief Rauf Asghar, a global terrorist on the United Nations Security Council 1267 Committee listing.

Details:

- Asghar is responsible for organizing the hijack of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 and holding 200 civilians hostage on the Kandahar tarmac and other terrorist attacks.
- Asghar is on both U.S.'s and India's domestic 'most wanted terrorist' lists.
- China's decision to halt an important terror listing has come as another blow to the already fragile [India-China ties](#).
- Beijing made a similar move two months before in the case of Lashkar-e-Taiba deputy chief Abdul Rahman Makki.

Causes of India-China stressed relations:

- India and China have failed to resolve the standoff that began with the PLA amassing troops in April 2020 despite 16 rounds of military commander talks at the Line of Actual Control.
- Both the countries engaged in a maritime spar after India made its concerns over the proposed docking of a Chinese satellite tracking ship at Sri Lanka's [Hambantota port](#) clear to the Sri Lankan government.
- The Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax authorities are raiding Chinese technology majors under suspicions of a range of financial crimes.

Way Ahead:

- India should persevere with its attempts to designate terrorists responsible for attacks on Indians, without losing faith in the process.
- India should build international pressure and garner more co-sponsors for the listing.
- One way should be to work on changing 1267 Committee procedures so that they don't allow one country to hold back such important terror listings without due cause.
- India can also open dialogues with both China and Pakistan bilaterally on the issue to ensure the listings are accomplished.

***Nut Graf:** It is insensitive on the part of China and unfortunate for India-China relations as India has always been sensitive on the issues of terrorist attacks. India should work on all avenues to ensure that perpetrators of terrorist acts are held accountable.*

Category: GOVERNANCE**1. Never-ending fight**

***Syllabus:** Government policies and interventions.*

***Prelims:** Section 295A of IPC.*

***Mains:** Freedom of speech and expression and section 295A of IPC.*

Context: Madras High Court (HC) quashed a criminal case against the actor and director of a film (Jai Bhim) facing proceedings for allegedly insulting the Vanniyar community.

Details of the case:

- The FIR was filed citing [Section 295A of the IPC](#), which makes it a crime to commit “deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings”.
- A magistrate forwarded the complaint to the police for the registration of an FIR concluding that it was a “cognizable offense”.
- The HC has rightly ruled that the magistrate acted mechanically as the order did not even mention what offense was made out in the complaint. In this case, it was quite strange that a perceived insult to a caste was seen as outraging “religious” feelings.

Misuse of Section 257 of IPC:

- The casual resort to criminal proceedings for perceived insults to religion or any other social segment has become a common feature of contemporary life.
- Various groups and individuals use some imagined slight as a pretext to infringe the right to [freedom of speech](#) and expression by objecting to films, plays, and public performances.

- The police also tend to give greater importance to such complaints and cite the possibility of a disruption of law and order situation rather than protecting free speech.
- Such incidents are also reported in cases of book releases, performances, and lectures. These developments can only mean that the fight for free speech has to be fought anew from time to time.

Judicial stand on the matter:

- The Constitution Bench in 1957 interpreted Section 257 to the effect that it only “punishes the aggravated form of insult to religion” when something is done with a deliberate and malicious intention to outrage the religious feelings of a class.
- A few years back, the Supreme Court quashed a criminal charge against cricket star Mahendra Singh Dhoni for being featured in the likeness of a deity on the cover of a magazine.
- Constitutional courts intervene from time to time protecting freedom of expression, but such relief comes after some delay.

***Nut Graf:** The freedom of speech and expression are often undermined by the use of Section 257 of IPC just on the basis of a perceived insult to religion or community. Society, in general, should appreciate the difference between deliberate malicious intent to hurt religious feelings and the mere expression of opinions.*

F. Prelims Facts

1. Garuda Shield

Prelims: Military Exercise

Context: The United States, Indonesia and other countries are conducting joint combat exercises on the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

Key Details:

- It has been an annual military training since 2009, known as Garuda Shield.
- Participation of several other countries, including Australia and Japan, makes the 2022 edition the largest ever.
- The exercises encompass army, navy, air force and marine drills.
- It is designed to strengthen capability, interoperability, trust and cooperation in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

2. SMILE 75

Syllabus: GS01-Indian Society-Social Empowerment

Prelims: Government Schemes

Context: Recently, the Union Ministry for Social Justice & Empowerment launched the “SMILE-75 Initiative”.

Key Details:

- It is an initiative with the objective of comprehensive rehabilitation of persons engaged in begging in 75 identified municipalities as a part of the celebrations of 75 years of Independence.
- It is part of the ongoing SMILE project (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise).
- This initiative will cover various welfare measures for persons who are engaged in the act of begging with a focus on rehabilitation, counselling, provision of medical facilities, education, awareness, skill development, economic linkages and convergence with other government welfare programmes.
- This project is aimed towards making cities and municipal areas begging-free.

G. Tidbits

1. Essential Commodity Act

- Essential Commodities Act was invoked recently to control the rise in tur dal price.
- Prices of Tur dal have risen due to slow progress in Kharif sowing as compared to 2021 due to excess rainfalls and water logging conditions in parts of major tur dal growing States of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- Also, some sections of traders and stockists are resorting to ‘restricted sales’ and creating artificial scarcity to push the price for tur dal upwards.

2. Stampede

- The recent stampede in Khatu Shyam temple which killed 3 women has brought focus on a similar incident at Chamunda Devi temple in Jodhpur’s Mehrangarh Fort in 2008 which had claimed 216 lives.
- In January 2022, 12 people died in a stampede at Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in Jammu and Kashmir’s Katra.
- The Rajasthan state government is working with temple management to evolve strategies for managing the crowds.

- The emphasis is on making corridors for pedestrians at religious places and ensuring strict compliance with the guidelines.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements: (Level – Medium)

1. Project Elephant is a centrally sponsored scheme and was launched in February 1992 for the protection of elephants, their habitats and corridors.
2. As per Elephant Census (2017), Karnataka has the highest number of elephants, followed by Assam and Kerala.
3. The elephant herd is led by the oldest and largest female member (known as the matriarch).

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct**, [Project Elephant](#) is a Central Government sponsored scheme launched in February 1992.
- **Statement 02 is correct**, India has the world's largest population of Asian Elephants with around 27,000 Elephants. As per the 2017 Elephant Census, Karnataka has the highest number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054).
- **Statement 03 is correct**, The elephant herd is led by the oldest and largest female member (known as the matriarch). This herd includes the daughters of the matriarch and their offspring.

Q2. Consider the following statements with respect to the Essential Commodities Act, 1955: (Level – Medium)

1. There is no specific definition of essential commodities in the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.
2. The Ministry of Rural Development implements the Act.
3. The Act gives powers to the central government to add or remove a commodity from the list of essential commodities.

Choose the correct code:

- a) 1 & 2 only

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct**, There is no specific definition of essential commodities in The EC Act. Section 2(A) of the Act states that an “essential commodity” means a commodity specified in the “Schedule” of this Act.
- **Statement 02 is incorrect**, The Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution implements the Act.
- **Statement 01 is correct**, The Act empowers the central government to control the production, supply, distribution, trade, and commerce in certain commodities by adding or removing a commodity in the list of essential commodities.

Q3. As per the recent judgment of the Supreme Court, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and such protected forests must have an Eco-Sensitive Zone of minimum _____ from their boundaries. (Level – Easy)

- a) 10 km
- b) 5 km
- c) 1 km
- d) 20 km

Answer: c

Explanation: The three-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India directed that every protected forest, national park and wildlife sanctuary across the country should have a mandatory eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of a minimum of **one km** starting from their demarcated boundaries.

Q4. Consider the following statements with regards to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA): (Level – Easy)

1. China was a part of the JCPOA deal.
2. Under the agreement, Iran agreed to implement a protocol that would allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
3. After Donald Trump backed out of the deal, the other nations launched a barter system known as INSTEX to facilitate transactions with Iran outside the US banking system.

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct**, The Iran Nuclear Deal, formally known as [the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#) is an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program reached in Vienna on 14 July 2015, between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States—plus Germany).
- **Statement 02 is correct**, Iran agreed to implement a protocol that would allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency unrestricted access to its nuclear facilities. This access can also be applied to undeclared sites.
- **Statement 03 is correct**, after the exit of the United States, the other powers, in an attempt to keep the deal alive, launched a barter system known as INSTEX to facilitate transactions with Iran outside the US banking system.

Q5. Who of the following scientists proved that the stars with mass less than 1.44 times the mass of the Sun end up as White Dwarfs when they die? (Level – Medium)

- a) Edwin Hubble
- b) S. Chandrasekhar
- c) Stephen Hawking
- d) Steven Weinberg

Answer: b

Explanation: In the 1930s, using Albert Einstein's special theory of relativity and the principles of quantum physics, Subramanyan Chandrasekhar proved that it is impossible for a white dwarf star, which is supported solely by a degenerate gas of electrons, to be stable if its mass is greater than 1.44 times the mass of the Sun. This limit is crucial in the evolution of stars. This is known as Chandrasekhar Limit.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. [India has witnessed many stampedes in the past. Discuss the reasons for such occurrences and suggest measures to overcome the issue.](#) (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS-3, Disaster Management)
2. [Should the state stop focusing on population control and focus on investment in human capital, on older adults living with dignity, and on healthy population ageing? Evaluate.](#) (10 Marks, 150 Words)(GS-1, Social Issues)