

29th July COMPREHENSIVE NEWS ANALYSIS

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. After the referendum: The challenges of a power grab in Tunisia

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries

Mains: Details about Arab Spring Revolution and the political crisis in Tunisia

Context

The Tunisian voters have approved a new constitution in a referendum.

Details

- The new constitution will replace the 2014 one adopted by the Constitutional Assembly of Tunisia in the wake of the 2011 **Arab Spring**.
- The new constitution would turn the country back into a **presidential system** and further grant unchecked powers to the office of President Kais Saied who had earlier suspended the elected Parliament in the country.



Image Source: Britannica

Arab Spring

- The Arab Spring was a series of anti-regime protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world in the early 2010s to bring down dictatorships.
- **Tunisia:** the Arab Spring protests started in Tunisia in December 2010, which caused the fall of the regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who held power since 1987.
 - Tunisia was the only country that saw a peaceful transition to democracy post the Arab Spring.
- The protests then spread across other Arab countries such as Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria.
- **Egypt:** the demonstrators were successful in bringing down the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt but the revolution failed to sustain further as the military seized power toppling the elected government.
- **Libya:** the protests against Muammar Gaddafi led to a civil war, which saw a military intervention by the [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#).
 - NATO then toppled the Gaddafi regime but the country fell into chaos and anarchy which still exists.
- **Bahrain:** in the Shia majority country which was ruled by a Sunni monarchy, Saudi Arabia dispatched its forces to quell the protests in Manama's Pearl Square.
- **Yemen:** despite President Ali Abdullah Saleh relinquishing his power, the country witnessed a civil war that has resulted in the rise of the Shia Houthi rebels.
- **Syria:** the protests caused a civil war, as President Bashar al-Assad's rivals backed his enemies, and his allies, including Hezbollah, Iran and Russia, backed the regime.

Political Crisis in Tunisia

- The Constitution drafted in 2014 established a system that was a mix of parliamentary and presidential systems.
 - According to this, both the President and Parliament were directly elected by the voters of the country.
 - The President was entrusted to oversee the military and foreign affairs.
 - The Prime Minister who was elected with the support of a majority of lawmakers was entrusted with the day-to-day affairs of governance.
- In the elections, the Islamist Ennahda party emerged as a major party in the country, which caused concerns among the secular sections.
- Tunisia has seen nine governments between 2011 and 2021.

- With the country's economy already struggling, the crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the situation.
 - Tunisia has one of the highest per capita COVID death rates in the world.
 - The unemployment rate in the country is at 15.5%, with an annual inflation rate of 8.1 % and the situation is further aggravated by the food crisis due to the [war in Ukraine](#).
- In the wake of an increasing economic and healthcare crisis, protests started against the government in July 2021.
- Demonstrators stormed the offices of the ruling Ennahda party which made the President step in and dismiss the Ennahda-backed Prime Minister and suspend the Parliament which caused a constitutional crisis.
- According to the 2014 Constitution, such crises must be resolved through a constitutional court, which was not yet set up in the country, thereby allowing the President a free hand to rule the country
 - The President then declared a state of emergency, appointed a Prime Minister to oversee the governance, dissolved the suspended Parliament and started to amend the Constitution in such a way that it gave him more powers.

Key amendments in the new Constitution

- The President has expressed concerns over Tunisia's post-revolutionary parliamentary system and he feels that the new Constitution would protect the values of the 2011 revolution which are bread, freedom and dignity.
- The changes in the Constitution seek to cut down the powers of the Parliament making the Constitution a presidential system.
- The new Constitution accords the President the powers to form a government, select Ministers (without Parliament's approval), appoint judges and present legislation directly to the legislature.
- Further, the changes would make it practically impossible for lawmakers to remove the President from office.
- As per the new Constitution, the President can also directly appoint the members of the Supreme Independent Elections Commission (ISIE) who were earlier appointed by Parliament.

Path ahead

- The referendum is said to be a victory for the acting President who now claims legitimacy for his one-man rule.
- However, the low turnout of voters (30%) and the boycott of the vote by opposition political parties suggest that the country is still vulnerable to a political crisis.
- The post-revolutionary chaos, the current economy and constitutional crisis are expected to hamper the country's progress even in the coming days.

Nut graf: As Tunisia's President has cemented his power grab with a referendum vote, the critics and

the opposition parties fear that the new Constitution would wipe out the democratic advances made by Tunisia since the 2011 Arab Spring revolution and make the country an authoritarian state again.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Reviving BSNL in a competitive telecom market

Syllabus: *Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.*

Mains: *The need for a revival package for BSNL and its impact*

Context

The Union Cabinet approved a ₹1.64 lakh crore package for the revival of state-owned telecom firm Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL).

Details

- The Cabinet announced a revival project to boost BSNL's overall competitiveness in the domestic telecom sector and loosen its balance sheet.
- The latest package is the second such package announced after the one in 2019 and will be spread for over four years.
 - The latest package consists of a cash component of ₹43,964 crores and a non-cash component of ₹1.2 lakh crores.
- The recent package aims to:
 - Infuse fresh capital for advancing the BSNL's services
 - Strengthen the firm's stressed balance sheet
 - Expand the fibre network by merging Bharat Broadband Nigam Limited (BBNL) and BSNL

The need for the relief package

- **Loss of subscriber base** - BSNL was considered a monopoly telecommunication services provider until the opening up of the sector to private players and the entry of wireless telephony in the 1990s.
 - Since 2019, BSNL has been experiencing erosion in its subscriber base at an accelerated pace.
 - According to the [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India \(TRAI\)](#), BSNL lost over 0.30% of wireless subscribers in each month between the end of April and May 2022.
 - At the same time, private telecom firms like Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio

together had acquired wireless subscribers at an average of 0.43% each month.

- Further, Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel have almost 5 times more subscribers in rural areas as compared to BSNL.
- **ARPU suffering** - Average revenue per user (ARPU) is a key metric to gauge the health of telecom firms. BSNL functions as a social sector and this means that it has to cover all losses on capital assets through internal accruals (profit or earnings that the firm has created over the year).
 - Whereas Bharti Airtel's ARPU in the March-end quarter rose nearly 23%, and the ARPU of Reliance Jio increased 27% on a year-on-year basis.
 - This is hindering BSNL's ability to compete with the private firms in terms of rapid technological innovations such as a transition from 4G to 5G.
- **Inadequate Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs)** - BTS is a device that sends and receives radio signals from mobile devices and routes them to other terminals in the network.
 - According to reports, Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel have about 6 and 5.5 times more BTSs, respectively, when compared to BSNL.

The BTS count		Type	BSNL	Bharti	V-IL	R-jio
Reliance Jio has got the highest number of transceiver stations among all other leading telecom companies		2G BTS	84,672	2,18,747	2,13,086	0
		3G BTS	62,375	6,704	1,13,019	0
		4G BTS	8,599	6,46,828	3,47,336	9,04,579
		Total BTS	1,55,646	8,72,279	6,73,441	9,04,579

Image Source: The Hindu

Impact of the revival package

- As a part of the latest package, BSNL would be allocated spectrum in the 900/1800 MHz band at the cost of ₹44,993 crores through equity infusion which is expected to help BSNL expand and consolidate the bandwidth available for its services.
- Spectrum allocation will also play a key role in providing high-speed data.
 - This would help BSNL to compete in the market and provide high-speed data.
- The government also has extended ₹13,789 crores which will help BSNL fund its operational viability gap in the commercially impractical rural wireline operations that it had undertaken between 2014-15 and 2019-20.
- The Cabinet has also decided to increase the authorised capital to ₹1.50 lakh crores from ₹40,000 crores on behalf of adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues, provision of capital expenditure and allotment of spectrum.
- Overall the revival package will help BSNL to improve services and generate a net profit in 2026-27.

Nut graf: Considering the importance of a public sector telecom service provider's role in ensuring inclusivity, reducing the digital divide by expanding services to rural areas, developing indigenous

technology, disaster relief and advancing crucial telecom services to border areas, the government has announced a bailout package for BSNL that aims to improve the quality of existing services of BSNL, roll out 4G services and become financially viable.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Narrow view

Syllabus: GS-2; Government policies and interventions aimed at development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Mains: Money Laundering and associated issues

Context: Recently, the Supreme Court of India overrode its own ruling to justify the [Prevention of Money Laundering Act's](#) (PMLA) provision for bail and upheld the constitutional validity of amendments to the PMLA.

Introduction:

- The ruling came on a challenge raised against the amendments introduced to the 2002 Act by way of the Finance Acts.
- The three-judge bench opined that money laundering is an offense against the sovereignty and integrity of the country and gave an extensive meaning to the offense of “money laundering” to add “every process and activity”, direct or indirect, dealing with the proceeds of the crime.

Shortcomings of the Judgment:

- The method of introduction of the amendments through [Money Bills](#) itself is contested.
- Money laundering has transnational consequences negatively affecting the financial systems and sovereignty of the countries.
- Concentrating completely on India's commitment to the international community on strengthening the domestic legal framework for combating money laundering might lead to the violation of fundamental rights.
- However, experience suggests that money laundering in the Indian context is linked to offenses that are attached to the Act as a schedule.
 - These scheduled offences ought to be ideally limited to grave offences such as narcotics, terrorism, corruption, smuggling and serious forms of tax evasions. However, in practice,

the list contains offenses such as forgery, fraud, kidnapping, cheating and even copyright and trademark infringements.

- The provision of disclosing and submitting documents, and then signing them under the pain of prosecution can be seen as a violation of fundamental rights under Article 20(3).
- Misuse of ED's power by the executive to target opponents in future might be seen as the judiciary's failure to protect personal liberty from executive excess.

Way Forward:

- ED should use these enhanced powers with greater responsibility without any executive intervention.
- Judiciary along with ED shall work together to expeditiously clear the cases and improve the conviction rate.

***Nut Graf:** Recent judgment upholding provisions of PMLA for effective and stringent measures to combat the menace of money laundering has certain shortcomings and it is the duty of the judiciary to protect the rights guaranteed by the Constitution with a strict overview.*

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. What numbers do not reveal about tiger conservation

***Syllabus:** GS-3, Conservation*

***Mains:** Tiger conservation and genetic drift*

Context: [Global Tiger Day](#) is celebrated on July 29th every year to raise awareness about Tigers. The first Tiger day was celebrated in 2010 when the 13 tiger range countries came together to create Tx2 – the global goal to double the number of wild tigers by the year 2022.

Introduction:

India is home to over 50% of the world's wild tigers with an estimated 2,226 tigers and is reporting an increased number of tigers since 2005, and recent data from the International Union for Conservation of Nature shows that tiger numbers have increased by 40% since 2005. This is cause for celebration.

Is the rise in tiger numbers enough to prevent their extinction?

Genetics and connectivity:

- Several studies on evolution show that the numbers are crucial to preventing extinction.
- Species with populations of less than 100 breeding individuals have a high probability of extinction.

- Also, for populations to endure, they need to be part of larger landscapes with other such populations that are connected.
 - Isolated and small populations face a high probability of extinction because of genetic drift.
- Also, individuals in small populations are more likely to be related, causing inbreeding depression, and reduced survival and reproduction of inbred individuals.

Research Findings on Genetics and Connectivity of Tiger Population:

- Most tiger ranges have tiger ‘populations’ smaller than 100.
- Based on movement data sourced from radio-collared tigers and their biological data it is evident that,
 - Tiger reserves that show shared genetic variation are well connected — the inference is that the intervening landscapes facilitate connectivity or movement whereas sets of tiger reserves that share less genetic variation must have barriers or landscapes that impede movement and connectivity.
 - The presence of settlements, infrastructure and high-traffic roads greatly obstruct tiger movement.
 - Given the specific land-use changes in the next 100 years, simulations show that the development projects such as highway widening would make them barriers, thereby increasing extinction significantly.
 - Fencing tiger reserves thereby isolating them also resulted in high extinction.

Genetic effects of Isolation:

- A recent study on black tigers/pseudo-melanistic found in Simlipal, Odisha has shown the genetic effects of isolation.
 - Tigers in Simlipal form a small and isolated population where 60% of them carry at least one copy of genetic variant DNA resulting in pseudo-melanistic tigers that are common only in Simlipal.
- In another study, genome sequences from wild tigers of Ranthambore tiger reserve showed inbreeding among individuals. which might affect the survival and the reproduction of tigers in Ranthambore in future.

Way Forward:

- Future development policies should be in line with conservation goals.
 - For example, having an underpass or [eco bridges](#) to allow wildlife movement and connectivity.

- To retain the evolutionary potential of tigers as a species, we should work to conserve the entire extant gene pool, range of habitats, behaviors that are culturally inherited, and manage populations so as to retain their unique evolutionary trajectories while addressing fragmentation caused by developmental activities.
- Special attention is needed for populations that are becoming isolated and facing the genetic consequences of such isolation.
- Synergy between data and management strategies must be promoted to ensure their survival.

Nut Graf: *There is sufficient evidence to show genetic differences amongst tigers due to vicariant events and local selection which might lead to their extinction in future. As long as we manage landscapes outside tiger reserves to allow tiger movement, and protect prey and tigers inside tiger reserves, extinction can be avoided.*

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Govt. worried about teen pregnancies

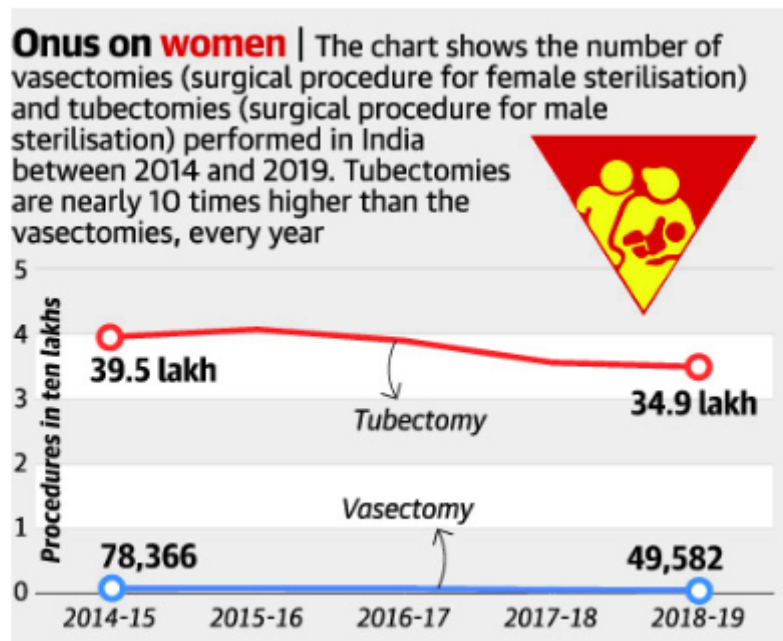


Image Source: The Hindu

The Union Health Ministry in its Family Planning Vision-2030 document has said that the high teenage fertility in a few areas remains a cause of concern in India even as the fertility rate has stabilised across the country.

- The document says that despite the decline in teenage childbearing, from 7.9% in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) to 6.8% (in the NFHS-5) it is still on the higher side and needs focus.
- About 118 districts have reported a high percentage of teenage pregnancies and are mostly from states such as Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, and Tripura.
- Also, over 44% of the districts in India have reported a high percentage of women marrying before the age of 18, especially in states like West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra.
- According to the document, India's population has reached 136.3 crores and is expected to reach 147.9 crores by 2031 and further increase to 152.2 crores by 2036.
- The youth population (in the age group of 15-24) has increased from 23.3 crores in 2011 to 25.2 crores in 2021 and will decrease to 23.4 crores in 2031 and 22.9 crores by 2036.

2. Airlines reported 478 technical snags in a year

- According to the government, airlines in the country have reported over 478 technical snags between July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022.
- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has undertaken several surveillance, spot checks and night surveillance initiatives to examine the engineering and maintenance aspects of various airlines.
- Following the inspections, DGCA has taken regulatory actions in various instances of violations, which include suspension of licence, withdrawal of the airline staff responsible for aircraft maintenance and issuance of warning letters.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

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

1. In the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, the Speaker and Chairman have the power to suspend a member either through a motion or by themselves.
2. Article 124 of the Constitution says parliamentary proceedings cannot be questioned before a court.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only

- c) Both
- d) None

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is not correct**, In the Lok Sabha, Rules 374 and 374(A) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business give the Speaker the power to suspend a member either through a motion or by themselves.
 - However, the **Rajya Sabha Chairman does not have the power to suspend a Member and can only suspend a member through a motion.**
- **Statement 2 is not correct**, Article 122 of the Constitution says that the validity of any proceedings in Parliament shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure.

Q2. Which of the following are the initiatives for the welfare and upliftment of the minority

Communities? (Level – Medium)

1. Hamari Darohar
2. Nai Manzil
3. Nai Udaan
4. Naya Savera
5. USTAAD

Options:

- a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- b) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- c) 1, 4 and 5 only
- d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **USTAAD:** The Scheme aims at upgrading Skills and Training in preservation of traditional Ancestral Arts/Crafts of minorities.
- **Hamari Dharohar:** The Scheme aims to preserve the rich heritage of minority communities in the context of Indian culture.
- **Nai Manzil:** A bridge course to bridge the academic and skill development gaps of the deeni Madrasa passouts with their mainstream counterparts.

- **Nai Udaan:** Support for students clearing Prelims conducted by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), State Public Service Commission (PSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), etc
- **Naya Savera:** The Scheme aims to provide free coaching to students/candidates belonging to minority communities for qualifying in entrance examinations of technical/medical professional courses and various competitive examinations.

Q3. With respect to Samudrayaan Mission, which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

(Level – Difficult)

1. It is India's first manned ocean mission.
2. The mission has the goal of sending men deep into the ocean in a submersible vehicle for deep-ocean exploration and rare mineral mining.
3. It will carry 3 human beings to a water depth of 6000 meters in the ocean.

Options:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct,** Samudraya is India's first manned ocean mission.
- **Statement 2 is correct,** The mission aims to send individuals into the deep sea in a submersible vehicle for deep-ocean exploration and mining of rare minerals.
- **Statement 3 is correct,** The mission will carry three individuals in a manned submersible vehicle named **MATSYA 6000** to a depth of 6000 metres in the ocean.

Q4. Consider the following statements (Level – Difficult)

1. This region is surrounded by Gulf of Aqaba.
2. Strait of Tiran connects two water bodies.
3. Its coastlines touch Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea.

The country in question is:

- a) Jordan
- b) Egypt
- c) Syria
- d) Israel

Answer: b

Explanation:



Image Source: Wikipedia

Q5. Which one of the following lakes of West Africa has become dry and turned into a desert?

(Level – Medium) PYQ (2022)

- a) Lake Victoria
- b) Lake Faguibine
- c) Lake Oguta
- d) Lake Volta

Answer: b

Explanation:

- **Lake Faguibine** in northern Mali is dry and has been since the 1970s.
- Erratic rainfall patterns due to climate change, sand dunes blocking parts of the channels, extensive use of water for large-scale irrigation and to produce hydropower, have combined to deprive Lake Faguibine of much needed water.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Is rescuing loss-making BSNL a good use of public funds? Critically examine. (10 marks, 150 Words) (GS III - Economy)
2. The Arab Spring which offered hope of democratic change across the Middle East and North Africa has failed. Substantiate. (15 Marks, 250 Words) (GS II - International Relations)

