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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan conflict

Syllabus: Effect of Policies & Politics of Developed & Developing Countries on India's Interests

Mains: Significance of Central Asian countries

Context: Violent border conflicts between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have claimed hundreds of lives and injured thousands more. Recently, a ceasefire was reached through Russian mediation.

Background:

- Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan share a 1,000-km long border, a large part of which is disputed. Historically, the Kyrgyz and Tajik populations enjoyed common rights over natural resources and there have been flare-ups in the past as well over sharing water and land resources.
- Both share multiple water channels with undulating trajectories and flow, which upset equitable access to water in both countries and resulted in small-scale conflicts practically every year during the vital irrigation period.
- Despite having a shared history, the internal dynamics of the two countries have been very different ever since they became independent states. Their instability can be linked to internal ethnic conflict and global challenges.
- In 2021, conflicts killed around 50 people.



Image Source: The Economist

Ongoing Conflict:

- Vorukh is a regular flashpoint over territorial claims and access to water. It is an enclave surrounded by Kyrgyzstan that forms part of the city of Isfara in the Sughd Region.
- The location of the border of the enclave is disputed by the Tajik and Kyrgyz governments.
- Ferghana valley continues to be a site of struggle and frequent violent outbursts, with the location consisting primarily of Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks, who have historically shared common sociological specificities, economic activities, and religious practices.
- Close to 1,50,000 people of the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan have either fled the area or have been relocated by the state.

Reasons behind the ongoing conflict:

- One of the crucial points of disagreement remains over the map which should be used for demarcation purposes.
- By imagining a specific kind of development project in an effort to stabilise the internal dynamics of their respective countries and legitimise their authority, the leaders of both countries have in some way contributed to the conflict's prolongation.
- This "development project" is comparable to how the Soviet Union approached modernization, which led to the extensive eviction of nomadic populations and ultimately served as an "environment driver" for the ongoing conflict.

- The environmental trajectory of the conflict can be further highlighted by incidents which saw groups from either side planting trees in disputed areas and engaging in a physical confrontation using agricultural equipment as weapons.
- The [disintegration of the Soviet Union](#) which dissolved the then-existing water and land agreements saw the creation of multiple smaller independent farms, which led to a marked increase in water consumption patterns among the farmers.
- The highly militarised borders also add to tensions.

Way Forward:

- It will be necessary for groups to agree on a shared map in order to find a solution to the conflict.
- Elders have historically been employed to settle disputes, thus the international community will have to make steps to resolve the disagreement by involving elders in the communities.
- The individual nations would also need to work together to further enhance the informal small-scale governance systems in order to stabilise the geopolitical dynamics.

***Nut Graf:** The ideological basis of the ongoing conflict in the Central Asian region is reinforced by developmental issues. This region that has been at the centre of significant political and economic changes owing to its geography, will now, in the 21st century, be even more crucial due to the Belt and Road Initiative's implementation, India's Connect Central Asia policy, and the EU's new Central Asia strategy.*

C. GS 3 Related

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Maoist Movement in Andhra-Odisha Boundary

Syllabus: Left Wing Extremism

Mains: Government initiatives to deal with LWE

Context: Recently, the Andhra-Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee (AOBSZC) of the banned CPI (Maoist) released a letter urging the tribal people to join and revive the movement.

Introduction:

- In Andhra Pradesh and Odisha region, the Maoist movement is in decline due to a severely diminished cadre and militia. The letter, which was published on the eve of the CPI (Maoist) 18th Foundation Day, made it quite evident how desperate the movement was to remain alive.

- Recent events show a huge leadership crisis, as almost all remaining top leaders have fled to Chhattisgarh.

Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in the Andhra-Odisha border region

- Left-wing extremism, also known by various other names such as Naxalism and Maoism, is a form of armed insurgency against the State motivated by leftist ideologies.
- Left-wing extremists are also known as Maoists globally and as Naxalites in India.
- The Maoists belonging to the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War or the People's War Group (PWG), entered the Andhra-Odisha border region in the mid-1980s.
- In 2004, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) merged to form CPI (Maoist) which strengthened the movement in the region.
- The combined military strength of the party grew to over 7,000 armed members overnight. The weapons stockpile shot up to over 6,500 items with several advanced weapons.
- The cadre also grew in strength and expertise in manufacturing and using improvised explosive devices (IED) effectively.

Success of Anti-Naxal Forces:

- A number of top leaders have either died in encounters or surrendered or have been arrested in major operations by Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Border Security Force (BSF) battalions and elite anti-naxal forces of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha such as '[Greyhounds](#)'.
- These operations have left the movement depleted of strength.
- The increased police surveillance of the Maoists' communication network has made VHF equipment and cell phones redundant to Maoists.
- One of the biggest setbacks for the Maoists is the stepped-up surveillance by the police on their communication network. As a result, it is said they are unable to use mobile phones and VHF sets.
- Apart from carrying out strategic anti-Naxal operations, the security personnel are conducting frequent outreach programmes to earn the trust and confidence of the tribals staying in the far-flung areas of the State. This has made fresh recruitment of cadres and training them a Herculean task.
- Generous surrender and rehabilitation policy, which includes financial assistance, providing skill development training and houses to the Maoists, is also encouraging ultras to lay down their arms and join the mainstream.

Nut Graf: *The Maoist movement is in decline with diminished cadre and militia in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha region. Successful fight against LWE in the region is mainly because of strong intelligence set-up and ground operations. Along with these, sufficient and speedy development in the affected areas will render the Maoists insignificant.*

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. A census is not about counting sheep

Syllabus: Important aspects of governance

Prelims: About Census in India, National Register of Citizens, National Population Register and socio-economic and caste census

Mains: Significance of the Census programme and various concerns associated with it.

Context: This article talks about the significance of undertaking a census programme.

Census in India

- The first Census in India was conducted in 1872 in a non-synchronous manner across the country.
- India has conducted its decadal censuses regularly from 1881 to 2011, in spite of various disease outbreaks, world wars, issues of partition and other challenging times.
- However, the 2021 Census programme has been postponed due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Significance of Census programme

- The Census programmes play a crucial role in disproving false narratives or notions about the country or its population.
 - During the 1850s and 1860s, anti-slavery campaigners in the U.S. used the Census data to prove that there was an increase in the number of enslaved people in their country against the false narratives built by the pro-slavery politicians.
 - Even in India, there were widespread notions that the high reproductive rates among the followers of a particular religion were the reason for the population explosion.
 - However, the Census data helped to establish that the [Total Fertility Rate \(TFR\)](#) was reducing at a rapid rate and the variation in TFR depended more on various regions and socio-economic indicators, and not on religion or caste.
 - The 2011 Census also helped to disprove the notion of variations in divorce rates among

cities and rural India.

- The urban divorce rate (0.89%) was found to be almost equal to the rural rate (0.82%).
- Census programmes provide a unique opportunity for the state to connect with every individual in the country and get to know the existing issues in their daily life.
- Key information collected in the Census about the age, gender, economic status, religion and languages spoken makes it a repository of findings which plays an important role in planning, addressing various problems, and resolving existing deficiencies.
- The census is a crucial repository of complete data about the country which is gathered openly, voluntarily, and with the use of public money, making it a social good.
- Censuses in India have facilitated a great amount of reliable information over time which enables systematic, inter-temporal comparability about where India stands.
- Further, data on important metrics such as the substantial decline in the gender ratio in India between the Censuses of 1961 and 1971 helped to identify various pre and post-natal factors which were influencing the “son bias” which led to female infanticide.

Causes of concern

- The postponement of the Census programme citing the excuse of the COVID pandemic has been largely criticised as the Government at the same time had allowed large numbers of election rallies to take place.
- Even before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the Census programme was entangled in the protest against the [National Register of Citizens \(NRC\)](#).
 - Further, there will be more challenges and roadblocks if the Census programme is conducted along with the preparation of a [National Population Register \(NPR\)](#) which is a register of all the residents of the country which includes both citizens and as well as non-citizens.
- Further, the caste census was held in India in 1931 and in 2011, a socio-economic and caste census (SECC) was conducted, but the caste data was not published due to many reasons.
- The gap in the conduction of the Census indicates dysfunction, inabilities, and also a lack of desire to realise the truth and facts.
- Experts also point out that the postponement of the Census is accompanied by various measures by the government to mine the data of citizens such as efforts to link electoral rolls with Aadhar, the introduction of Criminal Procedure (Identification) Rules, 2022 and the withdrawal of the Personal Data Protection Bill 2019.

Nut graf: India, which is regarded as the largest democracy, cannot afford to skip or postpone the conduction of the Census programme for too long as it acts as a key instrument of democracy wherein the state displays its desire to connect with the citizens of the country.

Category: POLITY

1. Should the Election Commission insist on inner-party elections?

Syllabus: Powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies

Prelims: About Political Parties in India and the Election Commission of India

Mains: The role of inner-party elections in enforcing internal democracy and various recommendations to improve inner-party democracy

Context

- The Congress party is gearing up for elections for the post of the party president.
- The Yuvajana Shramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) elected the current Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh as the president of the party for life in July 2022 and the [Election Commission of India \(ECI\)](#) has rejected this idea of a “permanent president” as anti-democratic.

Political Parties in India

- Despite India looking as if it is a party-led democracy or democracy based on political parties, the term “political party” was not mentioned or described in the original Constitution.
- The definition of a “political party” was introduced in the Constitution for the first time through the [Anti-defection Law](#) only in 1985.
- The Indian political parties are of different kinds:
 - A few of the parties are structured and are cadre-based organisations that operate with an ideological goal or a principle
 - A few others are loosely structured collections of individuals with varied opinions but functioning within an association that has core ideals
 - And a few others still reflect social or regional cleavages
- Moreover, all the rules and regulations in India are applicable more to candidates than to political parties.

Read more about - [Political Parties in India](#)

The need for inner-party elections

- The increased fragmentation of India’s polity into a federalised and multi-party system has often led to the domination by certain charismatic individuals or their families due to the amount of influence they enjoy within the party or due to their financing structures. This necessitates the periodic conduction of inner party elections.

- Further, internal elections are said to be the key to upward mobility from being controlled by strong individuals or political families.
- In democratic countries, the ideals of democracy should be reflected at every level, and political parties which are a crucial pillar of democracy are also expected to operate in a democratic manner through formal and periodic elections for the posts of its office-bearers.
- As most of the political parties in India lack homogeneity with respect to ideas and leadership, the internal elections, meetings and contests of ideas become more important to build consensus among the members of the party.

Can inner-party elections be mandated by ECI?

- The courts in the past have observed that none of the provisions in **Article 324** of the Constitution, or **Section 29A** of the [Representation of the People Act, 1951 \(RP Act\)](#) provides the power to ECI to regulate internal structures, organisations or elections of the party.
- Despite there being no law or any statutory powers, the ECI has constantly used the guidelines issued for the registration of parties under Section 29A of the RP Act to persuade the parties to conduct elections and to ensure that their leadership is renewed.
 - ECI in the past has ordered the conduct of organisational elections within the political parties through executive orders.
- However, the ECI does not question the result or the procedure of the election followed by the parties and it just expects political parties to abide by their constitution, a copy of which is submitted to the ECI when the parties are registered.
- The registered political parties are mandated to inform the ECI about changes in their leadership and also submit a document about the cost incurred during elections and in the non-election period. However, there is no provision for action against non-compliance.

Recommendations to ensure inner-party democracy and better functioning of political parties

- Rather than introducing new laws, there is a need for new and reinterpretation of the existing laws which accords more power to the ECI to enforce inner-party democracy.
- Also, the ECI must come up with innovative methods to regulate political parties.
- There have to be efforts to check the arbitrariness in electing certain individuals unopposed as getting elected unanimously is also considered a valid election.
- Further, in 1999, the Law Commission Report recommended that the government must consider state funding of political parties as these political parties are currently involved in sourcing money from corporates or private individuals who most of the time expect something in return.

***Nut graf:** Most of the political parties in India have failed to follow their own constitutional norms due to the centralised nature of their internal structures and organisations. This is said to be a key challenge for the functioning of a democracy and hence there is a need for enforcing inner-party elections which ensures more democracy and accountability within political parties.*

F. Prelims Facts

1. The National Toy Action Plan

Syllabus: Economy

Prelims: Government Initiatives for Generating Employment

Context: The Union government has recently compiled a State-wise national repository of indigenous toys and shared this with all States as part of its special nutrition campaign.

Background:

- In 2020, Prime Minister Modi stressed the significance of toys in shaping a child's thinking and offered a variety of suggestions to increase the manufacture of indigenous toys.
- He recommended the use of toys as a pedagogical tool in all anganwadi centres and schools for the all-around growth and development of the children.
- He proposed that young people be encouraged to develop original toy designs that may foster a sense of pride in the nation's aims and accomplishments.
- Also, the new national education policy incorporates play-based and activity-based education on a large scale.
- In this regard, the Union Government has prepared a National Toy Action Plan involving 15 ministries with a view to making the domestic toy industry competitive.

Action Plan:

- The Department for Promotion of Industries and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is working on a wide-ranging plan involving several ministries - from education to textiles to railways.
- According to the action plan, the department of school education is working on the use of toys in learning.
- It is using these local, indigenous toys in anganwadi centres for creating awareness and educating children and their families about healthy living and good nutritional practices.

2. Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967 (UAPA)

Syllabus: Institutional Framework to Tackle Challenge of Internal Security

Prelims: NIA, UAPA

Context: Recently, the [National Investigation Agency](#) searched and raided 93 locations across the

country and arrested at least 45 people linked to the Popular Front of India (PFI) organisation.

Introduction:

- NIA and [Enforcement Directorate \(ED\)](#) raided several locations across the country and arrested at least 45 people linked to the PFI based on a court warrant dated September 20, 2022, to carry out the raids.
- The NIA claimed that the PFI has been involved in “recruiting Muslim youth to proscribed organisations like ISIS” and PFI is accused of providing training to its members to carry out acts of terror.
- In June 2022, the ED filed complaints against the PFI for covertly mobilising funds through well-organised networks in Gulf countries. It has attached Rs 68.62 lakh under the [Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2022](#).

Popular Front of India:

- PFI was formed as a successor to National Development Front (NDF) in 2006.
- It acquired a multi-state dimension by merging with the National Development Front in Kerala, Manitha Neethi Pasarai in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka Forum for Dignity and other organisations.
- The PFI, which emerged in the aftermath of the ban on the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), has projected itself as an organisation that fights for the rights of minorities, Dalits, and marginalised communities.
- The PFI has itself never contested elections.
- The PFI does not maintain records of its members, and it has been difficult for law enforcement agencies to pin crimes on the organisation after making arrests.
- In 2009, a political outfit named the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) evolved out of the PFI, with the aim of taking up the political issues of Muslims, Dalits, and other marginalised communities. The PFI is a key provider of ground workers for the SDPI’s political activities.
- A large number of criminal cases have been registered by different states over the last few years against the PFI and its leaders and members for their involvement in many violent acts.

G. Tidbits

1. Carbon Dating

Context: Recently, the Varanasi district court issued notice to the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee on an application which sought carbon-dating of the disputed structure known to have been found inside the premises of the Gyanvapi mosque.

Carbon Dating:

- Carbon dating is one of archaeology's mainstream methods for dating organic objects up to 50,000 years old. This method was developed by the American physicist Willard F. Libby in 1946.
- This method is based on the idea of radiative decay of Carbon-14 isotopes over thousands of years.
- Radioactive molecules decay at a specific rate dependent on the atomic number and mass of the decaying atoms. This constant can be used to determine the approximate age of the decaying material through the ratio of radioactive isotopes to the estimated initial concentration of these isotopes at the time of the organism's death.
- Scientists have concluded that very little change has occurred in the ratio of Carbon-12 to Carbon-14 isotopes in the atmosphere meaning that the relationship between these two should be very similar to how they remain today.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with regards to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India: (Level – Medium)

1. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.
2. The TRAI Act was amended in 2000 which established a Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI.
3. The TRAI consists of a Chairperson, two whole-time members and two part-time members, all of whom are appointed by the Government of India.

Choose the correct code:

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

Answer: d

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct**, The [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India \(TRAI\)](https://byjus.com) was established with effect from February 20, 1997, by an Act of Parliament, called the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 to regulate telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs

for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.

- **Statement 02 is correct**, The TRAI Act was amended by an ordinance, effective from 24 January 2000, establishing a Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI.
- **Statement 03 is correct**, TRAI consists of a chairman, at least two full-time members and not more than two-part members, all appointed by the Union Government.
 - The members should have special knowledge of, or professional experience in telecom, industry, finance, accountancy, law, management and consumer affairs.
 - Only those senior or retired Government officers can be appointed as members who have served for at least three years as secretary/additional secretary to the Union or State Governments.

Q2. The '1098 helpline number' in India is related to which of the following? (Level – Easy)

- a) Women rights
- b) Children helpline
- c) Minority welfare
- d) Tribals helpline

Answer: b

Explanation:

- '1098 helpline number' is a 24/7/365 free, emergency phone service for children in need of aid and assistance.
- A non-governmental organisation CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF) is the nodal agency supported by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development responsible for setting up, managing and monitoring the CHILDLINE 1098 service all over the country.

Q3. Consider the following statements with regards to Nikah Halala: (Level – Medium)

1. In India, the Muslim Women's Protection of Rights on Marriage, passed after the invalidation of triple talaq by the Supreme Court, is silent on nikah halala.
2. The Koran allows a man to divorce his wife a maximum of two times.
3. In Saudi Arabia, where divorces are on the rise, the number of halala cases is increasing drastically.

Choose the correct code:

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

d) All of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct**, Nikah halala is a Muslim personal law that requires a woman to marry and have physical relations with another man in order to return to her first husband. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 declares the instant divorce granted by the pronouncement of talaq three times as void and illegal. But the Act is silent on nikah halala which takes place as a consequence of triple talaq.
- **Statement 02 is correct**, The holy book of Islam, the Koran contains numerous verses dealing with the issues of marriage, child-rearing, divorces, marital obligations, reconciliation between estranged couples and inheritance. The Koran allows a man to divorce his wife a maximum of two times. On both occasions, separated by at least one menstrual cycle.
- **Statement 03 is incorrect**, In Saudi Arabia, where divorces are on the rise, no cases of halala have been reported. No case has been reported from the UAE, Kuwait and Yemen either.

Q4. The Vineet Narain case of 1997 led to which of the following? (Level – Easy)

- a) Reforms in the CBI
- b) Restoration of judicial review powers of the High Courts
- c) Striking down of the EWS quota introduced by the Government
- d) Prohibition on Manual Scavenging in India

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The 1997 judgement in the Vineet Narain vs Union of India case, popularly known as the Jain hawala case led to sweeping changes in the [Central Bureau of Investigation](#).
- The Supreme Court gave directions to fix the tenure of the CBI Director for two years and statutory status to the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).

Q5. Which of the following adopted a law on data protection and privacy for its citizens known as 'General Data Protection Regulation' in April 2016 and started implementation of it from 25th May, 2018? (Level – Medium) (CSE Prelims-2019)

- a) Australia
- b) Canada
- c) The European Union
- d) The USA

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The General Data Protection Regulation is a regulation in European Union law on data protection and privacy for the citizens of the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA).
- It also addresses the export of personal data outside the EU and EEA areas.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Critically evaluate the need for inner party democracy in India's political system. (250 words; 15 marks) (GS-2 ; Polity)
2. What are the reasons behind the recent clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan? What interests does India have in the region? (250 words; 15 marks) (GS-2; International Relations)