

06 Nov 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis



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A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. Snakebites deaths in India

Syllabus: Health Infrastructure in India

Mains: Challenges and Potential of Healthcare Sector in India.

Context: A study estimated that a vast majority of snakebite deaths globally — up to 64,100 of the 78,600 deaths — occur in India.

Introduction:

- A study by the George Institute for Global Health, India along with researchers from 21 other countries, published in Nature Communications recently estimated that a vast majority of snakebite deaths globally up to 64,100 of the 78,600 deaths occur in India.
- Snakebite (a [neglected tropical disease](#)) is a public health problem in India and many other low- and middle-income countries.
- The study also suggests that the global target of halving the number of deaths and injuries from snakebite by 2030 is unlikely to be met.

Snakebite Deaths in India:

- The study used data from verbal autopsy and civil registration details to estimate snakebite deaths from the Global Burden of Disease 2019.
- Previous global estimate of deaths due to snakebite was in 2008.
- Study shows snakebite deaths in India are at almost 80% of the global deaths.
- Within India, Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of deaths, estimated to be up to 16,100, followed by Madhya Pradesh (up to 5,790 deaths), and Rajasthan (up to 5,230 deaths).
- The study estimated that the age-standardised death rate (which accounts for different age-structures in different countries, thus allowing comparison between countries) in India, at 4.0 per 1,00,000, is also among the highest globally compared to the global figure of 0.8 deaths per 1,00,000.

- Within India, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan have even higher age-standardised death rates, at 6.5, 6.0, and 5.8 per 1,00,000, respectively.

Snakebite as a public health problem:

- Only Somalia has a higher age-standardised death rate than India at 4.5 per 1,00,000 which indicates a failing health system in India leading to high deaths in those who are bitten by venomous snakes.
- India lacks a specific national strategy to address the burden of snakebite in India. This implies that there is no programme by the government to either prevent snakebite or in preventing deaths or disability from snakebites.
- Recognising snakebite as a public health problem, Indian Council of Medical Research recently launched a national survey to estimate the burden.
- There is a massive shortage of medical staff, infrastructure and last mile connectivity in rural areas. g.: Doctor: Population 1:1800 and 78% doctors cater to urban India (population of 30%).
- Snakebite victims approaching a traditional healer for treatment instead of a primary health facility is another factor for increased deaths.
- The antivenom manufactured in India is exclusively against venoms of four major snake species, and is not effective against other species prevalent in different regions.

Way Forward:

- A strategy focusing on snakebite prevention and strengthening of the health system is the need of the hour.
 - As snakebite predominantly affects the rural poor, a national strategy for snakebite brings in an equity focus which will bring benefits for other neglected tropical diseases, which affect the same communities.
- Snakebite at its core is due to snake-human-environment conflict tied to many socio-cultural-religious aspects. Therefore, understanding this conflict and code signing community-based programmes for prevention of snakebites are required.
- There is a need for comprehensive strengthening of primary healthcare systems focusing on both access and quality of care across all health systems blocks, instead of a sole focus on snake antivenom availability.
- A national strategy to address snakebite can bring in the investments for health systems strengthening the community-based programmes.

Nut Graf: Recent study shows that India is responsible for about 80% of the global deaths due to snakebite. The global target to halve snakebite deaths by 2030, cannot be attained without action in India. The call to end neglected tropical diseases under the Sustainable Development Goals framework has brought the problem of snakebite into focus.

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Supreme Court on sealed cover affidavits

Syllabus: Means to ensure Transparency & Accountability in Governance

Mains: Rationale and the criticism against judicial practice of sealed cover affidavits

Context: Supreme Court gave a way out of sealed cover affidavits in a recent suggestion to the government and its agencies.

Introduction:

- The Supreme Court has suggested a way out of routinely filing documents in sealed covers, especially in cases touching on national security.
- The court said the government could redact the sensitive portions and show the rest to the petitioners.
- This would address both the state's concerns about "national security" and the "right to know" of petitioners.
- The Supreme Court also said that the government has to present "extenuating circumstances" before confidentially passing materials to the court without disclosing them to the petitioners.
- The observations came during a hearing on the challenge to the telecast ban on the Kerala-based Media One TV channel.
 - The government wanted to pass on its internal files in a sealed cover. The government was reluctant to share the details with Media One TV channel as its security clearance was revoked in January, 2022 on the grounds of "national security and public order".
- According to the Media One TV channel's argument, a sealed cover affidavit would compel the judges to accept the state's version, that too, in cases in which the government's narrative is under challenge and the fundamental rights of the petitioners are at stake.

Sealed cover jurisprudence:

- It is a practice used by the Supreme Court and sometimes lower courts, of asking for or accepting information from government agencies in sealed envelopes that can only be accessed by judges.
- There is no specific law that defines the doctrine of sealed cover.
- The Supreme Court derives its power to use it from Rule 7 of order XIII of the Supreme Court Rules and Section 123 of the Indian Evidence Act of 1872.

- Under the said rule, if the Chief Justice or court directs certain information to be kept under sealed cover or considers it of confidential nature, no party would be allowed access to the contents of such information, except if the Chief Justice himself orders that the opposite party be allowed to access it.
 - It also mentions that information can be kept confidential if its publication is not considered to be in the interest of the public.
- As for the Evidence Act, official unpublished documents relating to state affairs are protected and a public officer cannot be compelled to disclose such documents.
- Information may also be sought in secrecy or confidence when its publication impedes an ongoing investigation, such as details which are part of the police's case diary; or breaches the privacy of an individual.

Criticism against sealed cover jurisprudence:

- It is against the principles of transparency and accountability of the Indian justice system, standing in contrast to the idea of an open court, where decisions can be subjected to public scrutiny.
- It increases the scope for arbitrariness in court decisions, as judges are supposed to lay down reasoning for their decisions.
- Not providing access to such documents to the accused parties obstructs their passage to a fair trial and adjudication.
- The need for such special privilege to the government is questioned when existing provisions like in-camera hearings already provide sufficient protection to sensitive information.

Judiciary's observation:

- In *P. Gopalakrishnan V. The State of Kerala* 2019, the Supreme Court had said that disclosure of documents to the accused is constitutionally mandated, even if the investigation is ongoing and said documents may lead to breakthrough in the investigation.
- The Supreme Court in the *INX Media* case in 2019, had criticised the Delhi High Court for basing its decision to deny bail to the former union minister on documents submitted by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a sealed cover as it would be against the concept of fair trial.
- In the *S.P. Velumani* case 2022, the Supreme Court criticised the Madras High Court's decision to permit a report to remain "shrouded in sealed cover" when the State had not even claimed any specific privilege.
- In *Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India* case 2020, the court said sensitive portions in government records "can be redacted or such material can be claimed as privileged, if the state justifies such redaction on the grounds, as allowed under the law".

Nut Graf: *The Supreme Court being critical about the government's practice of submitting sealed affidavits suggested the government could redact the sensitive portions and show the rest to the petitioners. This highlights the right to information as an important facet of the right to freedom of speech and expression.*

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. How is India planning to end child marriage?

Syllabus: *Issues related to children.*

Mains: *Child marriage.*

Prelims: *Recent trends about child marriage.*

Context: UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage team will visit India.

Background Details:

- The steering committee of The Global Programme to End Child Marriage will visit India to assess the status of Child marriage in India. It will particularly study the impact of the pandemic on the number of child brides.
- It should be noted that according to UNFPA-UNICEF, nearly 10 million children globally would have become child brides as a consequence of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#).
- Recent Trends in India related to child marriages:
 - Child marriages reduced in India from 47.4% in the year 2005-06 to 26.8% in the year 2015-16. It registered a decrease of around 21% in a decade.
 - As per [National Family Health Survey 5 \(NFHS-5\)](#), it reduced by about 3.5% in five years and reached 23.3% in 2020-21.

Status of Child marriage across the world:

- As per [UNICEF](#), approximately 12 million girls globally are married in childhood every year. And if accelerated efforts are not made, nearly 150 million more girls would be married before attaining the age of 18 by the year 2030.
- Though South Asia has made significant progress in the previous decade, where the share of child marriages reduced from around 50% to 30%, the progress is uneven across the region.
- According to health experts and rights activists, child marriage is not only against children's rights but also causes more maternal and infant deaths. Moreover, children born to adolescent mothers are more prone to stunted growth, as they have low weight at birth. NFHS states that child stunting stood at 35.5% in 2019-21.
- The efforts to reduce child marriage should be significantly accelerated to achieve the target set under [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\)](#) and end the practice by 2030.

India-specific findings:

- Even though India is witnessing a declining trend, 23.3% is still a high percentage in a country with a population of approximately 141.2 crores.
- 8 States in India have more child marriages in comparison to the national average. The states with the highest share of child marriages are West Bengal, Bihar, and Tripura. It is found that more than 40% of women in the age group of 20-24 years were married before the age of 18 years.
- Among the category of big States, Bihar and West Bengal have a very high prevalence of girl-child marriage. Child marriages are also very popular in tribal states with a large population. For instance, Jharkhand has 32.2% of women (in the 20-24 age group) who became child brides. It should also be noted that the infant mortality rate is 37.9% and the prevalence of anemia in the women of age group 15 to 19 is 65.8% (as per NFHS-5).
- Similarly, Assam registered an increase in the incidents of child marriage from 30.8% in 2015-16 to 31.8% in 2019-20.
- States that have shown a decline in the share of child marriages are:
 - Madhya Pradesh: It reduced from 32.4% in 2015-16 to 23.1% in 2020-21.
 - Rajasthan: It also registered a decline from 35.4% to 25.4% during the same period.
 - Odisha: It declined from 21.3% in 2015-16 to 20.5%. It is just below the national average.
- States with better literacy rates, health outcomes, and social indices perform much better than other states. For example:
 - In Kerala, women who got married before the age of 18 stood just at 6.3% in the year 2019-20. The share was 7.6% in the year 2015-16.

- Similarly, Tamil Nadu showed improvement from 16.3% in 2015-16 to 12.8% in the year 2019-20.
- It is evident from the data that child marriage is a key determinant of high fertility, poor maternal and child health, and lower social status of women.
- Data shows that girls with the education of primary level or below experienced higher levels of child marriages.

Policy interventions to deal with Child marriages in India:

- There are various laws to protect children from violation of human and other rights. Some of these laws are the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, and the [Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012](#).
- Moreover, a parliamentary standing committee is deliberating on raising the marriageable age of women to 21. The union cabinet has already cleared the proposal.
- Marriages in India are governed by various personal laws and the government is looking forward to amend them. However, many experts argue that this will not be enough to end the practice of child marriage.
- There are also various centralized schemes like the [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#) that are working on improving the factors associated with child marriage. Moreover, several states have launched their own initiatives for the overall development of a child's future. For instance,
 - Kanyashree scheme of West Bengal provides financial assistance to girls wanting to pursue higher studies.
 - Bihar and other States provide cycles to the girl students.
 - U.P. has also launched a scheme to encourage girls to return to school.

Way Ahead:

- The solution to the issue of child marriage lies in girls empowerment apart from ensuring proper public infrastructure and addressing societal norms.
- Rights workers and welfare officials suggest that more efforts should be made on the factors that are closely associated with child marriages. Some of these measures are:
 - Poverty eradication
 - Better education and public infrastructure facilities for children
 - Increasing social awareness about inequalities, regressive social norms, health, and nutrition.
 - Strict laws with proper implementation.
 - Girl children should get adequate education and vocational training for financial independence.
- It should be ensured that Child Protection Committees and Child Marriage Prohibition officers are working efficiently and activating community support groups at the gram

panchayat level. Such efforts can lead to building child marriage-free villages on the lines of Odisha. Odisha now have more than 12000 such villages.

- It should be noted that significant progress was registered in Karnataka, where the share of child marriages declined from 42% in 2005-06 to 21.3% in 2019-20. A series of interventions and recommendations from the Shivraj Patil Committee report (2011) was adopted by the government of Karnataka to reduce the prevalence of child marriage. Some of the measures adopted are:
 - Several thousand child marriage prohibition officers were notified.
 - Around 90,000 local gram panchayat members were roped in to spread awareness about the illegality of child marriage and its consequence on the maternal as well as child's health.

Nut Graf: *The issue of child marriage is highly prevalent across the globe. This has been further worsened due to the pandemic. India has made significant progress in this direction in the previous decades, but more efforts are required to achieve the target of ending the practice of child marriages by 2030.*

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Ghaem 100

- Iran's Revolutionary Guards recently tested Ghaem 100.
- It is a three-stage, solid fuel launcher that will be able to place satellites weighing 80 kg in an orbit 500 km above the Earth's surface.
- The new rocket will be used for future launches of Iran's Nahid communications satellites.
- This follows the launch of an Iranian military spy satellite by Russia in August in 2022 and the first flight of the country's Zoljanah suborbital rocket in 2021 and the country's first homegrown launch of a military satellite in 2020 on a Qassad rocket.
- The U.S fears the same long-range ballistic technology used to put satellites into orbit could also be used to launch nuclear warheads.

2. "Italian Pyramid"

- It is the world's longest-running high-altitude research facility. The laboratory was installed and became operational in September 1990.
- The Pyramid International Observatory is a high altitude scientific research centre located at 16,568 ft.in the Khumbu Valley, Sagarmatha National Park, at the base of the Nepali side of Everest.
- Since 1990, it has been offering the international scientific community an opportunity to study the environment, climate, human physiology and geology in a remote mountain protected area.
- The Pyramid is jointly managed by the Ev-K2-CNR Committee and the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).
- To date, 520 scientific missions have been carried out there by 220 researchers from 143 different scientific institutions in several nations.
- Its location at a high altitude and low latitude—makes it crucial to research on critical fields such as climate change, biodiversity, high-altitude physiology and the effects of pollution.
- It also acts as a point of reference for local populations and tourists who could take advantage of the advanced telecommunications systems available there to send urgent messages to Kathmandu or abroad.
- Facility is falling apart as the funding for the facility was cut short in 2014, and maintenance for existing lab equipment is now done by one lab manager.
- Researchers say even the limited data the observatory still collects are important for studying the effects of climate change in the region.

3. World heritage glaciers

- As per recent study by UNESCO in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a third of the glaciers on the UNESCO World Heritage list are under threat, regardless of efforts to limit temperature increases.
 - The warning followed a study of 18,600 glaciers at 50 World Heritage sites.
 - The study showed that these glaciers have been retreating at an accelerated rate since 2000 due to CO₂ emissions, which are warming temperatures.
 - They are currently losing 58 billion tonnes of ice every year — equivalent to the combined annual water use of France and Spain — and are responsible for nearly 5% of observed global sea level rise.
- However, the study said it was still possible to save the other two-thirds if the rise in global temperature did not exceed 1.5°C compared to the pre-industrial era.

- Covering about 10% of the planet's surface, ice masses are crucial for sustaining life on Earth.
 - Glacial ecosystems provide vital resources to a significant proportion of the global population because of their high biological diversity and ecosystem services such as sediment sinks, freshwater reservoirs and habitats for biodiversity.
 - About 50% of the global biodiversity hotspots on the planet are located in basins drained by glaciers and contain a third of the entire terrestrial species diversity .
 - Often referred to as natural "water towers", glaciers in mountains provide lowlands with essential freshwater supply.

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. 'Ghaem 100' recently seen in news is: (Level-Difficult)

- A. Iran's first three-stage satellite launch vehicle.
- B. Iran's latest Ballistic Missile Program.
- C. Russia's thermonuclear-armed Intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).
- D. Longest-range missile North Korea has tested till date.

Answer: A

Explanation:

- Iran recently tested Ghaem 100.
- It is a three-stage, solid fuel launcher that will be able to place satellites weighing 80 kg in an orbit 500 km above the Earth's surface.
- The new rocket will be used for future launches of Iran's Nahid communications satellites.

Q2. Sunda Strait lies between: (Level-Medium)

- A. Java and Sumatra
- B. Malay Peninsula and Sumatra
- C. Java and Malay Peninsula
- D. Sumatra and Borneo

Answer: A

Explanation: The Sunda Strait is a strait which is between the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Java. This strait connects the Java Sea with the Indian Ocean.



Image Source-Wikipedia

Q3. Consider the following statements: (Level-Medium)

1. Cheetah was declared extinct in India in 1952.
2. Asiatic cheetah is classified as “critically endangered” in the IUCN Red List
3. Asiatic cheetahs have been introduced into Kuno National Park under the cheetah reintroduction project.

How many of the given statements is/are INCORRECT?

- A. One statement only
- B. Two statements only
- C. All three statements
- D. None of the above

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct**, The fastest land animal, Cheetah, went extinct in 1952 in India due to too much reckless hunting activities.
- **Statement 02 is incorrect**, Asiatic Cheetahs have a very small population base and are listed as critically endangered species in the (IUCN) [Red List of Threatened Species](#).
- **Statement 03 is correct**, Asiatic Cheetahs - which had become extinct from India have been introduced into Kuno National Park under the [cheetah reintroduction project](#).
 - They were brought from Namibia - are being introduced in India under Project Cheetah, which is world's first inter-continental large wild carnivore translocation project.

Q4. Consider the following statements with respect to Raja Ram Mohan Roy: (Level-Difficult)

1. He represented Akbar II in England where he pleaded for his pension and allowances.
2. He started the Atmiya Sabha in 1814 as an effort against idol worship and superstitious beliefs.

3. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Alexander Duff jointly founded the Calcutta Unitarian Committee to promote education of women.

How many of the given statements is/are INCORRECT?

- A. One statement only
- B. Two statements only
- C. All three statements
- D. None of the above

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 01 is correct,** [Raja Ram Mohan Roy](#) visited England as an ambassador of the Mughal king Akbar Shah II (father of Bahadur Shah) where he pleaded for his pension and allowances.
 - Akbar II awarded him the title 'Raja'.
- **Statement 02 is correct,** Atmiya Sabha was a philosophical discussion circle in India started by Ram Mohan Roy in 1814 in Calcutta. They used to conduct debate and discussion sessions on philosophical topics, and also used to promote free and collective thinking and social reform.
- **Statement 03 is incorrect,** The Calcutta Unitarian Committee was jointly founded by William Adam and Rammohun Roy in September 1821.
 - It sought to bring together prominent Brahmins who were friends of Roy's and supporters of his agenda for the promotion of religious monotheism and social reform.

Q5. The term 'Intended Nationally Determined Contributions' is sometimes seen in the news in the context of; (Level-Medium) (PYQ-CSE-2016)

- A. Pledges made by the European countries to rehabilitate refugees from the war-affected Middle East
- B. Plan of action outlined by the countries of the world to combat climate change.
- C. Capital contributed by the member countries in the establishment of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.
- D. Plan of action outlined by the countries of the world regarding Sustainable Development Goals

Answer: B

Explanation:

- [Intended Nationally Determined Contributions \(INDC\)](#) are (intended) reductions in greenhouse gas emissions under the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC).

- The INDCs combine the top-down system of a [United Nations](#) climate agreement with bottom-up system-in elements through which countries put forward their agreements in the context of their national capabilities, circumstances and priorities with the goal of reducing greenhouse emissions.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. [Child marriage violates children's rights and places them at high risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. In the light of the statement, discuss the measures to be taken to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriages.](#) (15 Marks; 250 Words) (GS-2; Social Issues)
2. [India is among the countries dramatically affected by snakebite. Write a note on India's efforts to prevent and control the menace of snakebites.](#) (10 Marks, 150 Words) (GS-2; Health)