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08 June 2021: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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A. GS 1 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

B. GS 2 Related

Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

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1. Draft Rules for live-streaming court proceedings out

Context:

The Supreme Court (SC) e-Committee has released the **'Draft Model Rules for Live-Streaming and Recording of Court Proceedings'**.

Details:

- Recently, the Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana had said that **the process to make live stream a reality was actively under consideration.**
- The Rules are part of **the National Policy and Action Plan for implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the judiciary.**
- The Rules would cover **live-streaming** and **recording of proceedings** in **High Courts, lower courts and tribunals.**

Recommendations:

The rules intend to **balance between access to information and concerns of privacy and confidentiality**. Following are the recommendations made by the SC e-Committee.

- A 10-minute delay in transmission.
- Exclusion of **communally sensitive cases**.
- Exclusion of matters that involve **sexual offences** and **gender violence against women**.
- **Matrimonial matters**, **cases under the** Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) and **under the Juvenile Justice** (Care and Protection of Children) **Act** would also be exempted from live stream.
- The **Bench can exempt any case** it considers antithetical to the administration of justice. The reasons must be recorded in writing.
- The final decision as to whether or not to allow the live-streaming of the proceedings or any portion thereof will be of the Bench, however, it will be **guided by the principle of an open judicial process.**
- **Personal information** such as date of birth, home address, identity card number, bank account information, and the personal information of related parties, such as close relatives, witnesses and other participants, **will be deleted or muted.**

Significance:

- **Amidst the national lockdown**, the Supreme Court and several other courts have been **holding virtual proceedings**. Live-streaming of court proceedings will help **those even in distant places to witness court proceedings.**
- It has the potential of **throwing up an option to the public to witness proceedings** which they otherwise could not have **due to logistical issues and infrastructural restrictions**.
- The **issue of limited media access** can also be **resolved** through live streaming.

2. SC urged to stop illegal adoption

Context:

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) had urged the Supreme Court to intervene in the matter of illegal adoption taking place in the backdrop of the pandemic.

Issue:

- Private individuals and organisations have been **actively collecting data on children orphaned during the pandemic** while claiming that they want to assist families and children in adoption.
- **Social media posts** are circulating that the children are up for adoption – which **violates the Juvenile Justice Act.**

Details:

- NCPCR urged the court to direct the States and Union Territories to **not place any confidential information about children in the public domain** which would make them **susceptible to trafficking.**
- **Section 74 of the Juvenile Justice Act prohibits the disclosure of the identity of children** with regard to the name, school, age, address or any information which would reveal the essential details of the child.
- The adoption of orphaned/abandoned/ surrendered children **is lawful only after the adoption procedure as given under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 is followed** and the final adoption order is passed by the prescribed authority.
- The Commission asked the court to direct the States and UTs to create State **Juvenile Justice Funds** to enable the credit of donations/ contributions/ subscriptions directly in the notified account.

Read more on this issue covered in UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis. May 15th, 2021 CNA.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China hosts ASEAN Foreign Ministers

Context:

China is hosting Foreign Ministers from the **10 ASEAN** countries.

Details:

- China's Foreign Minister will hold bilateral meetings with all the visiting Ministers.
- He would also chair a meeting of the **Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC)** with Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.
  - LMC was established in 2016 to promote multifaceted cooperation at the sub-regional level among the countries of Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Significance:

- The country is pushing for **closer economic cooperation** and **aligning COVID-19 recovery efforts**.

- It also looks to **push back against** the recent **regional outreach of the Quad grouping**.
  - China has for long criticised the Quad — **the informal India, Australia, Japan and the United States grouping.**
- This marks a deepening of a period of **increasing Chinese engagement with Southeast Asia,** amid **intensifying U.S. efforts to build a regional coalition to counter China's rising power**.
- It **highlights the importance that Southeast Asia plays in key Chinese economic and strategic interests.**

Note:

- Terming of QUAD as "an Asian NATO" by Beijing has been criticised by the QUAD members.
- Chinese analysts have framed **ASEAN as a key space where Chinese and Quad initiatives may come in conflict with each other.**
- Chinese analysts believe that **Quad members will further rope in ASEAN members** to counter **China as Southeast Asia is of great significance to the U.S.' Indo-Pacific Strategy.**

2. Maldives wins UNGA election, India seeks close cooperation

Context:

In a first for the Maldives, Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid has been elected the President of the UN General Assembly for 2021-22.

Details:

- It was the **Asia Pacific group's turn** to take up the **76ᵗʰ Presidency of the General Assembly** for 2021-22.
- Maldives Foreign Minister won against Afghanistan's Zalmai Rassoul.

India's Role:

- India had made it clear to Afghanistan's government that it would be unable to support Mr. Rassoul as it had earlier declared its support for the Maldives publicly.
  - India shares close ties with both countries.
- The win was welcomed by the Indian diplomats who had been helping the Maldives canvass for him.

President of the United Nations General Assembly

- President of the United Nations General Assembly is a position voted for by representatives in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) **on a yearly basis.**
- The **President is the chair and presiding officer of the General Assembly.**
- The **presidency rotates annually** between the **five geographic groups**: African, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, Latin American and Caribbean, and Western European and other States.
- It is customary that **no permanent member of the United Nations Security Council ever serves as UNGA president.**

C. GS 3 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: HEALTH

1. Towards a stronger mental health strategy

<u>Context:</u>

- **COVID-19 has exacerbated mental health issues among the Indian population** due to lockdowns and related issues.

<u>Mental illness:</u>

- Mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health disorders that **affect one's emotion, thinking and behaviour.**

  - Mental illnesses include depression and anxiety disorders, psychotic disorders, mood disorders, substance use addiction, personality disorders and eating disorders. It also includes schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

- They are generally characterized by a combination of abnormal thoughts, perceptions, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others.

- Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities.

<u>Challenge posed by mental illness:</u>

Increasing burden of mental health issues:

- Both incidence and severity of mental illnesses are on the rise. The <u>WHO</u> estimates that at any given time 10% of the global population suffers from some form of mental illness.

- The proportional **contribution of mental disorders to the total disease burden has doubled between 1990 and 2017 in India.**

- As per the reports published in Lancet, **one in seven people in India had a mental disorder ranging from mild to severe in 2017.** The pandemic would have only increased this number.

Morbidity and mortality:

- As per the assessment by World Health Organization (WHO), there is a **10-25-year life expectancy reduction in patients with severe mental disorders,** thus, indicating the otherwise invisible impact of mental health on the overall well being of a person.

- Estimates suggest that depression, the most common mental disorder will be the second leading cause of disability worldwide.

- The majority of **suicides in the world are related to psychiatric problems or to the illnesses associated with mental health.**

  - Globally, the suicide rate was 10.6 per 1,00,000 population whereas, in India, it was 16.3 per 1,00,000 in 2016.

Stigmatization:

- Many people who have a mental illness do not want to talk about it because of the **stigma and discrimination attached to mental illness in societies**.

- Some of the effects of stigma include feelings of shame, hopelessness and isolation, leading to reluctance to ask for help or to get treatment and lack of understanding by family, friends or others.

- This results in a lack of detection and robs the potential advantage of early intervention in the treatment of mental illness.

For related information refer to:

UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis 11th Oct 2020

Increased vulnerability in certain sections:

- Though mental illness does not discriminate and can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, income, three-fourths of all mental illness begins by age 24.

- **Depressive disorders are more prevalent among females than males** which could be due to sexual abuse, gender discrimination, stress due to antenatal and postnatal issues and other reasons.

- The level of development, modernization and urbanization may also be a factor on which mental health depends as is observed in the trend where mental illness is a bigger challenge in the southern states compared to the northern states of India.

Measures being taken in India:

- India introduced the **National Mental Health Policy (NMHP)** in 2014 and a rights-based **Mental Healthcare Act in 2017**.

- The National Health Mission, National Adolescent Health Programme, and Ayushman Bharat also incorporate mental health within their ambit.

Lacunae in efforts:

Lack of requisite attention:

- There continues to be a lack of focussed attention given to mental health compared to other major diseases in India despite the increasing burden of mental health.

- **Mental health may not be the primary concern in developing economies like India** as there may be other communicable and non-communicable diseases that may be more prevalent.

Low expenditure on mental health infrastructure:

- The government expenditure on hospitals dealing with mental health issues as a percentage of total government expenditure on mental health is 1.3% in India. This is low compared to that observed in developed countries where it ranges from 3% to 15%.

  - As per the Lancet Public Health (2019) report **the median mental health spending across the world was around 2% of the total government health expenditure in 2015.** There was higher allocation in developed countries than in developing countries.

Low supporting infrastructure for mental health:

- The per capita availability of **mental hospitals, mental health units in general hospitals, mental health outpatient facilities, mental health day treatment facilities and community mental healthcare residential facilities** continue to be below the global average.

- Unlike in developed countries where there has been a growth of mental healthcare facilities in line with the increase in patients with mental health issues, there has been no such improvement in India.

Lack of trained workforce:

- The availability of **nurses, social workers and psychologists** working in the mental health sector (per 1,00,000 population) in India continue to be considerably below the global average.

<u>**Recommendations:**</u>

Increasing awareness on mental health:

- Given the lack of awareness when it comes to mental health, the administration should work towards creating adequate awareness on this issue.

  - Mental health is the foundation for emotions, thinking, communication, learning, resilience and self-esteem. Mental health is also key to relationships, personal and emotional well-being and contributions to community or society and hence should be **accorded equal emphasis along with that of physical well being**.

  - **Mental illness is just another medical condition that can be treated with appropriate medical interventions**.

- Given the potential of communities and families in the detection and treatment of mental healthcare issues, there should be relevant policies to facilitate community-based programmes on mental healthcare. **School-based programmes** on mental health could be an important intervention in this regard.

- The increased awareness will help destigmatize mental illness and help reduce discriminatory attitudes towards people suffering from mental illness.

Reducing treatment gap:

- To effectively address mental health issues, India needs to work towards reducing the treatment gap for mental disorders, by **increasing the availability of mental healthcare facilities and trained personnel in the mental health sector**.

- The government should focus on **universalizing mental healthcare** as well in India by ensuring **accessible, affordable and quality mental healthcare services for all**.

- This would require more fund allocation for mental healthcare. **A dedicated fund** for this sector would be a welcome move.
- The provision of **more community-based mental health services** would be a more effective, less costly and easily accessible alternative to the more traditional mental healthcare facilities.

Integrated approach:

- There is a need for an integrated approach for **detecting, treating, and managing a patient's mental health needs.**
  - Detecting would amount to a major intervention given that the lack of know-how results in a large proportion of the population suffering from mental health issues remaining oblivious to their mental illness.
  - More **accessible counselling facilities** would be a critical intervention in the early detection and treatment of mental illnesses.
  - The **availability of telephone-based helpline numbers and mental health apps** could help increase access to mental healthcare and address the huge gap between demand and supply when it comes to mental healthcare in India.

Conclusion:

- **Mental health issues are a major health challenge in the world today.**
- Access to health care and social services capable of providing treatment and social support is key to the fight against mental illness. The pandemic may be the best time to explore relevant policy options to universalize access to mental healthcare in India.

Additional information:

Linkage with recent events:

- The **withdrawal of world number 2 tennis player Naomi Osaka from the French Open** on account of extreme mental stress and anxiety through which the athlete was going through.
- This episode has raised the issue of mental well-being.

2. Connecting the dots to mitigate a third wave

Context:

- The abating second wave of the novel coronavirus and concerns associated with a possible third wave.

Reproduction Number (R_0):

- R_0 also referred to as the reproduction number is a mathematical term that indicates **how contagious an infectious disease is.**
- It indicates the **average number of new infections arising from one infected individual**.
- R_0 fluctuates over time during an epidemic. When R_0 is greater than 1, infected individuals infect more than one person on average and we observe increasing cases. When it is less than 1, cases are declining.

Determinants of R_0:

- R_0 depends on four factors:
  - **The duration of infectiousness of an infected person**
    - This depends on the **virus variant** as well as the medical interventions available to control the infectiousness.
  - **Opportunities infected individuals have to spread the infection to others**
    - **Super spreader events** where many individuals are infected by a small number of individuals has been a characteristic feature of COVID-19.
    - Increased **social mixing and large gatherings** are good opportunities for the spread of infection.
  - **The probability of transmission occurs given an opportunity**
    - Not taking proper preventive measures like **social distancing and the use of masks in public spaces** can lead to increased transmission.
    - The transmission of a virus is also dependant on the mutant variant. The B.1.617.2, recently known as the delta variant, is known to be much more transmissible.
  - **The average susceptibility of a population to infection**
    - Susceptible individuals lack immunity derived through **prior infection or immunisation**.

Measures needed to avoid a third wave:

- The understanding of the determinants of the reproduction number can help understand the dynamics of a pandemic and will therefore help mitigate and prepare for future waves.
- Following measures could be taken to **decrease the determinants so as to keep R_0 as low as possible.**

Approach in line with the dynamic nature of the pandemic:

- **Genome sequencing** should be undertaken to ensure early recognition of new variants of concern.
- The isolation and quarantining guidelines, treatment protocol should be revisited with the mutating virus and scientific evidence related to it.

Reducing opportunities for infection:

- **Mass gatherings should be restricted.**
- **Localized lockdowns** can be implemented to substantially reduce opportunities for transmission.

Reducing the probability of transmission:

- Transmission can be reduced through increased **use of face masks and improved ventilation**.
  - Research from neighbouring Bangladesh indicates that providing free masks together with community monitors can help improve the adoption of such measures.

Understanding and protecting the susceptible population:

- The susceptible population can be increased by **increasing immunisation coverage.**

- The administration should undertake well-designed **seroprevalence surveys** to understand how much of the population remains susceptible and where they reside.

- Further studies into questions about waning immunity and the potential for reinfections should be prioritized for a better understanding of the infection.

Category: EDUCATION

1. School ranks

Context:

- Education Ministry has released the **Performance Grading Index (PGI)** for 2019-20.

For information on this refer to:

UPSC Comprehensive News Analysis of June 7th 2021

Performance Grading Index:

- The Performance Grading Index is a tool to provide insights on the **status of school education in States and UTs** including key levers that drive their performance and critical areas for improvement.

- The score is derived using databases on **70 parameters such as access, equity, governance processes, infrastructure and facilities, and learning outcomes** that are mostly self-reported by the States but also vetted by the Centre, with **National Achievement Survey data** also being incorporated.

Significance of the PGI index:

- The PGI will help the States and UTs **pinpoint the gaps and accordingly prioritize areas for intervention.**

- The PGI will help create a **resource-sharing system** that low-performing States can tap into. The PGI can act as a good source of information for best practices followed by States and UTs which can be emulated in other states.

- Through this initiative, the Union Education Ministry aims to **get States into a competitive mode in upgrading their school education system.**

- The Index will propel the States and Union Territories (UTs) towards undertaking multi-pronged interventions that will focus on **improving the quality of education**. The PGI by shifting the focus from the issue of access to the issue of quality of education will help in **realizing optimal education outcomes.**

Way forward:

- Need to address the infrastructure gap by ensuring **sufficient funds for the school education sector.**

- COVID-19 has had a detrimental impact on access to education for the poor and vulnerable class children. These **equity issues will need to be dealt** with by bridging the gaps, particularly on digital tools, infrastructure and subsidies for access.

- The available evidence points to **governance processes being the weak link in some States**. Thus measures to help improve the governance process need to be incorporated in future policies and approaches.

- The PGI scores show that the southern and western States are on firm ground to achieve this, while those in central India and parts of the east and northeast are less resourced. Thus, there is a need for **relevant policies and resource supply to these areas to help correct the inequity.**

F. Prelims Facts

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Tidbits

1. Govt. will revert to centralised procurement of vaccines: Modi

What's in News?

The Prime Minister has announced that India would revert to a system of centralised procurement of vaccines against COVID-19.

- **Free vaccines** have been announced for the **18-44 age group as well**.

- **25% of procurement** of vaccines is kept open for the **private sector**.

- The announcement comes a week after the **Supreme Court asked for an affidavit from the Centre on how the sum of ₹35,000 crore allocated in the Union Budget for vaccines** has been spent so far.

- The Supreme Court had slammed the Centre on three cardinal issues:
  - decentralised procurement of vaccines
  - differential pricing
  - paid vaccination for citizens in the 18-44 age group under its 'Liberalised Vaccine Policy'

Other measures:

- Free ration distribution scheme for 80 crore beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana has been extended till November 2021.

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana:

- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** (PMGKAY) is a part of **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP)** to help the poor fight the battle against Covid-19.

- PMGKAY provides **5 kg of rice or wheat** (according to regional dietary preferences) **per person.**

- The **foodgrains** will be allocated free-of-cost at **5 Kg per person per month to the beneficiaries** covered under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) over and above NFSA foodgrains.

- It is being operated by the Department of Food and Public Distribution under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

- The **Government of India is bearing 100% financial burden.**

2. Farmer protests increased fivefold since 2017: CSE report

What's in News?

According to data collated by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), **farmer protests increased fivefold since 2017.**

Findings:

- Apart from the three contentious Central farm laws, procurement and agricultural market price-related failures have contributed to a fivefold increase in major farmers' protests since 2017.
- In 2017, there were 34 major protests across 15 States. The number has now shot up to 165 protests across 22 States and Union Territories.
- **Reasons for protests:**
  - Large numbers of farmers are fighting against market failures and demanding fair prices.
  - There are battles against acquisition of farm land for development projects, including highway and airport construction.
  - Few agitations have demanded loan waivers or have been organised to protest poor insurance coverage and delayed compensation.
  - The arrests of protesting farm leaders have also led to further stirs.
- The report notes that **India now has more farm labourers than landowning farmers and cultivators.**
- The CSE has called for **better maintenance of agricultural data**, noting that 14 States had actually witnessed a **deterioration in the quality of their land records.**

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. With reference to Aravalli Range, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The Aravalli Mountain range passes through three states.
2. The highest peak is Guru Shikhar.
3. It is the oldest range of fold mountains in India.

Options:

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 2 and 3 only
c. 1 and 3 only
d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Aravalli Mountain range passes through Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

- Guru Shikhar in the Arbuda Mountains of Rajasthan is the highest peak in the Aravalli Mountain range.
- It is the oldest range of Fold Mountains in India. The natural history of the Aravalli Range dates back to times when the Indian Plate was separated from the Eurasian Plate by an ocean.

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. According to the Juvenile Justice Act 2015, juveniles charged with heinous crimes and who are between the ages of 15-18 years would be tried as adults and processed through the adult justice system.
2. "Heinous Offences" include the offences for which the minimum punishment under the Indian Penal Code or any other law for the time being in force is imprisonment for five years or more

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a. 1 only
b. 2 only
c. Both
d. None

Answer: d

Explanation:

- According to the Juvenile Justice Act 2015, juveniles charged with heinous crimes and who are between the ages of 16-18 years would be tried as adults and processed through the adult justice system.
- Juvenile justice procedure has categorized the offence into 3 types, petty, serious and heinous.
- "Heinous Offences" include the offences for which the minimum punishment under the Indian Penal Code or any other law for the time being in force is imprisonment for seven years or more.

Q3. In the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC), an initiative of six countries, which of the following is/are not a participant/participants?

1. Bangladesh
2. Cambodia
3. China
4. Myanmar
5. Thailand
6. India

Options:

a. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
b. 1 and 6 only

c. 3, 4 and 5 only

d. 1, 2 and 5 only

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism (LMC) was formally launched in March 2016.

- It is an initiative of China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

- India and Bangladesh are not a part of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation.

Q4. Which of the following countries border Peru?

1. Venezuela
2. Colombia
3. Paraguay
4. Chile
5. Bolivia

Options:

a. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only

b. 2, 4 and 5 only

c. 1, 3 and 4 only

d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: b

Explanation:

Q5. Regarding 'carbon credits', which one of the following statements is not correct? (UPSC 2011)

a. The carbon credit system was ratified in conjunction with the Kyoto Protocol.
b. Carbon credits are awarded to countries or groups that have reduced greenhouse gases below their emission quota.
c. The goal of the carbon credit system is to limit the increase of carbon dioxide emission.
d. Carbon credits are traded at a price fixed from time to time by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The carbon credit system was ratified in conjunction with the Kyoto Protocol.
- Carbon credits are awarded to countries or groups that have reduced greenhouse gases below their emission quota.
- The goal of the carbon credit system is to limit the increase of carbon dioxide emission.
- Carbon credit prices are traded on an exchange. So, their prices are never fixed.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. What do you understand by the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)? Discuss its impact on the Indian Monsoons. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [GS 1, Geography]
2. As the curve of coronavirus infection spikes, depression and despair are also likely to increase. Explain what measures have to be taken to overcome the silent pandemic of anxiety and mental ailments. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [GS2, Health]