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Articles of the day - THE HINDU (16-12-2019)

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II

Prelims & Mains practice questions

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Pleas in SC speak of past judgments (GS-2)

Navtej Singh Johar case dealt with the decriminalization of homosexuality.

Anwar Ali Sarkar verdict of the Supreme Court states that if at all the state ventures to classify people on the basis of religion, it should be reasonable, based on intelligible differentia and have a rational basis with the objective sought to be achieved by the law.

The Constitution Bench in the **S.R. Bommai judgment** lays down that the State cannot favour any particular religion. It is the government's duty to accord equal treatment to members of all faiths.

A Constitution Bench in its **Shayara Bano (triple talaq case)** held that legislation which is manifestly arbitrary, capricious, irrational, excessive or disproportionate should be struck down.

2. Delay in sending official notifications to Parliament (GS-2)

A study by a Parliamentary panel revealed that out of 233 statutory notifications containing rules and regulations from 14 Ministries, 125 notifications were presented to Parliament after a delay ranging from one to ten months, thereby withholding information that should be available to all members.

As per the rules, the notifications are required to be laid on the Table of the House within 15 days of their publication in the Gazette if the House is in session, and if not, within 15 days of the commencement of the next session.

The panel on Subordinate Legislation has taken a serious view of the delay and recorded its displeasure over the lackadaisical approach that negates the principle of accountability of the Executive to the Parliament and the Constitutional mandate of the Parliament to monitor the functioning of the Executive.

3. Many mutinies (GS-2)

Context

Assam and the other Northeastern States erupted in revolt against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

North East

- **Diversity** - The Northeast is inhabited by diverse populations, sharing borders with several neighbors.
- **Politics of the region** - Assertive ethnic politics, secessionism, and resistance to migration into the region, has been a defining character of the area.

- **Genuine grievances** – Grievances of indigenous populations are genuine. It is difficult to try to resolve them by privileging one group over another.
- **Mindless application of religion** – Applying a religious test to such an exercise is mindless and dangerous.
- **Managing diversity** – The Northeast’s ethnic divergences have been delicately managed with the collaboration of local power-brokers and grant of special property and cultural rights to communities.
- **Invoking faultlines** – CAA aggravated dormant faultlines and inflames new passions. It has wrecked the Assam Accord of 1985 and exhumed sleeping hostilities.

Upholding diversity

- The government announced its commitment to the cultural and linguistic rights of Northeast communities.
- **What it takes** – meaningful gestures are needed to hold together diverse populations in the pursuit of common goals.

India – superpower

- The government has to understand that triggering numerous mutinies across the nation is an impossible route to be a superpower.
- **Kashmir** – the subterfuge on Kashmir involved responsible government functionaries lying to the public.
- **BJP in NE** – the party is in power in all seven States. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, it won a majority of the region’s 25 seats. It mistook its victories for approval of its Hindutva politics.
- **Hindutva** – it seeks to subordinate all identities to an overarching Hindu identity. But societies cannot be shoehorned into such narrow politics.
- **CAA’s intent** – The CAA seeks to provide a legal route to the politics of turning the Northeast’s ethnic faultlines into a religious one, by excluding Muslims alone.
- It pits Bengali-speaking Hindus who have moved around in the region against their Muslim counterparts.

Conclusion

The government must undo the misadventure of CAA. It must show courage and hold back, and the leadership must demonstrate statesmanship.

4. 'Maternity scheme exclusionary, need benefits for all' (GS-2)

Context:

Concerns over the implementation of the **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**.

Background:

- Under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) it is envisaged to give a benefit of 5,000 to pregnant and lactating mothers for the birth of the first child. This would be disbursed in three instalments upon meeting several conditionalities – registration of pregnancy, at least one antenatal check-up, registration of childbirth and vaccinations.
- The remaining cash incentive of up to ₹1,000 is to be given under a separate scheme called the Janani Suraksha Yojana so that on an “average” women get a total sum of 6,000. The objective is to compensate women for wage loss due to childbirth.
- The scheme is also a way to meet a woman’s right under the National Food Security Act, 2013.

Concerns:

- Three years after a pan-India maternity benefits programme promising ₹6,000 to new mothers was first announced, the chorus on its **many exclusions** is growing louder leading to a demand for a scheme that is truly universal.

Lengthy documentation:

- The lengthy documentation work includes filling up six documents totalling 32 pages – an application form to be filled for each of the three instalments, an application for linking the Aadhaar card with a bank account, another one for linking the Aadhaar card with post office account and a feedback form. This could be a big deterrent to illiterate sections.

Documentation requirements:

- Applicants have to submit at least nine documents for verification – Aadhaar card (or enrolment slip when there is no card), an identity proof, voter ID card (as age proof) of the mother and her husband; ration card (for husband’s

address), copy of bank passbook and maternal and child protection (MCP) card. This leads to a long and tedious documentation process.

- A mother seeking benefits needs to provide proof of the address of her marital home, which proves challenging for a newlywed expecting a child and often residing in her natal home during pregnancy. This leads to the need for a lot of effort from women to procure the documents.

Issue of corruption:

- Eligible beneficiaries have to jump through several hoops to claim their entitlement. Women have to pay a hefty bribe during the application process.

Exclusion of vulnerable sections:

- The documentation work is likely to result in many women living on the margins, such as sex workers, women in custody, migrant and those living in post-conflict situations unable to claim benefits even though they are most in need of monetary compensation.
- The registration for the scheme requires an applicant to provide her husband's Aadhaar details along with her own, affecting single women which include unwed mothers, deserted wives, and widows.

Newlywed woman:

- A mother is unable to get the compensation when she needs it the most, i.e. during the nine months of her pregnancy. While the scheme is solely for the first living child, it ironically leaves out those who are most likely to give birth to one – a newlywed woman.
- The requirement that the applicant has to be at least 19 years old also leaves out younger brides, who hesitate in getting their marriages registered as the legal age of marriage is 18 years. 30-35% of first-time mothers are under the age of 18 years.
- The application form requires separate undertakings from the woman and her husband that the child for whom they are seeking the benefit will be “the first living child for both of them”, further making it prohibitive.

Missed targets:

- Since the scheme came into effect in January 2017, it has benefited a total of 128 lakh women as per the government's reply in Parliament. This is **80% of the total target** the government has set out for itself – 53 lakh women per year.

Low targets:

- Experts estimate that the government's target itself is 43% of the total 123 lakh first births in the country in a year as derived from the population size of 133.9 crores in 2017 and the birth rate of 20.2 per thousand.

Way forward:

- Activists and grassroots workers must make a "formal representation" to the government highlighting their concerns so that corrective actions can be taken.
- There is a need for reviewing the scheme and making it universal by removing restrictions on the number of children as well as including all women, whether they are in the formal or informal sector, engaged in paid or unpaid work.
- The sum promised should also be at least on par with minimum wages for women in self-employment, unpaid work, or working for less than minimum wage.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

5. No deal as longest climate talks end (GS-3)

Context:

The end of the 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Background:

- The 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as **COP25**, is the 25th United Nations Climate Change Conference. It was held in Madrid, Spain, from 2 to 13 December 2019 under the presidency of the Chilean government.
- The conference incorporates the 25th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the 15th meeting of the parties for the Kyoto Protocol (CMP15), and the second meeting of the parties for the Paris Agreement (CMA2).

Concerns:

- International climate talks ended without any major progress or announcement.
- The international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation, and finance to tackle the climate crisis.

No enhanced targets:

- The Paris Accord established the goal of avoiding a temperature increase of more than 5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century. So far, the world is on course for a 3- to 4-degree Celsius rise, with potentially dramatic consequences for many countries.
- The final declaration of the summit only underscored the “urgent need” to cut planet-heating greenhouse gases in line with the goals of the landmark 2015 Paris climate change accord. That fell far short of promising to enhance countries’ pledges to cut greenhouse gases next year which developing countries had lobbied the delegates to achieve.
- Calls for more aggressive actions to limit greenhouse gas emissions have not been addressed.

Lack of funding for adaptation:

- Another aspect of the negotiations is the language around loss and damage under Article 8 of the Paris agreement. These are proposals for compensating developing countries for damages caused by climate change. It’s a high priority for island countries facing rising sea levels and for African countries that have already experienced devastating extreme weather worsened by climbing temperatures.
- Delegates from almost 200 nations endorsed a declaration to help poor countries that are suffering the effects of climate change, although they didn’t allocate any new funds to do so.

Failure to take responsibility by the major polluters:

- Major polluters resisted calls to ramp up efforts to keep global warming at bay.
- Negotiators in Madrid left some of the thorniest issues for the next climate summit in Glasgow, including the liability for damages caused by rising temperatures that developing countries were insisting on. That demand was resisted mainly by the United States.
- The US is set to exit the Paris agreement altogether next year and thus would not be impacted by any provisions in the accord but is still making the process more difficult for the negotiators.

No final agreement on Carbon markets:

- The last part of the Paris regime that remains to be resolved is **Article 6**. This article describes rules for a carbon market and other forms of international cooperation. In the COP24 conference, no agreement could be reached on this topic. Multiple politically difficult decisions have to be made for this article.

- These carbon-trading mechanisms are important for how some countries plan to meet their goals, using tactics like restoring a section of tropical rainforest that can act as a net absorber of carbon dioxide. The trouble is that such schemes can be gamed to avoid making real cuts in emissions. There are also some accounting problems in Article 6 that need to be resolved, like double-counting credits.
- International trading of carbon can make overall emission cuts. The final agreement on carbon markets' regulation has been put off.

Failure to recognize the scale of the crisis:

- The negotiations were primarily meant to finalize the Paris rulebook, a series of regulations that countries would use to meet their targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions under the Paris agreement.
- The overriding issue of how fast the world needs to cut greenhouse gas emissions has received little official attention. Urgent UN talks on tackling the climate emergency are still not addressing the true scale of the crisis.
- Greenland's ice sheet is melting seven times faster than in the 1990s. Oxygen in the oceans is decreasing. A quarter of the world's population is at risk of water supply problems as mountain glaciers, snow-packs and alpine lakes are run down by global heating and rising demand.

Additional Information:

- The European Commission announced its European Green Deal, a plan to make the 28 countries in the EU "climate neutral" by 2050 and to halve its emissions by 2030.

6. Android vulnerable to cyber attack: MHA (GS-3)

Context:

Alert issued by the Union Home Ministry.

Details:

- The Union Home Ministry has sent an alert to all States warning them about the vulnerability of the Android operating system to a bug called 'StrandHogg' that **allows** real-time malware applications to pose as genuine applications and access user data of all kinds.

- This malware can then potentially listen to their conversations, access photo albums, read/send messages, make calls, record conversations and get login credentials to various accounts.
- This apart, things that such malware can access include private images, files, contact details, call logs, and location information.
- The information was shared by the Threat Analytical Unit, Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, Ministry of Home Affairs.

Warning signs:

- While all versions of Android, including Android 10, are vulnerable to this bug, it may not be apparent to the affected users that malware applications are already onboard their devices.
- Pop-ups asking for permission to send notifications, messages, etc., are one of the main entry points for 'StrandHogg' to launch the attack.
- An app in which the user is already logged in asking him/her to log in again is another anomaly pointing to the possibilities of a cyberattack. Once users approve such requests, the malware would instantly access the mobile phone or tablet for specific purposes.
- Links and buttons that become non-functional, apps asking for permissions that are not required are among the other warning signs.

Conclusion:

- An alert has been sent to all senior police officials to sensitize them to the threat. Steps should be taken to create awareness among the public on the vulnerability of Android to 'Strand Hogg'.

StrandHogg

About StrandHogg

- It is a vulnerability in android which allows real-time malware applications to pose as genuine applications and access user data of all kinds.
- It can **listen** to the conversations, access photo album, read/send messages, make calls, record conversations, get login credentials to various accounts, access private images, files, contact details, call logs and location information without being apparent to the affected users.

Prelims practice questions

1. India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C47 has launched Cartosat-3. Cartosat-3 is mainly used for

1. Weather mapping
2. Measure wind speeds and direction
3. Urban planning
4. Coastal land use

Select the correct answer code:

- a) 1, 2, 3
- b) 1, 3, 4
- c) 2, 3, 4
- d) 1, 2, 3, 4

Solution: b)

Cartosat-3 satellite is a third-generation agile advanced satellite having high resolution imaging capability.

Cartosat-3 could be potentially used for weather mapping and cartography. It aims to address the increased demands for large scale urban planning, rural resource and infrastructure development, coastal land use and land cover.

2. Consider the following statements with respect to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India

1. It is a statutory public body constituted under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.
2. It cannot take suo motu cognisance of any case and can look into only those cases recommended by suitable authorities.
3. The chairperson is always a person, who has been the Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India is a statutory public body constituted on 12th October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993. It was given a statutory basis by the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

The NHRC is the National Human Rights Commission of India, responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, defined by the Act as "Rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants.

The NHRC consists of: A Chairperson, who has been a Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court.

One member who is, or has been, a Judge of the Supreme Court of India.

One member who is, or has been, the Chief Justice of a High Court.

Three Members, out of which at least one shall be a woman to be appointed from amongst persons having knowledge of, or practical experience in, matters relating to human rights.

In addition, the Chairpersons of National Commissions (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Women, Minorities, Backward Classes, Protection of Child Rights) and Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities serve as ex officio members.

3. Consider the following statements with respect to The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act:

1. The Act provides for the establishment of Special Courts for trial of offences under the Act, keeping the best interest of the child as of paramount importance at every stage of the judicial process.
2. The POCSO Act is only applicable to child survivors and adult offenders. In case two children have sexual relations with each other, or in case a child perpetrates a sexual offence on an adult, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, will apply.

Which of the given statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1 and 2 both
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

4. which of the following statements are correct?

1. The pygmy hog is classified as critically endangered in the IUCN red list.
2. Wild populations of the Pygmy hog have been limited to only the Manas national park in Assam.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1 and 2 both
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The pygmy hog (*Porcula salvania*) is critically endangered, previously spread across Bhutan, India and Nepal, but now only found in India (Assam). The current world population is about 150 individuals or fewer.
- The pygmy hog is the sole representative of *Porcula*, making the conservation of this critically endangered species even more important, as its extinction would result in the loss of a unique evolutionary branch of pigs. They used to be

widespread in the tall, wet grasslands in the southern Himalayan foothills from Uttar Pradesh to Assam, through Nepal and north Bengal. However, human encroachment has largely destroyed the natural habitat of the pygmy hog by development, agriculture, domestic grazing, and deliberate fires. Only one viable population remains in the Manas National Park, but even there, threats due to livestock grazing, poaching, fire, and tigers persist.

- The pygmy hog is designated as a Schedule I species in India under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and offences against them invite heavy penalties.

5. which of the following statements are wrong with respect to the monetary policy committee?

1. The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 was amended by Finance Act (India), 2016 to constitute MPC.
2. The committee comprises seven members – three officials of the Reserve Bank of India and three external members nominated by the Government of India and The Governor of Reserve Bank of India as the chairperson ex officio of the committee.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. 1 and 2 both
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Explanation:

- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 was amended by Finance Act (India), 2016 to constitute MPC which will bring more transparency and accountability in fixing India's Monetary Policy.
- The Monetary Policy Committee of India is responsible for fixing the benchmark interest rate in India. The committee is answerable to the Government of India if the inflation exceeds the range prescribed for three consecutive months.
- The committee comprises six members – three officials of the Reserve Bank of India and three external members nominated by the Government of India.
- The Governor of Reserve Bank of India is the chairperson ex officio of the committee. Decisions are taken by majority with the Governor having the casting vote in case of a tie. The current mandate of the committee is to maintain 4%

annual inflation until 31 March 2021 with an upper tolerance of 6% and a lower tolerance of 2%.

6. Which of the statements is/are correct?

1. Citizenship is listed under the union list of the 7th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
2. Article 256 of the Constitution states that the executive power of every State shall be so exercised as to ensure compliance with the laws made by Parliament.

Options:

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Part XI of the Constitution, which governs the relationship between the Centre and the states, says categorically that states are bound to implement the laws passed by Parliament.
- Article 256 of the Constitution makes it a state's obligation to ensure compliance with central laws.
- Article 249 empowers Parliament to make laws even on state subjects in the national interest.
- Under Articles 251 and 254, the Centre is to prevail over the states in the event of any inconsistency between central and state legislations.
- The governor can recommend President's rule under Article 356, advising that the state cannot be run in keeping with the Constitution's provisions.

Mains practice questions

(GS-3: Economy)_Topic: Growth and Development.

1. India's economic indicators have been deteriorating in the recent times. Discuss the reasons for this grim situation and the needed economic reforms that can lift the potential growth rate of the economy. (250 Words) (15 Marks).

Approach:

1. Give a brief account of the status of India's economic indicators.
2. Explain the various reasons for the dip in the indicators.
3. Suggest the required economic measures to be taken in this scenario.
4. Give a futuristic way forward for the same.

2. Explaining the concept of judicial activism, discuss why it is important for courts not to take over the functions of the legislature or the executive. (250 Words) (15 Marks).

Approach:

- Briefly explain the concept of judicial activism and reasons for its advent.
- Discuss why it is important for the judiciary to practice constitutional restraint while dealing with functions of the legislature or the executive.