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GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Plea in Supreme Court seeks 'Uniform Judicial Code' for HCs

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court to implement a “Uniform Judicial Code (UJC)” for High Courts across the country to adopt a uniform set of procedures, especially for virtual courts.

What is the PIL about?

- The petition urged the apex court to take appropriate steps to adopt uniform procedure for case registration, use common judicial terms, phrases and abbreviations and make the court fee uniform.
- It has, alternatively, sought a direction to the Law Commission of India to prepare a report in consultation with the HC in this regard.

Why need UJC?

- **Matter of Equality:** Judicial equality is a matter of constitutional right, its differentiation based on the jurisdiction of courts violates the right to equality.
- **Different nomenclatures:** All the 25 High Courts have different usage of the phrases when it comes to identifying different cases.
- **Diverse procedures:** The PIL plea highlighted how different High Courts follow different procedures in matters pertaining to virtual courts, started during the pandemic.
- **Different fees:** Unequal court fees in different states discriminate among citizens based on their place of birth and residence. Moreover, it promotes regionalism; hence it is a clear violation of Articles 14-15.

Way forward: Bringing in digitized Judiciary systems

- The judiciary needs to develop a well-defined framework supported by an accessible platform and direct e-court system in India.
- It also needs to harp on advanced infrastructure to run an e-court system that eradicates the digital divide, simultaneously upping judicial functioning.
- While the digitized judicial systems give some semblance of convenience for the people who interact with the court, digitization also brings threats of intrusion etc.

2. UAE's Golden Visa

Bollywood actor Tusshar Kapoor awarded **Golden Visa**.

- He joins a growing list of Indian movie stars, including Mohanlal and Shah Rukh Khan, who have received the coveted 10-year residency.

What is it?

In 2019, the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** implemented a **new system for long-term residence visas, thereby enabling foreigners to live, work and study in the UAE without the need of a national sponsor and with 100 per cent ownership of their business.**

So, what does the Golden Visa offer?

The Golden Visa system essentially **offers long-term residency (5 and 10 years) to people belonging to the following groups:**

- investors, entrepreneurs, individuals with outstanding talents the likes of researchers, medical professionals and those within the scientific and knowledge fields, and remarkable students.

Eligibility requirements (Have a brief overview; need not mug up):

For investors:

- A deposit of at least AED (United Arab Emirates Dirham) 10 million worth of public investment, either in the form of an investment fund or a company.
- 60% of the total investment must not be in the form of real estate.
- The invested amount must not be loaned, or in case of assets, investors must assume full ownership.
- The investor must be able to retain the investment for a minimum of three years.
- May be extended to include business partners, providing that each partner contributes AED 10 million.
- Can also include the holder's spouse and children, as well as one executive director and one advisor.

For individuals with specialized talents:

The category includes doctors, researchers, scientists, investors and artists. These individuals may be granted a 10-year visa following accreditations granted by their respective departments and fields. The visa also extends to their spouses and children.

Eligibility for a 5-year visa:

- The investor must invest in a property of a gross value of not less than AED 5 million.
- The amount invested in real estate must not be on loan basis.
- The property must be retained for at least three years.

Outstanding students:

- Outstanding students with a minimum grade of 95% in public and private secondary schools.
- University students within and outside the country having a distinction GPA of at least 3.75 upon graduation.

Reasons Behind the Move:

The UAE's economy has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic and low oil prices, prompting many expatriates to leave.

- The move intends **to bring them back now and keep the “talented people and great minds” in the Gulf country and help in nation-building.**
- It will **attract talented professionals** from various fields of expertise and further encourage innovation, creativity and applied research, adding to the appeal of a career in the UAE for the world's brightest minds.

Significance for India:

- It would attract more Indian professionals and businessmen to the Gulf nation and strengthen the India-UAE Relations.

- It will also facilitate the return of Indians who want to resume work after the relaxation of Covid-19-related restrictions, for which India had requested the members of the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** in early November 2020.

3. Simple ways to better counts of Omicron in India

This article discusses the ways to count Omicron cases in India.

Ways to Count Omicron Cases in India:

- **Genome sequencing:**
 - The reported instances of Omicron infections are the result of genomic monitoring conducted by the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG).
 - Genome sequencing is difficult, and just 38 facilities in the United States are capable of sequencing a virus as infectious as this one.
 - As a result, only a tiny percentage of affected people provide viral samples for sequencing.
- **RTPCR Tests:**
 - According to the MoHFW, India did over 12 lakh RT-PCR tests every day, with approximately 0.5 percent of the test findings being positive. INSACOG has sequenced just a small percentage of these genomes.
 - If the viral genomes to be sequenced were picked at random from the newly infected, one would have to assume that there are around 20,000 Omicron positive cases in India.
 - However, all public health organisations across the world have assumed that the Omicron form developed recently and is currently being transferred around the world. As a result, the sequencing effort has favoured international tourists.
- **Improving the estimates**
 - The data-handling agencies and scientists who run statistical models would be able to greatly refine these estimations and limit the range of uncertainty.
 - However, there may be issues about medical privacy that restrict the government and its agencies from making such data information public.

Conclusion:

Given the numbers made available by the MoHFW and INSACOG, it is possible for individuals to estimate their personal health risks from COVID-19, whether they stay at home or travel for work or on vacation.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. Meendum Manjappai Scheme

Tamil Nadu CM has launched the 'Meendum Manjappai' Scheme to promote the use of cloth bags by the public and discourage the use of plastic bags.

Meendum Manjappai Scheme

- This awareness campaign on using 'yellow' cloth bag or 'manjapai' as it is called in Tamil, is aimed at encouraging the people to return to the use of this eco-friendly bag and discard the plastic bags.
- Manjal means turmeric in Tamil which has curative power. The manjapai was an integral part of daily life in the past.
- Traditionally the manjapais were used for shopping, carrying books, ration and even cash.
- The state government had enforced a ban on the production, use, storage, distribution, transportation or sale of 14 types of plastics with effect from January 1, 2019.

5. National Mathematics Day

Celebrated every year on **December 22**.

- It is **observed to honor the birth anniversary of the famous mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan** who greatly contributed towards mathematical analysis, number theory, infinite series and continued fractions.
- 2021 marks **134th birth anniversary of Dr Ramanujan**.

Highlights of Srinivasa Ramanujan's life:

- In 1911, Ramanujan published the first of his papers in the Journal of **the Indian Mathematical Society**.

- Ramanujan traveled to England in 1914, where Hardy tutored him and collaborated with him in some research.
- He worked out **the Riemann series, the elliptic integrals, hypergeometric series, the functional equations of the zeta function, and his own theory of divergent series.**
- The number **1729 is known as the Hardy-Ramanujan number** after a famous visit by Hardy to see Ramanujan at a hospital. It is **the smallest number which can be expressed as the sum of two different cubes in two different ways.**
- Hardy observed Ramanujan's work primarily involved fields less known even amongst other pure mathematicians.
- Ramanujan's home state of Tamil Nadu celebrates 22 December as '**State IT Day**', memorialising both the man and his achievements, as a native of Tamil Nadu.
- Ramanujan compiled around 3,900 results consisting of equations and identities. One of his most treasured findings was his infinite series for

The Dev Patel-starrer '**The Man Who Knew Infinity**' (2015) was a biopic on the mathematician.

6. Flex Fuel Vehicles

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, has for long been advocating the use of flex-fuel to power cars and motorcycles sold in India.

- Recently, at an industry event, the transport minister revealed that he has issued an advisory to all carmakers to introduce flex-fuel engines in their vehicles.

As per the advisory issued by the government:

- Carmakers are given six months' time to introduce flex-fuel engines.
- Manufacturers have to produce the Flex Fuel Strong Hybrid vehicles and both types of vehicles must comply with the BS-6 emission norms.

What are flexible fuel vehicles (FFVs)?

An FFV is a modified version of vehicles that could **run both on gasoline and doped petrol with different levels of ethanol blends.**

- FFVs will allow vehicles to use all the blends and also run on unblended fuel.
- FFVs have compatible engines to run on more than 84 percent ethanol blended petrol.

Benefits:

- FFVs are aimed at reducing the use of polluting fossil fuels and cutting down harmful emissions.
- Alternative fuel ethanol is Rs 60-62 per litre while petrol costs more than Rs 100 per litre in many parts of the country, so by using ethanol, Indians will save Rs 30-35 per litre.
- For India, FFVs will present a different advantage as they will allow vehicles to use different blends of ethanol mixed petrol available in different parts of the country.
- Also, these vehicles are a logical extension of **the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme** launched by the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in January 2003.
- Since India has surplus produce of corn, sugar and wheat, the mandatory blending of ethanol programme will help farmers in realising higher incomes.
- For the overall Indian economy, higher usage of ethanol as an automobile fuel will help save import costs as the country meets more than 80 per cent of its crude oil requirements through imports.

Disadvantages/challenges of using FFVs:

1. **Customer acceptance** will be a major challenge since the cost of ownership and running cost are going to be very high compared with 100 per cent petrol vehicles.
2. **Running cost** (due to lower fuel efficiency) will be higher by more than 30 per cent when run with 100 per cent ethanol (E100).
3. **Flex Fuel Engines cost more** as ethanol has very different chemical properties than petrol. Ethanol has very low (40 per cent) Calorific value as compared to Gasoline, very High Latent heat of vaporization causing cooling of charge/combustion etc.
4. **Ethanol also acts as a solvent and could wipe out the protective oil film inside the engine** thereby could cause wear and tear.

7. Bottom trawling and associated issues

Sri Lankan authorities between December 18 and 20 and the impounding of 10 boats for “poaching” in territorial waters have again raised concerns about the fate of the men.

What’s the issue now?

Fishermen from Tamil Nadu getting arrested and released later has become a routine affair, but there have been cases of deaths.

- The bone of contention between the two countries has been the use of bottom trawlers by the Tamil Nadu fishermen, a practice opposed in Sri Lanka’s Northern Province on the ground that trawling damages the marine ecosystem.
- This practice has been banned in Sri Lanka and there have been agitations for stringent enforcement of the law.

The Indian side had agreed twice – in 2010 and 2016 – to phase out and end the practice of bottom trawling. But it has not ended yet.

What is the issue with Bottom trawling?

Bottom trawling, an ecologically destructive practice, involves trawlers dragging weighted nets along the sea-floor, causing great depletion of aquatic resources.

- Bottom trawling captures juvenile fish, thus exhausting the ocean’s resources and affecting marine conservation efforts. This practice was started by Tamil Nadu fishermen in Palk Bay and actively pursued at the peak of the civil war in Sri Lanka.

Solution to the bottom trawling- deep-sea fishing plan:

The solution to the bottom trawling issue lies in transition from trawling to deep-sea fishing.

- The activity of catching fish that live in the deep parts of the sea/ocean is called deep-sea fishing.
- The boats are designed in such a way that fishermen get access to the deeper parts of the ocean and fish species.

- It is practiced worldwide, especially in the coastal areas with no ecological damage.
- The depth of water should be at least 30 meters to be considered a deep sea fishing zone.

Efforts by Government- the Palk Bay scheme:

- Launched in July 2017 under the Blue Revolution programme.
- The scheme is financed by the Union and the State Governments with beneficiary participation.
- It had envisaged the provision of 2,000 vessels in three years to the fishermen of the State and motivate them to abandon **bottom trawling**.

8. 'Monetary policy is financially inclusive'

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor observed the significance of the monetary policy and financial inclusion.

What is the Significance of Monetary Policy for Financial Inclusion?

- Monetary policy and financial inclusion have a two-way interaction.
- India's monetary policy is financially inclusive by design, and more participation would improve policy efficacy over time by building social intolerance to inflation.
- It is undeniable that financial inclusion may reduce inflation and production volatility.
- This is accomplished through smoothing consumption by allowing consumers to withdraw money resources during difficult times for daily requirements.
- The inflation targeting monetary policy protects individuals on the periphery of financial inclusion from unfavourable income shocks that occur when prices increase unconscionably.
- Monetary policy's effectiveness in reaching its stability goal improves when it targets a price measure that includes food costs rather than one that excludes them, such as core inflation.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

GS 2 : Polity, Governance, International Relations

1. Centre declares Soya Meal as an Essential Commodity

In a bid to cool down the domestic prices of Soya Meal, Government has notified order under the Essential Commodities Act to declare 'Soya Meal' as Essential Commodities under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

Essential Commodities Act

- The ECA, 1955 was established to ensure the delivery of certain commodities or products, the supply of which, if obstructed due to hoarding or black marketing, would affect the normal life of the people.
- The list of items under the Act includes drugs, fertilizers, pulses, and edible oils, as well as petroleum and petroleum products.
- The Centre can include new commodities as and when the need arises, and takes them off the list once the situation improves.
- Additionally, the government can also fix the maximum retail price (MRP) of any packaged product that it declares an "essential commodity".

How ECA works?

(1) Centre notifying stock limit holding

- If the Centre finds that a certain commodity is in short supply and its price is spiking, it can notify stock-holding limits on it for a specified period.
- The States act on this notification to specify limits and take steps to ensure that these are adhered to.
- Anybody trading or dealing in the commodity, be it wholesalers, retailers or even importers are prevented from stockpiling it beyond a certain quantity.

(2) States can opt-out

- A State can, however, choose not to impose any restrictions.
- But once it does, traders have to immediately sell into the market any stocks held beyond the mandated quantity.

What happens for non-compliance?

- As not all shopkeepers and traders comply, State agencies conduct raids to get everyone to toe the line and the errant are punished.
- The excess stocks are auctioned or sold through fair price shops.
- This improves supplies and brings down prices.

What about Food Items?

(1) Items covered:

Rice, wheat, atta, gram dal, arhar dal, moong dal, urad dal, masoor, dal, tea, sugar, salt, Vanaspati, groundnut oil, mustard oil, milk, soya oil, palm oil, sunflower oil, gur, potato, onion and tomato.

(2) Price Stabilization Fund (PSF):

The government utilizes the buffer of agri-horticultural commodities like pulses, onion, etc. built under Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) to help moderate the volatility in prices.

Recent amendments to the ECA

In 2020, the EC Act was amended for the stock limit to be imposed only under exceptional circumstances such as famine or other calamities.

- **Exceptional circumstances:** It allowed the centre to delist certain commodities as essential, allowing the government to regulate their supply and prices only in cases of war, famine, extraordinary price rises, or natural calamities.
- **Commodities de-regulated:** The commodities that have been deregulated are food items, including cereals, pulses, potatoes, onion, edible oilseeds, and oils.

Exceptions provided:

- The government regulation of stocks will be based on rising prices, and can only be imposed if there is
 1. A 100% increase in retail price in the case of horticultural produce and
 2. A 50% increase in retail price in the case of non-perishable agricultural food items

- These restrictions will not apply to stocks of food held for public distribution in India.

2. Special Category Status

The government has informed the Lok Sabha that it has extended a special package in lieu of **the Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh.**

Assistance provided:

- An amount of ₹19,846.199 crore under **the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014.**
- As per the recommendations of the respective **Finance Commissions,** Revenue Deficit Grant of ₹22,112 crore for 2015-20 and ₹5,897 crore for 2020-21 had been released.

Significance:

The special assistance measure would make up for the additional Central share the State might have received during 2015-16 to 2019-20, if the funding of **Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)** would have been shared at the ratio of 90:10 between the Centre and the State.

What's the issue?

Andhra Pradesh has revived its demand for Special Category Status (SCS).

- It was the bifurcation promise and 15th Finance Commission report that stated that 'grant of SCS lies in the hands of the Centre'. SCS was promised to Andhra Pradesh by the then Congress government at the Centre in 2014, at the time of bifurcation which resulted in the formation of Telangana.
- The then Opposition party BJP too agreed to it and even stated that SCS would be extended by five more years if it was voted to power.

What is Special Category Status?

- There is **no provision of SCS in the Constitution**; the Central government extends financial assistance to states that are at a comparative disadvantage against others.
- This classification was done on the recommendations of **the Fifth Finance Commission in 1969**.

It was based on **the Gadgil formula**. The parameters for SCS were:

1. Hilly Terrain;
2. Low Population Density And/Or Sizeable Share of Tribal Population;
3. Strategic Location along Borders With Neighbouring Countries;
4. Economic and Infrastructure Backwardness; and
5. Nonviable Nature of State finances.

Some prominent guidelines for getting SCS status:

1. Must be economically backward with poor infrastructure.
2. The states must be located in hilly and challenging terrain.
3. They should have low population density and significant tribal population.
4. Should be strategically situated along the borders of neighboring countries.

Who grants SCS status?

Special Category Status for plan assistance was granted in the past by **the National Development Council** to the States that are characterized by a number of features necessitating special consideration.

- Now, it is done by the central government.

Benefits:

Besides tax breaks and other benefits, the State with SCS will get 90% of all the expenditure on Centrally sponsored schemes as Central grant. The rest of the 10% will also be given as a loan at zero percent interest.

Concerns associated:

Considering special status to any new State will result in **demands from other States and dilute the benefits further**. It is also not economically beneficial for States to seek special status as the benefits under the current dispensation are minimal. Therefore, States facing special problems will be better off seeking a special package.

Present scenario:

The **14th Finance Commission** has done away with the 'special category status' for states, except for the Northeastern and three hill states.

- Instead, it suggested that the resource gap of each state be filled through 'tax devolution', urging the Centre **to increase the states' share of tax revenues from 32% to 42%**, which has been implemented since 2015.

3. China's draft law to protect women's rights

Amid a growing number of sexual harassment and domestic violence cases, China is set to update and strengthen its nearly three-decade-old law to protect women's rights both at the workplace and at home.

- China's top legislative body – the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) – began to review a draft amendment to the 'Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women'.

What does the draft amendment say about women's rights in the workplace?

- Under the proposal, employers are banned from stating **gender preferences in job ads** or asking female applicants about their marital and pregnancy status.
- Employers are also prohibited from firing or reducing a woman's salary if she chooses to get married or have a baby.
- While previous laws simply stated that sexual harassment against women was prohibited, the proposal lays down a clear definition of what qualifies as 'sexual harassment'.
 - This includes subjecting women to verbal expressions with sexual connotations or any other inappropriate sexual behaviour without their consent, Reuters reported.
- The draft also prohibits offering benefits in exchange for sex.

What about women's rights at home?

- Extending to the domestic sphere, the new regulations also **clarify the duties of both the husband and the wife** within the traditional family structure.
- In case of divorce, women have the right to ask for compensation if they believe they have been shouldering more duties at home, the draft states.
- This comes after a court in Beijing granted a housewife a 50,000 yuan payout from her husband for five years of unpaid labour. The landmark case sparked a nationwide debate on the **value of domestic work** earlier this year.
- The draft also says that harassing women under the guise of being in a relationship, or after a relationship ends will be prohibited.
- It also bans practices that could be mentally manipulative – this includes 'female morality classes', where women are 'brainwashed' into believing that they are inferior to their partners.

Why now?

- In recent years, China has been widely criticised for doing little to protect sexual harassment survivors and **attempting to suppress the #MeToo movement** in its nascent stages.
- The country has witnessed a **growing debate on crimes against women** as more domestic violence and sexual harassment cases have been reported in recent years.
- China's #MeToo movement began in 2018, when a former student of Shanghai University of Finance and Economics accused her professor of sexually harassing her. He was fired from the university, following which several other women were encouraged to come forward with their complaints.
- Most recently, Chinese tennis pro-Peng Shuai's sparked a storm on social media after she alleged that she was forced into a sexual relationship by China's former Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli, 75, after his retirement from power in 2017.
 - Soon after she shared her explosive allegation on China's social media forum WeChat, she went missing. After her sudden disappearance caused international furore, she reappeared in a few offline media videos. However, Zhang got away unscathed.
- Meanwhile, **gender-based discrimination in the workplace is rampant** across China. Many women have long faced discrimination based on their marital status.
- According to a report released by Human Rights Watch (HRW), gender gap, the **lack of anti-discrimination laws and the two child policy** were behind this phenomenon.

- Also, many Chinese companies are reluctant to pay salaries during maternity leave. As per Chinese law, women are entitled to about 98 days of maternity leave. Employers are mandated to pay maternity insurance to ensure that women receive a monthly allowance from the government fund if they give birth.

Conclusion

- The draft proposal was presented before China's top legislative body on Monday for deliberation. The discussion is expected to continue until at least Friday, following which the draft will be voted upon.

GS 3 : Economy, Science and Technology, Environment

4. How James Webb Telescope seeks to unlock Universe's Secrets

Today, NASA's James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), the largest and most powerful space telescope ever built, will be launched from French Guiana, on the northeast coast of South America on the European Ariane 5 rocket.

James Webb Space Telescope

- JWST is a space telescope jointly developed by NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA), and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA).
- It is planned to succeed the Hubble Space Telescope as NASA's flagship astrophysics mission.
- It will conduct a broad range of investigations across the fields of astronomy and cosmology, including:
 1. Observing some of the most distant events and objects in the universe such as the formation of the first galaxies
 2. Detailed atmospheric characterization of potentially habitable exoplanets

How is it different from other telescopes?

- JWST is much more powerful and has the ability to look in the infrared spectrum, which will allow it to peer through much deeper into the universe, and see through obstructions such as gas clouds.
- As electromagnetic waves travel for long distances, they lose energy, resulting in an increase in their wavelength.

- An ultraviolet wave, for example, can slowly move into the visible light spectrum and the infrared spectrum, and further weaken to microwaves or radio waves, as it loses energy.
- Hubble was designed to look mainly into the ultraviolet and visible regions of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- JWST is primarily an infrared telescope, the first of its kind.

Special features of JWST

(1) Time machine in space

- Powerful space telescopes, like JWST or the Hubble Telescope, are often called time machines because of their ability to view very faraway objects.
- The light coming from those objects, stars or galaxies, which is captured by these telescopes, began its journey millions of years earlier.
- Essentially, what these telescopes see are images of these stars or galaxies as they were millions of years ago.
- The more distant the planet or star, the farther back in time are the telescopes able to see.

(2) Farthest from Earth

- JWST will also be positioned much deeper into space, about a million miles from Earth, at a spot known as L2.
- It is one of the five points, known as Lagrange's points, in any revolving two-body system like Earth and Sun, where the gravitational forces of the two large bodies cancel each other out.
- Objects placed at these positions are relatively stable and require minimal external energy to keep them there. L2 is a position directly behind Earth in the line joining the Sun and the Earth.
- It would be shielded from the Sun by the Earth as it goes around the Sun, in sync with the Earth.

(3) Engineering marvel

- JWST has one large mirror, with a diameter of 21 feet (the height of a typical two-storey building), that will capture the infra-red light coming in from the deep universe while facing away from the Sun.
- It will be shielded by a five-layer, tennis court-sized, kite-shaped sunscreen that is designed to block the heat from Sun and ensure the extremely cool temperatures that the instruments are built to operate at.
- Temperatures on the sun-facing side can get as high as 110°C, while the other side would be maintained at -200° to -230°C.

- The extremely cold temperatures are needed to detect the extremely faint heat signals from distant galaxies.
- The mirror as well as the sunscreen is so large they could not have fit into any rocket. They have been built as foldable items and would be unraveled in space.

5. GIS Based 'Automatic Water Supply Systems'

The GIS based 'Automatic Water Supply System' for citizens of Cantonment Boards, 1st of its kind in the country was recently launched by Defence Minister.

Key takeaways

- The module of the system has been developed by Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geo informatics
- It is completely automated which provides facilities to its citizens to identify the location of water supply connections. It automatically determines the nearest water pipeline.
- This GIS system is the first of its kind in the country.
- It is based on the 'minimum government and maximum governance' concept.

6. Garbage Free Cities

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), launched the 'Azadi@75 Star Rating Protocol of Garbage Free Cities- Toolkit 2022'.

- It is the most important governance tool of waste management - the Star Rating Protocol for Garbage Free Cities.
- On 1st October 2021, Prime Minister had launched Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0, with the overall vision of creating "Garbage Free Cities" (GFC).
- For achieving this vision, a key objective under SBM-U 2.0 is to make every urban local body at least 3-star Garbage Free as per the Star Rating protocol.

Key revisions in the protocol are:

- The earlier 25 components have now been reduced to 24.
- Only 16 indicators are mandatory for 1-star and 3-star levels. The remaining 8 indicators are aspirational in nature, and will be relevant for 5-star and 7-star aspirants.

- The multi-step calculation of the previous GFC protocol has now been changed to a single step marking, which will help ULB to easily self-assess themselves .
- Higher weightages (50%) are allotted to Door-to-Door Collection, Source Segregation, Waste processing & Dumpsite remediation.

About Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 envisions to:

- Make all cities 'Garbage Free' and ensure grey and black water management in all cities other than those covered under AMRUT,
- Make all urban local bodies as ODF+ (open defecation free) and those with a population of less than 1 lakh as ODF++
- The Mission will focus on source segregation of solid waste, utilizing the principles of 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), scientific processing of all types of municipal solid waste and remediation of legacy dumpsites for effective solid waste management.

Prelims Practice Questions

1. The Viswanathan Committee (2019) is associated with which of the following?

- A Forced religious conversion
- B Police reforms
- C Migrant workers
- D Hate speech

Answer : D

Explanation

- **Viswanathan Committee 2019:**
 - It proposed inserting **Sections 153 C (b) and Section 505 A in the IPC for incitement to commit an offence on grounds of religion, race, caste or community**, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, place of birth, residence, language, disability or tribe.
 - It proposed punishment of up to two years along with Rs. 5,000 fine.
- **Hence, option D is correct.**

2. With reference to 'Quality Council of India (QCI)', consider the following statements:

1. QCI was set up jointly by the Government of India and the Indian Industry.
2. Chairman of QCI is appointed by the Prime Minister on the recommendations of the industry to the Government.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Quality Council of India (QCI) was set up jointly by the Government of India and the Indian Industry represented by three premier industry associations i.e. ASSOCHAM, CII and FICCI to establish and operate a national accreditation structure and promote quality through a national quality campaign.
- The chairman of QCI is appointed by the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the industry to the government. The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry is the nodal ministry for QCI.

3. Consider the following statements regarding the ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) Funds:

1. The ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) Funds is a kind of Mutual Fund.
2. The fund is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A 1 only
- B 2 only
- C Both 1 and 2
- D Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : A

Explanation

- The ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) Funds is a **kind of Mutual Fund**. Its investing is **used synonymously with sustainable investing or socially responsible investing**. Hence, **statement 1 is correct**.
- Typically, a mutual fund looks for a good stock of a company that has potential earnings, management quality, cash flows, the business it operates in, competition etc.
- However, while selecting a stock for investment, **the ESG fund shortlists companies that score high on environment, social responsibility and corporate governance**, and then looks into financial factors.
- Therefore, the key difference between the ESG funds and other funds is 'conscience' i.e the ESG fund focuses on companies with **environment-friendly practices, ethical business practices and an employee-friendly record**.
- The fund is regulated by **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**. Hence, **statement 2 is not correct**.

4. Pralay recently seen in news is a/an

- a. Indigenously-developed second generation, Anti-Tank Guided Missile
- b. Air-to-Air Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile
- c. Surface-to-surface tactical Short-range Ballistic Missile (SRBM)
- d. All-weather multi-target tracking radar

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Pralay is a canisterised surface-to-surface tactical short-range ballistic missile for battlefield use developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation of India

5. Special Commissioner appointed to contain the rise of Manyam Rebellion is

- a. Augustus Abbott

- b. Thomas Adams
- c. T G Rutherford
- d. Robert Hope

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The Rampa Rebellion of 1922, also known as the Manyam Rebellion, was a tribal uprising, led by Alluri Sitarama Raju in Godavari Agency of Madras Presidency, British India. It began in August 1922 and lasted until the capture and killing of Raju in May 1924.
- Unable to contain the 'Manyam' uprising, the British Government deputed T G Rutherford in April 1924 to quell the movement.

6. The 'Hadiya Case Judgement, 2017' sometimes seen in the news, is related to?

- A Right to marry a person of one's choice
- B Right to privacy
- C Right to livelihood
- D Right to access internet

Answer : A

Explanation

- **Hadiya Judgement 2017:**
 - Matters of dress and of food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership are within the central aspects of identity.
 - Neither the State nor the law can dictate a choice of partners or limit the free ability of every person to decide on these matters.
 - The principle that the **right to marry a person of one's choice** is integral to **Article 21**. Hence, **option A is correct**.

Mains Practice Questions

1. Discuss the similarities and differences between the basic tenets of Buddhism and Jainism.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly mentioning the origin of both religions.
- Discuss the similarities and differences between Buddhism and Jainism.
- Conclude Suitably.

2. Model Code of conduct has been a remarkable step in ensuring free and fair elections in India. However, the present digital era has posed challenges to it. Comment.

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing about the Model Code of Conduct.
- Discuss the limitations faced by the model code of conduct in the digital age.
- Conclude Suitably.