



CHROME IAS

Giving Wings To Your Dreams !!!

EDITORIALS

GIST

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53/5, First Floor, Old Rajinder Nagar

Contact: 011-49789720, 9990356664, 7840048445

(E-mail-info@chromeias.com, Website- <http://chromeias.com>)

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Ensuring Access to Justice

Category: GS 2 (Polity & Governance)

Should Supreme Court sit in other places as well?

- Article 130 says that SC should sit in other places in the country.
- It is feared that the authority of the Supreme Court would get diluted.
- However, many High Courts in this country have different Benches.

Negative consequences of Supreme Court sitting only in Delhi:

- Excellent lawyers not appearing before the Supreme Court,
- Lawyers have established a monopoly.
- Supreme Court in Delhi been reduced to a District Court.

Unethical lawyers:

- Lawyers act like dishonest brokers.
- Some lawyers take huge money as a percentage of compensation.
- Delays in the disposal of cases are attributable to lawyers.
- Disciplinary powers available to Bar Councils are ineffective.

The way forward:

- Setting up SC Benches in different States.
- Bar Council of India should exercise its powers effectively.
- Disciplinary jurisdiction can be returned to the judiciary.
- Referring more cases to trained mediators.

Lowering the Cost of Capital

Category: GS 3 (Economy)

Why has this issue cropped up?

The BJP manifesto puts the goal of making India a a \$10 trillion economy by 2032.

The requirement of investment

- Current growth rate is not enough to create quality jobs.
- Better growth requires an investment boom led by private sector.
- Investment requires competitive cost of capital.

Ways to reduce cost of capital

- First, the direct tax system has to be overhauled.
- Second, sustained low inflation can bring down the cost of borrowing.
- Third, machinery has to be competitively accessed.

Outer Clarity

Category: GS 3 (Defence & Security)

ISRO recently launched the PSLV-C45 rocket. Earlier, ISRO and DRDO did the ASAT test.

Message that the recent launches give

- Indian space programme is poised for a giant leap.
- ISRO offers reliability and expertise.

Not a new development

This is not a new development. In 2017, the PSLV-C37 placed 104 satellites in one go.

Space military architecture

The recent launches indicate that India is putting in place a space military architecture.

Articulating space doctrine

- India should clearly articulate its space programme doctrine.
- It must communicate its peaceful intentions to reduce the chances of wrong inferences.

Militarisation of space

- There is no global regulatory regime to address militarisation in space.
- Thus, India has legitimate reasons to develop deterrence for the security of its space-based assets.

Way forward

- India must lead in forging a treaty to prevent militarization of space.
- Countries must utilise the space technologies for the well-being of their people.

India-Maldives Relations Have Never Been Better

Category: GS 2 (International)

Introduction

Recently, Maldives elected a new President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in September 2018.

India-Maldives relation in the past

- In 1988, India helped when mercenaries attacked the Maldives.
- In 2004, India gave assistance when tsunami hit Maldives.
- India helped in water crisis in Male few years ago.
- Between 2013 and 2018, Maldives tilted heavily towards China.

Evidence of improvement in relations

- PM Modi attended President Solih's swearing-in ceremony.
- Recently External Affairs Minister visited Maldives.
- Indian government provides development assistance to Maldives.
- India is helping build huge projects such as Male commercial harbour.

Humanise the Law

Category: GS 2 (Welfare)

Why has this issue been raised?

The draft Indian Forest Act, 2019 needs improvement.

Classification of forests

- 3% - very dense
- 11%- moderately dense
- 11%- open

The draft forest bill

- reinforces bureaucratic control of forests
- provides immunity for actions by personnel
- emphasizes on accused detention
- penalises entire communities for offences by individuals.

Impact of the draft bill on the poor

- invariably affects poor inhabitants
- runs counter to the empowering goals of FRA

Way forward for a forest law

- stop diversion for non-forest uses
- recognize all suitable landscapes as forests
- prohibit commercial exploitation of forests
- partnership with communities and scientists
- independent scientific evaluation of forest health
- public scrutiny of decisions on diversion of forests
- proper impact assessment reports
- should be adopted by all States

Conclusion

A new law should encourage community-led, scientifically validated conservation.

For a Free Referee

Category: GS 2 (Polity/Governance)

Why has this issue been raised?

Recently, the Election Commission took punitive actions on repeated transgressions of the Model Code of Conduct.

What action did EC take?

It barred four leaders accused of intemperate speeches from campaigning for varying durations of time.

What are the powers of EC?

- Article 324 gives it the powers of “superintendence, direction and control” of elections.
- Some powers are given by the Representation of the People Act.
- Other powers are given to it the directions of the Supreme Court.

Way forward of EC

- EC needs to build upon a fundamental premise of the rule of law.
- EC should strength in its constitutional mandate and not plead helplessness.
- The Supreme Court should keep making the EC conscious of its own powers.

Conclusion

The EC needs to do much more to be seen as a fair referee else it may end up expending the accumulated trust in the institution.

Down to Earth on the ASAT Test

Category: GS 3 (Defence & security)

Why has this issue been raised?

Recently, India carried out a successful test of an Anti-Satellite (ASAT) weapon.

About the ASAT test

- India became the fourth country to do so after China, U.S. and Russia.
- The test shows that India is not averse to weaponisation of outer space.
- India sought to reassure the world that it has not violated any international treaty or understanding with this test.

Weaponization of outer space

- ASAT test, integral to ballistic missile defence programmes, is a military programme.
- The international community may think that India has breached the understanding against militarisation of outer space.

Relevance of ASAT

- ASAT was a Cold War phenomenon whose importance has declined now.
- Currently, no country extols ASAT's strategic value.
- Countries are increasingly focussing on laser and cyber capabilities.

Pak-China factor

- Pakistan will immediately try to acquire the same capability.
- China can become wary and take appropriate counter-measures.

Way forward for India

- India should play down the military objective of its ASAT test.
- India should assure the world that ASAT is a civilian programme.

Conclusion

ASAT test can damage India's image as a peaceful and responsible nation.

A Half-Written Promise

Category: GS 2 (Women empowerment)

Theme of the article

Women's health and reproductive rights.

Why has this issue been raised?

In the 2019 general election, sexual and reproductive rights of women has just not been an important electoral issue.

Party manifestos on women reproductive rights

Political parties have addressed reproductive rights in narrow ways:

- Congress has promised to make a law to prohibit child marriages.
- BJP focusses on women's menstruation and the Suvidha scheme.
- The CPI(M) has promised to make marital rape an offence.

Limited understanding of women's reproductive rights

- The above points show the limitation of understanding of reproductive rights.
- Understanding of sexual and reproductive rights in India must include maternal deaths, maternal care, contraceptives, adolescent sexuality, forced sterilisations, etc.

Unsafe abortions

- India has 45,000 maternal deaths every year.
- Unsafe abortions are the third leading cause of maternal deaths in India.
- Factors responsible for unsafe abortions:
 - Lack of access to safe abortion clinics, and stigma.
 - Doctors refuse to perform abortions on young women leading to clandestine and unsafe abortions.
 - The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 provides for termination only up to 20 weeks.

Efforts by the Supreme Court

- The court decriminalised adultery.
- It included marriage and sexual orientation within right to privacy.

Way forward

- Political parties should be concerned with women's reproductive rights.
- The responsibility also lies with civil society.
- The silence around unsafe abortions needs to be broken.

Conclusion

Women's reproductive rights must be seen as a crucial element in the contemporary debates on democracy.

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Taking Advantage of BRI

Category: GS 2 (International Relations)

Introduction

The China-led initiative's global reach should not exclude India.

Reasons why India should associate itself with BRI

- In the 21st century, Asia, not China, is at the centre of the world.
- BRI signals the political end of the old order shaped by G7.
- ADB, not China, drew global attention to infrastructure as the key driver of economic growth in Asia.
- BRI is evolving towards standards of multilateralism.
- IMF describes BRI as “very important contribution” to global economy.
- For BRI to have strategic objectives is not unusual. Marshall Plan had similar goals.

Way forward for India

- India's vision of the 'Indo-Pacific' makes joining BRI seem logical.
- China recognises the difficulties inherent in BRI, and needs India's support.
- India should respond to the strategic complexity arising from the BRI through diplomatic initiatives. For example,
 - It should give a South Asian character to the two BRI corridors on India's western and eastern flanks.
 - It needs to work towards 'multilateralising' the BRI with a set of rules.

A Silk Road for the Heavens

Category: GS 2 (International Relations)

India has stayed away from China's Belt and Road Forum.

Pressure on India on regional connectivity due to China

- China's BRI has pressed India to get its act together on regional connectivity.
- India is now working with others in promoting regional connectivity in the Indo-Pacific.

Change of India's perception on BRI

- BRI is more than two-dimensional.
- The additional dimensions of BRI are outer space and digital domain.

The space and digital aspects of BRI

- China's space silk road includes the BeiDou satellite navigation system.
- China has also launched a Big Earth Data initiative.
- China is also in the business of exporting satellites.
- Global surveillance capabilities, upgrading military effectiveness, etc

India's space program vs China

- India's space programme too has grown.
- India has a satellite navigation system of its own, the GAGAN.
- India's remote sensing capability too is impressive.
- However, India has missed the China's expansive scale.

Way forward for India

- Allow private corporations to play a larger role in space sector.
- Promote space startup.
- Rejuvenate India's international space collaboration.

Conclusion

India can surely shape the future of space and digital connectivity.

Competing for the Best

Category: GS 2 (Education)

The outflow of talent has heavily impacted the availability of highly qualified academics in Indian universities.

Efforts by the govt to counter 'brain drain'

- Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN),
- Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty Scheme (VAJRA), and
- Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC).

Foreign faculties at Indian higher educational institutions

- There are just 40 foreign teachers at all of the IITs – only 1 %.
- Appointment of global staff is central to the new 'Institutions of Eminence' programme.
- Graded Autonomy Regulations of UGC allows up to 20% foreign faculty.

Have Government efforts been successful?

- GIAN has been successful in attracting many academics of Indian origin.
- Offering higher salaries with tax exemption has not been very successful in attracting faculty of foreign origin.

Challenges in attracting foreign faculties

- Dramatic changes in governance structure in higher education required.
- Dramatically enhanced funding would also be required.
- Practical realities of Indian universities make them unattractive.
- Indian academic salaries are not globally competitive.

Way forward to attract foreign faculties

- Indian universities need to become world-class.
- International competitiveness and secure positions in global rankings, which in turn would also attract more motivated students.

Conclusion

Some private institutions have proved that it is possible to attract foreign faculty.

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Uncertain Times

Category: GS 3 (Energy)

Why has this issue been raised?

Recently, USA decided not to extend the 180-day waiver to India to purchase oil from Iran.

The price of Brent crude

- The US announcement caused the price of Brent crude oil to witness a sudden jump.
- The price of Brent crude has been rising steadily in the last few months.

Challenges faced by India

India will have to find alternative oil suppliers.

- Higher oil prices will negatively impact current account deficit, fiscal deficit and inflation.
- Higher oil prices also encourage OPEC to restrict oil supply.

Way forward for India

- India needs to diversify its supplier base.
- It needs to increase domestic sources of energy supplies.
- Opening up the renewable energy sector for more investments.

Vision for Our Cities

Category: GS 3 (Infrastructure)

New Government must learn from successes and failures of past urban schemes.

Strength and weaknesses of our urban programmes

- AMRUT focused only on big cities unlike JNNURM.
- JNNURM covered a wide variety of sectors including water and sanitation.
- AMRUT does not cover waste management.
- JNNURM and AMRUT included governance reforms.
- Decentralising of project sanction process has hampered monitoring.
- Affordable housing partnership, AHP of PMAY will raise issues of non-occupancy and ineligible beneficiaries.
- The Smart Cities Mission (SCM) covers traditional infrastructure projects which are already eligible under AMRUT.
- The formation of a special purpose vehicle for the implementation of the Smart Cities mission is at the cost of empowering local governments.
- The Swachh Bharat Mission's focus primarily was on toilet construction. However, the sanitation cycle requires several elements.

Way forward

- The efficiency of local governance holds the key to urban issue.
- Decentralisation should be encouraged but needs effective monitoring.
- The Centre will have to undertake timely data reporting protocols.
- One approach cannot work for urban areas of different sizes; a graded urban policy is needed.

For a Malnutrition-Free India

Category: GS 2 (Health)

India continues to grapple with a high rate of undernutrition.

Stunting

- Stunting impacts human capital, poverty and equity.
- It leads to less potential in education and fewer professional opportunities.
- India has unacceptably high levels of stunting of around 35%.
- Stunting leads to slower economic growth.
- Stunting also has lasting effects on future generations.
- Decadal decline in stunting is only one percentage point a year.
- Inter-State variabilities remain extremely high.
- India has more stunted children in rural areas.

National Nutrition Strategy

- Achieve a malnutrition-free India by 2022.
- Reduce stunting prevalence by about three percentage points per year.
- Achieve a one-third reduction in anaemia.

Way forward

- Serious alignment among line ministries.
- Convergence of nutrition programmes.
- Stringent monitoring of the progress made.
- Timely nutritional interventions of breastfeeding.
- Full immunisation and Vitamin A supplementation.
- Effective interventions for both mother and child.
- Lessons from Chhattisgarh's performance in reducing stunting.

- Increase in household income.

Conclusion

Effective monitoring and implementation of programmes to address malnutrition are needed.

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An Ineffectual Angel

Category: GS 2 (Polity)

Simply the act of voting that is enough: rather, voting must take place as part of a free and fair election.

The Supreme Court's efforts towards free and fair elections

- The Supreme Court has given many judgments on this issue:
- These include, for example,
 - the citizen's right not to be arbitrarily denied the vote
 - the right to know; and
 - the right to a secret ballot

Need of an independent judiciary

Any competitive process must be enforced by an impartial umpire. Ground rules of electoral competition need to be maintained. This task can't be left to political actors.

Gap between Judicial Rhetoric and Enforcement

- First, the right to know has been violated by the electoral bond scheme.
- Second, political parties can determine voting outcomes at the level of individual booths which destroys the concept of the secret ballot.
- Third, the freedom to vote gets violated when voters' names are deleted from electoral rolls
- And lastly, public faith in the electoral process has been affected by EVM controversy.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court with its rhetoric without enforcement remains an ineffectual angel.