

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Kulbhushan Jadhav case and ICJ ruling**

The International Court of Justice ruled that Pakistan should “review and reconsider” Kulbhushan Jadhav’s conviction and death sentence. ICJ also ruled that Pakistan should give the Indian government consular access to Kulbhushan Jadhav.

Background:

- Jadhav, a retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of “espionage and terrorism” after a closed trial in April 2017.
- His sentencing evoked a sharp reaction in India.
- India moved the ICJ in the same year for the “egregious violation” of the provisions of the Vienna Convention by Pakistan by repeatedly denying New Delhi consular access to the 48-year-old Indian national.

ICJ:

- ICJ is the “principled judicial organ of the United Nations” (ICJ, 1945), and is based at the Hague in the Netherlands.
- Statute of the International Court of Justice, which is an integral part of the United Nations Charter established the ICJ.
- The ICJ is made up of 15 jurists from different countries (elected to nine-year terms by Permanent members of the UNSC) and no two judges at any given time may be from the same country. The court’s composition is static but generally includes jurists from a variety of cultures.
- The function of the ICJ is to resolve disputes between sovereign states.

Ebola outbreak a global health emergency: WHO

World Health Organization declared the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo a public health emergency of international concern.

About Ebola

- Ebola virus disease (EVD), formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever, is a severe, often fatal illness in humans.
- The Ebola virus is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in the human population through human-to-human transmission.
- The Ebola virus causes an acute, serious illness which is often fatal if untreated.
- There are currently no licensed Ebola vaccines but 2 potential candidates are undergoing evaluation.

India’s agenda as an UNSC member

India secured UNSC non-permanent membership for 2021-22 with support from Asia-Pacific group including Pakistan and China. Each year the 193-member UN General Assembly (UNGA) elects five non-permanent members for a two-year term at the high-table. India has been at the forefront of the years-long effort to reform the security council saying it rightly deserves a place as a permanent member of the council, which, in its current form, does not represent the geopolitical realities of the 21st Century.

Concerns:

- Currently, the world is in a greater state of disorder than at any time since the end of World War II.
- Fear, populism, polarisation, and ultra-nationalism have become the basis of politics in many countries.
- The benign and supportive international system that followed the Cold War has disappeared.
- India finds itself in a troubled region between West and East Asia – a region with insurgencies, terrorism, human and narcotics trafficking, and great power rivalries (ranging from turmoil in Gulf, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Daesh), Iraq and Syria issue to Afghanistan’s peace process).

- India also faces issues in Asia such as strategic mistrust or misperception, unresolved borders and territorial disputes, the absence of a pan-Asia security architecture, and competition over energy and strategic minerals.

Role of UNSC:

- Prime function of the UNSC should be to maintain international peace and security.
- It should also focus on shared goals, especially international social and economic cooperation.
- Try to bring coordination between 193 sovereign member nations.
- To this end, the permanent members (P-5) as also other UN members must consider it worth their while to reform the Council.

What should India aim to do?

UNSC permanent seat will come India's way more by invitation and less by self-canvassing. As a non-permanent member of UNSC, India's objectives should be –

- to help build a stable and secure external environment
- to promote regional and global security
- to promote growth and its own people's prosperity
- to promote a rule-based world order
- to emerge as a partner of choice for developing and developed countries alike
- India must leverage this latest opportunity to project itself as a responsible nation.

Pakistan opens its airspace after 6 months

Pakistan reopened its airspace for all flights early after a gap of six months. Pakistan had shut its airspace in February after India carried out an air strike against what it said was a terrorist training camp in Pakistani territory.

How does the curb affect India?

- Airlines had to take a longer route to their destinations and burn more fuel,
- stop midway for re-fuelling
- Roster more pilots and cabin crew as their duty hours are regulated.
- An increase in fuel expenses, which constitute 40% of an airline's operational costs

Advantage of lifting the curb on airspace

- The move will benefit Indian carriers as well as the airlines that enter or exit Pakistan from its eastern border with India.
- Flights between Delhi and the west will see travel times drop by up to four hours

World Press Freedom Index An Indian Scenario

The 2019 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), covering 180 countries and territories, had given India a very low rank.

Issues highlighted by the report:

- Journalists are facing heightened threats around the globe.
- The number of countries regarded as safe for journalists is on the decline.
- Hatred of journalists has degenerated into violence in many places including in India.

What does the report say about India?

- In 2018, at least six Indian journalists were killed in the line of their work. Hence India's rank has been falling.
- Year- India's Rank
 - 2019- 140
 - 2018- 138
 - 2017- 136
 - 2016- 133
- The report notes that organized campaigns by supporters of Hindutva to purify all manifestations of 'anti-national' thought from the national debate are putting journalists in danger, particularly women journalist.
- Covering sensitive but important topics of public interest such as separatism in Jammu and Kashmir and Maoist insurgency has become more difficult.

- Authorities use sedition laws against journalists, who also face the wrath of militants and criminal gangs.
- The Centre and several State governments have shown extreme intolerance towards objective and critical reporting and also took unprecedented measures to restrict journalism.
- The Finance Minister's recent order barring credentialed reporters from the Ministry's premises is an example of government restricting journalism.
- There is a systematic attempt to limit the scope of journalism in India through physical restrictions, denial of information and hostile rhetoric against journalists by senior government functionaries.

How the government should respond?

- The government is unlikely to take the RSF report seriously.
- Expression of concern by foreign countries or global bodies regarding human rights, religious violence or media freedom is routinely dismissed as external interference in India's sovereignty.
- In a globalized world these perceptions matter which is visible in the government's pursuit to improve India's position in the World Bank's annual Ease of Doing Business ranking.
- India should also seriously look at its standing as a democratic, pluralist country with a free and dynamic press.
- That is not so much for the inflow of investment or luring global corporations, which may care little about a destination country's democratic credentials but for India's well-being.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Bimal Jalan committee on RBI's economic capital framework (ECF)

Bimal Jalan panel was formed to address the issue of RBI reserves, one of the sticking points between the central bank and the government. The expert panel to suggest how the central bank should handle its reserves and whether it can transfer its surplus to the government. Jalan panel to submit its report soon.

Issue:

- The government has been insisting that the central bank hand over its surplus reserves amid a shortfall in revenue collections.
- Access to the funds will allow finance minister to meet deficit targets, infuse capital into weak banks to boost lending and fund welfare programmes.
- Therefore, the Jalan panel was set up to decide whether RBI is holding provisions, reserves and buffers in surplus of the required levels.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Close polluting units in critical areas: NGT

National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to shut down all polluting industries in "critically polluted" and "severely polluted" areas within three months. It also directed all States and Union Territories to furnish a report on the amount of biomedical waste generated and asked them to set up common treatment and disposal facilities, if not done yet.

NGT: National Green Tribunal was established in 2010 under National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 to dispose of cases having environmental ramification. Its headed by retired judge of supreme court or being chief justice of high court and almost 20 experts and 20 judicial members.

Powers:

- Recommend penalties and fine
- Recommend policies for environment protection
- Disposal of cases within 6 months
- Enforcement of any legal right relating to environment
- Giving relief and compensation for damages
- Has power of civil courts

Significance

- Helps reduce burden on higher courts
- Faster resolution of cases
- Specialised member brings efficiency to justice
- Less expensive than courts
- Fulfils constitutional provision like article 21 i.e. right to clean environment and article 48(a) i.e. protection of environment and safeguarding of forests
- The rapid pace of development is harming the environment. The NGT provides a check and balance for this.
- It takes suo – moto cases like banning the crackers, directing states to speed up action to clean Ganga.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**Making Odisha a steel hub**

Union Steel Minister Dharmendra Pradhan meeting with industry stakeholders and senior officers to discuss road map for developing a steel hub in Odisha. Pradhan said he also had a detailed discussion with stakeholders of the secondary steel sector on overcoming challenges faced by the industry such as availability of raw materials, expiry of mining lease to enable them to ramp up production.

Opportunities for Odisha

- unique location,
- proximity to ports,
- emerging steel infrastructure
- skilled manpower

After the meeting with Odisha CM, Pradhan had said the Centre was committed to develop Odisha as an international hub for steel sector's ancillary industries.

Odisha suffers loss of Rs 732 crore in tourism sector post cyclone Fani

Odisha has lost around Rs 732 crore in the tourism sector in last two months following the widespread devastation caused by the extremely severe cyclonic storm Fani which made landfall near Puri on May 3.

Concerns:

- According to sources, only around 1, 09,000 domestic and 574 foreign tourists have visited Puri district in the last two months as against the expected footfall of 6, 65,000 domestic and around 3000 foreign tourists to the heritage region of the State.
- Similarly, Bhubaneswar which forms the famous 'Golden Triangle of Odisha Tourism' with Puri and Konark has also witnessed less number of tourist footfall during the period. Sources said, Khurda district including Bhubaneswar has recorded footfall of around 2, 33,000 domestic and 2,268 foreign tourists against the estimated 3, 74,000 domestic and 3,700 number of foreign tourists.

Fani, the second most powerful cyclone to hit Odisha in two decades caused heavy destruction in the tourism sector of the State which witnesses a growth of 9-10 per cent annually.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Setting a goal is the first step in turning the invisible into the visible.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: What should be the aims and agenda of India as a non-permanent member of the UNSC?

Ans: India secured UNSC non-permanent membership for 2021-22 with support from Asia-Pacific group including Pakistan and China. India has been at the forefront of the years-long effort to reform the Security Council saying it rightly deserves a place as a permanent member of the council, which, in its current form, does not represent the geopolitical realities of the 21st Century. However a non-permanent seat can also increase the role of India in international order. UNSC permanent seat will come India's way more by invitation and less by self-canvassing. As a non-permanent member of UNSC, India's objectives should be –

- to help build a stable and secure external environment
- to promote regional and global security
- to promote growth and its own people's prosperity
- to promote a rule-based world order
- to emerge as a partner of choice for developing and developed countries alike
- India must leverage this latest opportunity to project itself as a responsible nation.

Agenda as a member of UNSC

- India will have to increase its financial contribution, as the apportionment of UN expenses for each of the P-5 countries is significantly larger than that for India.
- Although India has been a leading provider of peacekeepers, its assessed contribution to UN peacekeeping operations is minuscule.
- At a time when there is a deficit of international leadership on global issues, especially on security, migrant movement, poverty, and climate change, India has an opportunity to promote well-balanced, common solutions.
- India must help guide the Council away from the perils of invoking the principles of humanitarian interventionism or 'Responsibility to Protect'.
- Given the fragile and complex international system, which can become even more unpredictable and conflictual, India should work towards a rules-based global order. Sustainable development and promoting peoples' welfare should become its new drivers.
- India should push to ensure that the UNSC Sanctions Committee targets all those individuals and entities warranting sanctions.
- Having good relations with all the great powers, India must lead the way by pursuing inclusion, the rule of law, constitutionalism, and rational internationalism. India should once again become a consensus-builder, instead of the outlier it has progressively become. It should find a harmonized response for dealing with global problems of climate change, disarmament, terrorism, trade, and development.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. Consider the following statements w.r.t the International Court of Justice.
 1. It is the judicial organ of the UN.
 2. It is based in Washington DC.
 3. It was established in the year 1948.
 4. It has 15 elected members as Jurists.
 Which of the statements are incorrect?
 - (a) 2, 3 and 4
 - (b) 2 and 3**
 - (c) 1, 2 and 3
 - (d) None of the above

2. What is the reason behind the naming of 'Ebola Disease'?
 - (a) because first case was reported near Ebola River in Congo.**
 - (b) because first case was reported from a woman named Ebola.
 - (c) because first case was treated a hospital named Ebola.
 - (d) because the natural host of the disease is a vertebrate called Ebola.

3. Which of the following statements is/are incorrect about the Ebola Disease?
 1. Fruit bats are natural host of this virus.
 2. It damages central nervous system.
 3. There is as yet no proven treatment available for its cure.
 Select the correct answer from the codes given below
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 2 and 3
 - (c) 1 and 3
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3**

4. Consider the following statements w.r.t the United Nations Security Council.
 1. India has recently got a membership in the UNSC.
 2. Prime function of the UNSC is to settle disputes between sovereign countries.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only**
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. Consider the following statements w.r.t World Press Freedom Index 2019.
 1. It is published by the WTO.
 2. India has a rank of 140.
 3. The list is topped by Norway.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 1 and 3
 - (c) 2 and 3**
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3

6. Bimal Jalan Committee of the RBI deals with which of the following?
 - (a) Monetary Policy
 - (b) Economic Capital Framework**
 - (c) Methodology of Measurement of Poverty
 - (d) Venture Capital

7. Consider the following about the power and function of the National Green Tribunal.
 1. Recommend policies for environment protection
 2. Disposal of cases within 6 months
 3. Enforcement of any legal right relating to environment
 4. A quasi-judicial body
 Which of the above functions are correct?
 - (a) 1, 2 and 3
 - (b) 2, 3 and 4
 - (c) 1, 3 and 4
 - (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4**

8. Which of the following statements are correct about the Rourkela Steel Plant?
 1. It is the first integrated steel plant in the public sector in India.
 2. It was set up in collaboration with West Germany.
 Select the correct answer using the codes given below.
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2