

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**SC Verdict on Internet Shutdown**

The Supreme Court declared that the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression and the right to carry on trade or business using the Internet are constitutionally protected. This came in the backdrop of the five-month-long Internet shutdown in Kashmir.

Background:

- The Information Technology Act, 2000, the Section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), 1973 and the Telegraph Act, 1885 are the three laws that deal with suspension of Internet services.
- In 2017, the central government notified the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Service) Rules under the Telegraph Act to govern suspension of Internet. These Rules derive their powers from Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act.

Recent verdict:

- While India's longest Internet suspension continues, the verdict has laid down a framework of how the Internet can be suspended, and what rights and legal recourses a citizen has when it is suspended.
- Although the court stopped short of ruling that access to Internet is a fundamental right, it said that the Internet as a medium is used to exercise other fundamental rights.
- The court recognised that the 2017 Rules are the only procedure to be followed to suspend Internet services in the occurrence of a "public emergency" or for it to be "in the interest of public safety".
- The verdict reiterated that the competent authority to issue an order under the Suspension Rules, in ordinary circumstances, would be the Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Rules also say that in case the confirmation does not come from a competent authority, the orders shall cease to exist within a period of 24 hours.

Presumption of Constitutionality

The Supreme Court declined urgent hearing on a plea seeking to declare the Citizenship Amendment Act as constitutional and said that there was already a "presumption of constitutionality" to a law passed by Parliament.

About:

- The term 'presumption of constitutionality' is a legal principle that is used by courts during statutory interpretation — the process by which courts interpret and apply a law passed by the legislature, such as Parliament.
- It is the legal principle that the judiciary should presume statutes enacted by the legislature to be constitutional, unless the law is clearly unconstitutional or a fundamental right is implicated.
- The presumption is not absolute, however, and does not stand when there is a gross violation of the Constitution. There are limitations to the doctrine.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.**PURVODAYA**

Ministry of steel in partnership with CII and JPC is organising the launch of 'Purvodaya': Accelerated Development of Eastern Region through an Integrated Steel hub.

Background:

- The Eastern region of India, though extremely rich in resources, lags behind other states in terms of development.
- Eastern states of India (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern Andhra Pradesh) collectively hold ~80% of the country's iron ore, ~100% of coking coal and significant portion of chromite, bauxite and dolomite reserves.

Integrated Steel Hub:

- The proposed Integrated Steel Hub would encompass 5 states namely Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern Andhra Pradesh.
- The Integrated Steel Hub would focus on 3 key elements:
- Capacity addition through easing the setup of greenfield steel plants
- Development of steel clusters near integrated steel plants as well as demand centres
- Transformation of logistics and utilities infrastructure which would change the socio-economic landscape in the East
- These elements would be supported through additional enablers such as ensured availability of raw materials, presence of supporting industries such as capital goods and well-established avenues for skill development.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Endangered Languages**

A press release issued by the UN in December 2019 quoted President of the UN General Assembly as saying that despite efforts throughout the year, one indigenous language disappears every fortnight.

UNESCO has six degrees of endangerment for languages.

These are:

- Safe, which are the languages spoken by all generations and their intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted;
- Vulnerable languages, which are spoken by most children but may be restricted to certain domains;
- Definitely endangered languages, which are no longer being learnt by children as their mother tongue.
- Severely endangered are languages spoken by grandparents and older generations, and while the parent generation may understand it, they may not speak it with the children or among themselves.
- Critically endangered languages are those of which the youngest speakers are the grandparents or older family members who may speak the language partially or infrequently; and
- Extinct languages, of which no speakers are left.

Related Info:

- As per UNESCO, roughly 57 % of the world's estimated 6,000 languages are safe, about 10 % are vulnerable, 10.7 % are definitely endangered, about 9 % are severely endangered, 9.6 % are critically endangered and about 3.8 % of all languages are extinct since 1950.
- As per the Endangered Languages Project (ELP), there are roughly 201 endangered languages in India.
- The last year, 2019, was the International Year of Indigenous Languages, mandated by the United Nations (UN).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Coal Sector Reforms

The government announced promulgation of the ordinance for amendment in the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, 1957 and the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015 to open up new areas of growth in the coal & mining sector.

The amendments in the Acts would enable the following:

- Enhancing the ease of doing business
- Democratization of coal mining sector by opening it up to anyone willing to invest.
- Offering of unexplored and partially explored coal blocks for mining through prospecting license-cum-mining Lease (PL- cum-ML).
- Promoting Foreign Direct Investment in the coal mining sector by removing the restriction and eligibility criteria for participation.
- Allowing of successful bidder/allottee to utilise mined coal in any of the plant of its subsidiary or holding company
- Attracting large investment in coal mining sector as restrictions of end use has been dropped.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Chinese Paddlefish

The Chinese paddlefish, one of the largest freshwater fish has been declared extinct in a study published in the journal Science of the Total Environment.

About:

- The Chinese paddlefish (*Psephurus gladius*) was an iconic species, measuring up to 7 m in length, dating back from 200 million years ago, and therefore swimming the rivers when dinosaurs ruled the Earth.
- Its ancestral home was the Yangtze River.
- Recently, Chinese researchers declared it extinct based on the Red List criteria of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- Between 1981 and 2003, there were just around 210 sightings of the fish. The researchers estimate that it became functionally extinct by 1993, and extinct sometime between 2005-2010.

Categories for Extinction:

- The Red List has several categories for extinction, or for how endangered a species is.
- Extinct in the wild means a species survives only in a captive environment.
- Locally Extinct means a species has ceased to exist in a particular area but may exist in other areas.
- Functionally extinct means the species continues to exist but it has too few members to enable to reproduce meaningfully enough to ensure survival.
- Globally extinct means a species has no surviving member anywhere. Such a conclusion is reached when there is no reasonable doubt left that its last member has died.

In-Depth Review Of India's Energy Policies 2020

In partnership with NITI Aayog, the International Energy Agency (IEA) released the first in-depth review of India's energy policies.

Key findings:

- India spent \$25 billion in 2018 on subsidies for the consumption of fossil fuels, mostly supporting oil consumption in the form of LPG (\$17 billion) and gas (\$4 billion).

- While the diesel subsidy ended in 2014-15, government is gradually increasing the prices of kerosene and cooking gas (LPG) to phase out the subsidies.
- India is the world's third- largest consumer of oil, the fourth- largest oil refiner and a net exporter of refined products.
- The government aims to increase the share of natural gas in the country's energy mix to 15% by 2030, from 6% today.
- Both the energy and emission intensities of India's gross domestic product (GDP) have decreased by more than 20% over the past decade. This represents commendable progress even as total energy-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions continue to rise.

Recommendations:

- Government should adopt a long-term energy plan for the country with focus on rationalising the energy prices, building energy infrastructure needs, energy security and access to affordable energy even as the government strives to open up the sector for private players and move towards cleaner fuels across sectors.
- The draft National Energy Policy by NITI Aayog, currently under consultation, should be adopted swiftly to guide policy making, implementation and enforcement across central and state governments.
- Government should continue reducing and consider phasing out fossil fuel subsidies through the reform of the LPG scheme in favour of cleaner fuels.

2019–20 Australian Bushfire Season

A series of bushfires/ wildfires, are burning across Australia, predominantly in the south-east.

How common are forest fires in Australia?

- Australia, where the summer starts around October, is known to be the most fire-prone of all continents. This is mainly because Australia is also the driest inhabited continent.
- Almost 70 % of its area comprises arid or semi-arid land, with average annual rainfall less than 350 mm, according to the Australian government's Department of Environment and Energy.

How are the ongoing fires different?

- This Australian summer, the spread and intensity of forest fires are something never seen before. The fire has impacted more than 10.3 million hectares of forest land so far, an area the size of South Korea.
- Twenty-seven people have so far died, while reports suggest millions of wild animals might have been killed.

Cause:

- Several record-breaking weather conditions are believed to have contributed to this unprecedented wave of forest fires. Heat and dryness are the key preconditions for the ignition and spread of forest fires.
- 2019 happened to be the warmest and driest year for the country since 1900. Daytime temperatures were, on an average, 2°C higher than normal, while average rainfall for the country was 40% below normal.
- Australia is in the midst of a prolonged drought, now spreading to three consecutive years.
- Nearly all the drivers of the extraordinary heat and dryness in Australia, which has led to these unprecedented forest fires, could directly be linked to climate change.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Coronavirus**

A new virus has been identified by Chinese researchers which is believed to be responsible for a new pneumonia-like illness that had swept Wuhan since last month. The researchers described the infectious agent as a "coronavirus."

About:

- Coronaviruses are a specific family of viruses, with some of them causing less-severe damage, such as the common cold, and others causing respiratory and intestinal diseases.
- A coronavirus has many "regularly arranged" protrusions on its surface, because of which the entire virus particle looks like an emperor's crown, hence the name "coronavirus".
- Apart from human beings, coronaviruses can affect mammals including pigs, cattle, cats, dogs, martens, camels, hedgehogs and some birds.
- So far, there are four known disease-causing coronaviruses, among which the best known are the SARS corona virus and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus, both of which can cause severe respiratory diseases.
- In the newly identified coronavirus, a direct link with the disease has not been established yet.

ISSUES RELATED TO INTERNAL SECURITY**Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)**

Union Minister for Home Affairs inaugurated the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).

About:

- The scheme to setup I4C was approved in October 2018 to deal with all types of cybercrimes in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

- I4C is located in New Delhi.
- It has seven components viz., National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit, National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, National Cyber Crime Training Centre, Cyber Crime Ecosystem Management Unit, National Cyber Crime Research and Innovation Centre, National Cyber Crime Forensic Laboratory Ecosystem and Platform for Joint Cyber Crime Investigation Team.
- At the initiative of Union Ministry for Home Affairs (MHA), 15 States and UTs have given their consent to set up Regional Cyber Crime Coordination Centres at respective States/UTs.

National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal

Union Minister for Home Affairs dedicated National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal to the Nation.

About:

- National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) was launched on pilot basis in August, 2019
- It enables filing of all cyber crimes with specific focus on crimes against women, children, particularly child pornography, child sex abuse material, online content pertaining to rapes/gang rapes, etc.
- This portal will improve coordination amongst the law enforcement agencies of different States, districts and police stations for dealing with cyber crimes in a coordinated and effective manner.
- So far, more than 700 police districts and more than 3,900 police stations have been connected with this Portal.

PRELIMS SPECIFIC FACTS- INDICES, DAYS, EVENTS, AWARDS ETC

National Youth Festival (NYF)

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and State Government of Uttar Pradesh are jointly organizing 23rd National Youth Festival (NYF) 2020 at Lucknow from 12th to 16th January, 2020.

About:

- The Government has been organizing National Youth Festival (NYF) since 1995.
- The objective of NYF is to provide a platform to bring the youth of the country together in an attempt to provide them opportunity to showcase their talents in various activities.
- The theme of the 23rd National Youth Festival 2020 is 'FIT YOUTH FIT INDIA'
- NYF 2020 would have around 6000 participants (volunteers from NYKS, NSS and local youth) from each State of the country.
- The NYF 2020 will be inaugurated on 12th January on the occasion of birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, the great Youth icon.

State Energy Efficiency Index 2019

Union Government released the State Energy Efficiency Index 2019.

About:

- The index tracks the progress of Energy Efficiency initiatives in 36 States and Union Territories based on 97 significant indicators.
- The index is developed by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in association with Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).
- The first such Index was launched on August, 2018.
- The index this year incorporates qualitative, quantitative and outcome-based indicators to assess energy efficiency initiatives, programs and outcomes in five distinct sectors – buildings, industry, municipalities, transport, agriculture, and DISCOMs.
- New indicators for this year include adoption of Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) 2017, energy efficiency in MSME clusters, etc.
- For rational comparison, States/UTs are categorised as 'Front Runner', 'Achiever', 'Contender' and 'Aspirant' based on aggregated Total Primary Energy Supply (TPES) required to meet the state's actual energy demand (electricity, coal, oil, gas, etc.) across sectors.
- The top performing states in the State EE Index 2019 - Haryana, Kerala and Karnataka - are in the 'Achiever' category. There isn't any 'front runner' state.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Shifting of priority from land productivity to irrigation water productivity has its own set of challenges which need to be addressed in time. Discuss.

Ans:

Agriculture remains the predominant occupation in terms of number of people employed in India and it is also critical for the country's food security. In such case, given that almost 89% of groundwater extracted in India is used for irrigation (according to the Asian Water Development Outlook, 2016), there is a need to shift priority from land productivity to irrigation water productivity (IWP) because:

- There is a major concern whether the present practice of ground water use can be sustained as the depth of ground water level continues to drop.

- The cropping pattern in India is highly skewed towards crops that are water intensive such as paddy and sugarcane which consume more than 60% of irrigation water available in the country, reducing water availability for other crops.
- The incentive structures like minimum support price; heavily subsidised electricity, water and fertilizers; etc. have played a significant role in the misalignment of crop patterns in the country.
- States such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, which have high land productivity, tend to have very low irrigation water productivity, reflecting inefficient use of water and the need to re-calibrate cropping pattern.

Irrigation water productivity (IWP), defined as the yield produced per unit of irrigation water use, has become an important criteria which takes into account both agricultural production and water use efficiency. Increasing the value of IWP would not only alleviate the pressure of limited water resources but also ensure the food security.

IWP can be increased by adopting improved methods of irrigation and irrigation technologies such as micro-irrigation system; organic and natural farming techniques including Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF); economizing the use of fertilizers and pesticides; and adopting appropriate technology for small farmholders.

However, a few challenges are associated with shifting of priority from land productivity to IWP such as

- Fragmentation of agricultural land holdings: The declining size of landholdings impacts farm incomes and farm income is closely associated with the capability of the farmer to adopt expensive micro-irrigation systems.
- Credit availability: Lack of access to timely credit or finance has severe impact on the installation and implementation of advanced irrigation technologies and efficient agricultural practices.
- Expensive micro-irrigation: High cost of installment and poor component repairs for micro-sprinklers and inadequate technical support in the event of the sophisticated system becoming obsolete make micro-irrigation expensive.
- Knowledge gap: Lack of knowledge with farmers regarding the benefits of IWP.

Way Forward

- In order to address these challenges, a combination of measures which suit the local agro-economic context needs to be applied to improve IWP which will lead to sustainable water use in agriculture.
- Therefore, devising policies such as “Per Drop More Crop” to incentivise farmers to adopt efficient ways of water use should become a national priority to avert the looming water crisis. In addition to these measures, a combination of resource efficient methods; dynamic cropping patterns; climate change responsive farming; and intensive use of technology should form the backbone of farming in India.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

- With reference to the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), consider the following statements:
 - The scheme to setup I4C was approved in October 2018 to deal with all types of cybercrimes in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
 - It is located in Mumbai.
 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
- With reference to the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, consider the following statements:
 - It enables filing of all cyber crimes with specific focus on crimes against women and children.
 - It is an initiative by the Union Ministry of Science and Technology.
 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
- With reference to the recently released ‘in-depth review of India’s energy policies’, consider the following statements:
 - India is the world’s largest consumer of oil, the fourth- largest oil refiner and a net exporter of refined products.
 - The government aims to increase the share of natural gas in the country’s energy mix to 15% by 2030, from the present 6%.
 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
- State Energy Efficiency Index 2019 is released by which of the following?

(a) International Energy Agency
(b) World Economic Forum
(c) Energy Efficiency Services Limited
(d) **Bureau of Energy Efficiency**
- Which of the following Union Ministries is organising the launch of ‘Purvodaya’?

(a) Ministry of Power
(b) Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
(c) Ministry of Coal
(d) Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

- Accelerated Development of Eastern Region?
- (a) **Ministry of Steel**
(b) Ministry of Home Affairs
(c) Ministry of Culture
(d) Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
6. With reference to the National Youth Festival (NYF), consider the following statements:
1. The Government has been organizing National Youth Festival (NYF) since 1995 with an objective to provide a platform to bring the youth of the country together in an attempt to provide them opportunity to showcase their talents in various activities.
 2. The theme of the 23rd National Youth Festival 2020 is 'FIT YOUTH FIT INDIA'.
- 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
7. With reference to the 'Coronaviruses', consider the following statements:
1. It affects only human beings.
 2. SARS corona virus and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus can cause severe respiratory diseases.
- 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
8. With reference to the Chinese paddlefish, consider the following statements:
1. It is one of the largest freshwater fish has been recently declared extinct in a study published in the journal Science of the Total Environment.
 2. Its ancestral home was the Yangtze River.
- 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
9. With reference to the 'Internet shutdown', consider the following statements:
1. The Information Technology Act, 2000 is the only law that deal with suspension of Internet services.
 2. The Supreme Court has recently declared that the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression and the right to carry on trade or business using the Internet are constitutionally protected.
- 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
10. Which among the following is the driest inhabited continent?
- (a) Asia
(b) **Australia**
(c) South America
(d) Africa
11. With reference to the 'presumption of constitutionality', consider the following statements:
1. It is the legal principle that the judiciary should presume statutes enacted by the legislature to be constitutional, unless the law is clearly unconstitutional or a fundamental right is implicated.
 2. The presumption is absolute in nature.
- 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
12. With reference to the UNESCO's degrees of endangerment for languages, consider the following statements:
1. Definitely endangered languages are those which are no longer being learnt by children as their mother tongue.
 2. Critically endangered languages are those of which the youngest speakers are the grandparents or older family members who may speak the language partially or infrequently.
- 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