

**GEOGRAPHY- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC****Ursula**

In the Philippines, a strong typhoon, 'Phanfone' has killed at least 20 people.

**About:**

- Typhoon Phanfone, locally known in the Philippines as Ursula, is a currently active typhoon which had traversed through the central Philippines.
- The origins of Phanfone can be traced to an upper-level low which had formed near the Caroline Islands, located in the western Pacific Ocean, to the north of New Guinea.

**Related Info:** Philippines is located in the Pacific “Ring of Fire,” where earthquakes and volcanic eruptions often occur, making the country of more than 100 million people one of the world's most disaster-prone.

**CONSTITUTION AND POLITY****Irretrievable Breakdown Of Marriage**

Recently, the Supreme Court used extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to grant divorce in a case of “irretrievable breakdown of marriage”.

**About:**

- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, lays down the law for divorce, which applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs.
- Under Section 13 of the Act, the grounds for divorce include: voluntary sexual intercourse with any person other than his or her spouse; cruelty; desertion; ceas(ing) to be a Hindu by conversion to another religion; and being incurably of unsound mind.
- In addition, Section 13B provides for “divorce by mutual consent”.
- Section 27 of The Special Marriage Act, 1954 provides the grounds for grant of divorce in the case of marriages solemnised under that Act.
- Thus, neither of the two Acts provide for “irretrievable breakdown of marriage” as a ground for divorce.
- The Law Commission of India in its 71st report and 217th report has recommended that “irretrievable breakdown” of marriage be included as a new ground for granting divorce to Hindus under the provisions of the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act.

**About A-142(1): Doing Complete Justice**

- It states that the Supreme Court may pass an order for doing complete justice.
- This ensures that the Supreme Court must not be dependent on the executive for the enforcement of its decrees and orders.
- In Supreme Court Bar Association v. Union of India (1998), it was decided that this article
- Cannot be used to over-ride the existing law, but only to supplement the law and
- Can be invoked for procedure purposes only.

**GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.****Higher Education**

Human Resource Development Minister launched the five documents developed by University Grants Commission (UGC) covering the 5 verticals of Quality Mandate in New Delhi.

**About:**

- These five documents cover evaluation reforms, eco-friendly and sustainable university campuses, human values and professional ethics, faculty induction and academic research integrity.
- The Higher Education Quality Improvement Programme Mandate aims at evolving higher education system to equip country's next-generation with vital skills, knowledge and ethics for leading a rewarding life.

- In order to make student assessment more meaningful, effective and linked to Learning Outcomes, the report 'Evaluation Reforms in Higher Educational Institutions in India' is very timely and beneficial for HEIs.
- SATAT – the Framework for Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Campus development in Higher Educational Institutions – encourages universities to adopt policies to enhance the environmental quality of the campus.
- UGC has also developed a policy framework- "MulyaPravah - Guidelines for Inculcation of Human values and Professionals Ethics in Higher Educational Institutions".
- Guidelines for Guru-Dakshta - A guide to Faculty Induction Programme will fulfil its main objective to motivate the faculty to adopt learner-centred approaches, ICT integrated learning and new pedagogic approaches to teaching-learning.

Related Info: UGC has set up a Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE) to continuously monitor and identify quality journals across disciplines.

### **UGC Issues Norms for Ethics in Higher Education**

Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has adopted the Higher Education Quality Improvement Programme Mandate to improve the quality in higher educational institutions. The Quality Mandate was developed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) which contains 5 documents covering the 5 verticals of Quality Mandate-

- Evaluation reforms
- Eco-friendly and sustainable university campuses
- Human values & professional ethics
- Faculty induction
- Academic research integrity

### **Key Points**

- The quality mandate aims at evolving higher education system to equip the country's next generation with vital skills, knowledge and ethics for leading a rewarding life.
  - Student evaluation plays a crucial role in improving the quality of Higher Education in the country.

### **Five Documents on 5 verticals of Quality Mandate**

- Evaluation reforms: Under this, the report 'Evaluation Reforms in Higher Educational Institutions in India' has been published in order to make student assessment more meaningful, effective and linked to 'Learning Outcomes'.
- Eco-friendly and Sustainable University Campuses: The SATAT - Framework for Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Campus development in Higher Educational Institutions encourages universities to adopt reflective policies and practices to enhance the environmental quality of the campus and to adopt sustainable and green methods in its future.
- Human Values & Professional Ethics: A policy framework 'MulyaPravah – Guidelines for Inculcation of Human Values and Professional Ethics in Higher Educational Institutions' has been developed to discuss and streamline the process that helps to infuse the culture of human values and ethics in educational institutions.
- Faculty Induction: The guidelines for Guru-Dakshta – A guide to Faculty Induction Programme (FIP) will fulfill its main objective to sensitise and motivate the faculty to adopt learner centred approaches, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) integrated learning and new pedagogic approaches to teaching-learning, assessment tools in higher education.
- Academic Research Integrity: UGC is putting up efforts for setting up a Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE) to continuously monitor and identify quality journals across disciplines. It will be useful to create more awareness and help the cause of promoting academic integrity and ethical publishing.

University Grants Commission

- It came into existence on 28th December, 1953 and became a statutory organization of the Government of India by an Act of Parliament in 1956, for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in university education.
- The head office of the UGC is located in New Delhi.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Joint Naval Exercise by China, Russia and Iran

China, Russia and Iran to hold joint naval drills from December 27 to 30 to deepen exchange and cooperation between the navies of the three countries.

About:

- The exercise is launched from the southeastern port city of Chabahar in the Gulf of Oman and is aimed at boosting the security of the region's waterways.
- The Chabahar port has been jointly developed by India, Iran, and Afghanistan.
- It is a part of "normal military cooperation" between the three countries.
- During the exercise, China would deploy its guided-missile destroyer — the "carrier killer" for its array of anti-ship and land-attack cruise missiles.
- The exercise comes in the backdrop of the US withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal and escalated sanctions on Iran by the USA.

**INDIAN ECONOMY**National Payments Corporation Of India (NPCI)

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said that customers can recharge FASTags through any BHIM UPI enabled mobile app.

About:

- NPCI is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.
- The corporation's current and future service portfolio includes: National Financial Switch (NFS), Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), RuPay, National Common Mobility Card, Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS), Unified Payments Interface (UPI), BHIM, Bharat Bill Payment System etc.
- Established in: 2008.
- Established by: Reserve Bank of India & Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- Type: A not-for-profit organisation registered under section 8 of the Companies Act 2013.
- Headquarters: Mumbai.

Related Info: FASTag, by the National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC), has been made mandatory for toll payment in the country from 15 of this month.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC**Stand-Off Range Missiles

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) recently carried out two successful tests of the latest variant of the BrahMos missile, one from the land platform and the other from air.

About:

- Recent air-based test of the missile marked the completion of the integration of BrahMos missile with the Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft.
- The BrahMos Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) is a significant addition in IAF's air combat capability from stand-off ranges.
- Stand-off range missiles are ones that are launched at a distance sufficient to allow an attacking party to evade defensive fire expected from the target area.

- Stand-off range missiles, of which cruise missiles are a type, have been in the arsenal of all the major powers of the world.

#### BrahMos

- BrahMos is a cruise missile, meaning it can be guided towards a pre-determined land- or sea-based target.
- With a capability to attain speeds 2.8 times that of sound (Mach 2.8), BrahMos is classified as supersonic cruise missile. A newer version under development is aimed at flying at speeds greater than Mach 5. These are called hypersonic cruise missiles.
- BrahMos is developed through a collaboration between India and Russia. An amalgam of the names of the rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva, BrahMos is being produced by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture company set up by DRDO and Mashinostroyeniya of Russia in 1998.

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

#### National Consumer Day

National Consumer Day was observed on December 24, 2019. The theme of this year is “alternate consumer grievance/dispute redressal”.

#### About:

- Objective of the day is to make every consumer more aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- On this day the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted which aims to provide consumers with effective safeguards against different types of exploitation, such as defective goods, deficiency in services and unfair trade practices.

#### Consumer Protection Bill, 2019

- Recently, Parliament passed the Consumer Protection Bill, 2019 which has replaced the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
- It entails setting up of a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers as a class. The CCPA would make interventions to prevent consumer detriment arising from unfair trade practices.

### **DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE**

**Qns. Enactment of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act has brought the Indian economy on the path of fiscal prudence only in letter but not in spirit. Critically analyse.** Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act was enacted in 2003. The objective of the Act is to ensure inter-generational equity in fiscal management, long-run macroeconomic stability, better coordination between fiscal and monetary policy, and transparency in the fiscal operations of the Government.

It provides a legal and institutional framework for fiscal consolidation. It is now mandatory for the Central government to take measures to reduce the fiscal deficit, to eliminate revenue deficit and to generate revenue surplus in the subsequent years. The Act binds not only the present government but also the future Government to adhere to the path of fiscal consolidation.

Implementation of the FRBM Act has significantly improved India's quantitative fiscal situation such as:

- The implementation of the FRBM Act has improved the fiscal performance of both the centre and states. The States have achieved the targets much ahead of the prescribed timeline.
- The Act has helped in the issues relating to fiscal consolidation due to the mandatory medium-term and strategy statements which are required to be presented annually before Parliament.
- The Act has helped in strict adherence to the path of fiscal consolidation during the pre-subprime crisis period created enough fiscal space for pursuing the countercyclical fiscal

policy. Implementing the Act, the government had managed to cut the fiscal deficit to 2.7% of GDP and revenue deficit to 1.1% of GDP in 2007-08.

- However, due to the global financial crisis of 2008, the deadline for the implementation of the targets in the Act was suspended. The fiscal deficit rose to 6.2% of GDP in 2008-09 against the target of 3% set by the Act for 2008-09.

However, the qualitative aspects of fiscally consolidating the economy have remained largely elusive:

- While there is a drastic fall in deficits, it has largely been on account of reductions in expenditure in critical sectors of the economy such as education, health etc. The Union government's development expenditure as a proportion of GDP has declined over time.
- An analysis of revenue account of the development expenditure by states shows that in almost all sectors of development, there has been a decline in the FRBM era.
- Also, at times it has been seen that the government has achieved the deficit targets by manipulating the revenue and expenditure accounts such as curtailing the capital expenditure; demanding interim dividend from Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in advance etc.
- Further, the FRBM Act ignores the possible inverse link between fiscal deficit (fiscal expansion) and bank credit (monetary expansion). That is, if credit growth falls, fiscal deficit may need to rise and if credit rises, fiscal deficit ought to fall — to ensure adequate money supply to the economy.
- Data on money supply growth, bank credit and GDP establishes that both money supply growth and credit expansion have significantly reduced in relation to GDP growth. Thus, the FRBM Act has not only reduced the fiscal deficit but also starved the growing economy from much-needed investment.

#### Conclusion

To ensure effective and efficient operation of the FRBM Act, few steps can be followed such as:

- The Government should consider a medium-term framework for fiscal policy and ensure that over the medium-term targets are met.
- On the basis of international developments, there is a need to build capacity in managing the fiscal policy of the government, and effective and efficient debt management of the government.
- Interest payments pre-empt a substantial part of revenue receipts. Given the limitations of enhancing tax collection, the Government increasingly resorts to borrowing. Therefore, there is a need to rationalize the interest expenditure of the Central Government.
- There is a need to be more specific on 'exceptional circumstances' when the 'pause' button can be used to stall the targets provided by the FRBM Act.
- Recommendations of the N.K. Singh Committee should be implemented in a time-bound manner so that the developmental needs of the economy are not unduly compromised while being on the path of fiscal prudence.

#### DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs

1. 'SATAT and MulyaPravah' both are framework documents recently seen in news, are launched by:
  - (a) University Grants Commission (UGC)
  - (b) All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
  - (c) Distance Education Council (DEC)
  - (d) Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM)
2. With reference to the National Consumer Day, consider the following statements:
  1. The theme of this year is "alternate consumer grievance/dispute redressal".
  2. On December 24th the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 was enacted and the objective of the day is to make every consumer more aware of their rights and responsibilities.

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
3. With reference to the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), consider the following statements:
1. It is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.
  2. It was established by the Reserve Bank of India and SEBI.
- 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
4. With reference to the 'types of solar eclipse', consider the following statements:
1. In Partial solar eclipse the moon does not block the sun completely, but looks like a "dark disk on top of a larger sun-colored disk" forming a "ring of fire".
  2. Total solar eclipse happens when the sun, moon and Earth are in a direct line.
- 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
5. With reference to the Stand-off range missiles, consider the following statements:
1. They are launched at a distance sufficient to allow an attacking party to evade defensive fire expected from the target area.
  2. Stand-off range missiles, of which cruise missiles are a type, have been in the arsenal of all the major powers of the world.
- 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
6. With reference to the "irretrievable breakdown of marriage", consider the following statements:
1. Section 27 of The Special Marriage Act, 1954 provides "irretrievable breakdown of marriage" as a ground for divorce.
  2. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, lays down the law for divorce, which applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs.
- 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