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A. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. [No more vehicle insurance without pollution certificate](#)

In news:

- Supreme Court directed that vehicles without valid pollution under control (PUC) certificates would not be eligible for the annual insurance.
- **The Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) recommended for** mandatory linking of PUC certificates with annual insurance. This recommendation was made by the EPCA in its report on assessment of the Pollution Under Control programme in Delhi and the National Capital Region.
- Supreme Court has now accepted this particular recommendation made by EPCA.
- The court also directed the linking of PUC centres with an online network and data centres to prevent manual tampering. It asked the State governments to audit PUC centres and set up a strong oversight system to ensure credible tests and emission results.
- **Advantages of linking:** ensure compliance with respect to emission norms and a subsequent dip in vehicular emission levels.
- **Key fact:** In Delhi, only 23% of vehicles come for PUC tests.

2. [Karnataka favours centralised selection for district judiciary](#)

In news:

- **Proposal:** Creation of a Central selection mechanism for selection to the posts of judges in the higher sub-ordinate judiciary, for which the central examination could be conducted by a recruitment body under the supervision of the apex court.
- Supreme Court had invited the views of the State governments and the High Courts on its proposal to centralise the process for selecting judges for the district judiciary across the country.
- **Karnataka Government response:** filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court stating that the government has no objection to the proposal.
- **Concerns raised by the government:** centralised selection process should ensure that knowledge of local language of the State concerned has to be made compulsory for such selection.

3. [RTE™s heart is in the right place”but not its head](#)

Situation after RTE Act

- RTE was supposed to bring millions to school
- Building the foundations upon which a modern, progressive and prosperous nation was to rise
- But after 7 years, Education level is deteriorated and schools are being closed
- According to some experts, the RTE has proved to be a disastrous piece of legislation
- But Government decision to scrap the no-detention policy (NDP), is an important first step towards mitigating some of its worst consequences

Deteriorating Educational standards due to NDP

- According to the 'Annual Status of Education Report' (ASER), less than 48% of children in class V can read a class II-level textbook
- Only 43.2% of class VIII students in rural India can do simple divisions
- Only one out of every four students in class V could read an English sentence

Views of Other Government Authorities on NDP

- The NDP has also been found to be faulty by the comptroller and auditor general as well as the Central Advisory Board of Education
- More than 20 states and union territories have asked for the policy to be either scrapped or modified

Arguments in favor of NDP

- NDP supporters claim that the objective of the policy was to keep students in school and prevent dropouts and in that, it has succeeded
- But, What is the point of students staying in school if they are barely learning anything at all?

Other issues with RTE that worsen the effect of NDP

- One of the main issues with the RTE Act is that it heavily focus on inputs while effectively ignores outputs
- It doesn't offer any benchmarks for learning outcomes or link teacher assessment to student performance

4. [There must be a common NEET question paper: SC](#)

Context:

- **NEET(National Eligibility and Entrance Test) -2017:** questions in vernacular languages in the NEET 2017 examination were not identical translations of the questions in English or Hindi.
- But difficulty level of questions was the same.
- Besides English and Hindi, the NEET exam was conducted in eight vernacular languages.

In news:

- The Supreme Court has questioned the CBSE about the setting of different questions for students taking NEET in regional languages and said there must be a common question paper.
- **Supreme Courts observations:** identical questions should be asked for students writing their NEET in English and other regional languages. The same questions can be translated from English to the regional languages concerned.

Basic Information:

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test

- The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test or NEET-UG is an entrance examination in India, for students who wish to study any graduate medical course (MBBS/ dental course (BDS) or postgraduate course (MD / MS) in government or private medical colleges in India.
- NEET-UG (Undergraduate), for MBBS and BDS courses, are conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).
- NEET-UG replaced the All India Pre Medical Test (AIPMT) and all individual MBBS exams conducted by states or colleges themselves in 2013.

5. [SC seeks details of convictions under Child Marriage Act](#)

In news:

- Centre said Parliament must have thought it 'pragmatic' to reduce the age of consent for sexual relations for married girls from 18 to 15 as the child marriage system still exists in the country.
- The Supreme Court asked the government to provide details of the number of child marriage prohibition officers and prosecutions initiated under the Child Marriage Act in the past three years.
- Petition filed by NGO challenging the Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of IPC, which permits 'intrusive sexual intercourse with a girl aged between 15 and 18 only on the ground that she is married.'

Discriminatory law

- Statutory exception to rape was violative of right to life, liberty, equality and was discriminatory.
- The Exception is part of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013 and is contrary to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 (POCSO).
- Law 'violates the health of not only the girl child concerned, but also generations to come
- A girl under 18 as a child in POCSO, but once she is married, she is no more a child under the Exception 2 to Section 375 of the IPC. This is totally inconsistent.

Basic Information:

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012: The Act is gender-neutral and defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years.

It provides:

- Precise definitions for different types of Child abuse crimes
- Stringent punishments
- Mandatory reporting
- Child-friendly procedures
- Under Section 45 of the Act, the power to make rules rests with the Central Government
- Qualifications and experience of interpreters
- Arrangements for care and protection
- Criteria for award of compensation by the Special Court

The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been made the designated authority to monitor the implementation of the Act.

Category: **BILATERAL ISSUES**

1. [UAE joins chorus of concern over Doklam](#)

Context:

- **United Arab Emirates response** : Any military escalation between India and China would be “potentially very disruptive” for the region, said Anwar Gargash, the visiting Minister of Foreign Affairs from the United Arab Emirates.
- **Reasons for UAE Investment delay**: The movement on proposed investment from the UAE sovereign wealth fund (SWF) into Indian infrastructure projects had been delayed over procedural negotiations, and specifically the mandate of the governing body of the National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF).

Category: **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

1. [Nepal tightens laws against dowry, menstrual exile](#)

In news:

- A new Bill has been passed by Nepal’s Parliament toward making women safer by **strengthening laws against acid attacks** along with the ancient Hindu customs of **demanding dowry payments** for marriage and **exiling women** who are menstruating.
- **Stringent punishment**: violators who force women into exile facing punishments of up to three months in jail or a fine of 3,000 Nepalese rupees, or about \$1,875.
- **Prevailing practice**: Many menstruating women are still forced to leave their homes and take shelter in insecure huts or cow sheds until their cycle ends, though the practice called **Chhaupadi** was actually outlawed a decade ago. But without any assigned penalties, the custom continued in many parts of the majority Hindu Himalayan country, especially in the western hills.

A. GS3 Related

Category: **ECONOMY**

1. [GST impact on the logistics sector](#)

Context:

- Goods and services tax (GST), could affect profitability of the logistics sector in the short run, but operational efficiency is bound to improve in the long run.

Logistic sector:

- The logistics sector broadly comprises the road transport sector, the storage and warehousing sector and finally third-party logistics (3PL).

Logistic performance

- Two key performance measures—profit after tax (PAT) as percentage of income and profit before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (PBITDA) as percentage of income
- Between 2010 and 2015, PAT has declined for all sub sectors and shows volatility for the logistics and the storage sector
- PBITDA is an important measure that reflects operating efficiency ranges between a low of 7% for the road transport sector to a high of 20% for the storage sector.

GST impact on Logistics

- For manufacturers, GST has now replaced the multiple state VATs and the need to have a hub across all states will cease to exist.
- Allow firms to redesign supply chains and centralize hub operations to take advantage of scale economies. It will also

- allow firms to employ efficient practices such as bulk-breaking and cross-docking from a central location
- For transport services, the “reverse charge mechanism” can be levied as before but the taxpayer will not be able to claim input tax credit, as the main input cost is fuel which is outside the purview of GST
- Under GST, the tax on warehouse, storage and other labour services has increased from 15% to 18%. So a third-party logistics provider will now have more incentive.
- Ease of entry across states will reduce transportation delays with measures such as the e-way bill
- GST will bring a lot of alignment of value-added services in the logistics sector. This will make way for cutting-edge investments and mergers and can see a phenomenal increase in asset utilization and increase in operational efficiency
- There will be new investment opportunities for technology-enabled mini warehouses along the highways and technology enabled start-ups.
- This will result in uncertainties and affect the profitability of the sector in the short run. In the long run, operational efficiency is bound to improve

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G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Question 1. The famous biennial Thakurani Jatra festival was recently held in

Question 3. Which one of the following industry doesn’t fall into the category of core industries identified by IIP?

Question 5. Probiotics are

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1.
 1. A democracy is likely to degenerate into a tyranny if it does not allow opposition groups to criticize fairly, freely and frankly Comment.
 2. “The job of chairperson of Rajya Sabha is very challenging and thankless” Examine.
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GS Paper III

1.
 1. Discuss in detail the impact of GST on Logistic sector?