

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Aug 14

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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. [Largest volcanic region on Earth discovered under Antarctica](#)



- The largest volcanic region on Earth discovered by Scientists
- It consists of almost 100 volcanoes – **two kilometers** below the surface of the vast Antarctic ice sheet.
- **Height range** : 100 to 3,850 metres.
- All of them are covered in thick layers of ice.
- **Region**: concentrated in a region known as the west Antarctic rift system, which stretches 3,500 km from **Antarctica's Ross ice shelf** to the Antarctic peninsula.

Importance

- Volcanic activity in this range poses crucial implications for the rest of the planet.
- It could further destabilize Antarctica's ice sheets.

Category: POLITY

1. [SC refuses to entertain fresh plea against triple talaq](#)

In News

- The Supreme Court has declined to engage a fresh plea challenging the constitutional validity of ‘triple talaq’, ‘nikah halala’ and polygamy practices among Muslims.
- **Why?** Since the issue is already pending consideration.
- The court, however, said the verdict rendered in pending petition will govern the outcome of the present plea as well.

Senior advocate- Soumya Chakraborty opinion about the issue

- All the three forms talaq (**Ahsan Talaq, Hasan Talaq and Talaq-ul- Biddat**) were arbitrary, capricious and violative of fundamental rights of Muslim women.
- ‘Khula’ and ‘Mubarat’ are the only two traditionally acknowledged Muslim modes of dissolution of marriage at the instance of the woman.
- Apart from the spiritual tenets engrained in the holy Quran, there being a wide variety of interpretations and divergent opinions among different scholars or schools of thought in the Muslim community, nothing is universally fundamental in the day-to-day practice of Islam.

2. [Supreme Court appoints panel to frame scheme for rehabilitation, remarriage of abandoned widows](#)

In news

- The Supreme Court appointed a committee of comprising of **social workers** and a **lawyer** .
- **Why?:** suggest measures to be taken for **rehabilitation of widows** abandoned by their family members and to deliberate on framing a policy to promote widow remarriage in the country.

Court observation

- Widow remarriage should be encouraged in society as it ‘might enable our society to give up the stereotype view of widows’.
- The essential things, like food and drinking water, were not being provided to them.

Court directives to the committee

- To prepare a common working plan for the welfare of widows
- Examine all the prevailing schemes for widows and reports filed before the court by government and National Commission for Women.

Key fact

- The number of widows in the country has increased tremendously between 2001 and 2011.
- As per census data, the number of widows in the country was only 18.5 lakh, which was 0.7% of the total population in 2001, but in 2011, it went up to 5.6 crore, which was 4.6% of the entire population.
- India is the home of the largest number of widows in the world, followed by China with around five crore widows.
- As per census, 0.45% of the total widows are the child widows in the age group of 10-19 years. 9.0% are in the age group of 20-39 years, 32% in the age group of 40-59 years and 58% are above 60 years. Despite a law banning child marriages, there are still 1.94 lakh child widows in the country.

3. [Centre announces ‘185-crore children’s diseases research centre at Gorakhpur](#)

In news

- The Union government has approved the setting up of a **regional medical Centre** at a cost of ‘185 crore in **Gorakhpur**

Why? For in-depth research into children’s diseases.

4. [Tamil Nadu to get exemption from NEET for 2017](#)

In news

- The Centre is all set to grant exemption from **NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test)** for one year to Tamil Nadu in terms of government college medical admissions to help rural students.

What next? State has to pass an Ordinance seeking exemption for one year, which should specify that the exemption was being provided to help rural students to get admission in government colleges.

Category:Â INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [In South Asia, be the Un-China](#)

Context

- China’s influence in South Asia and ways to counter it

Doklam Issue

- **Nepal:** Nepal will not get dragged into this or that side(means India and China) in the border dispute
- **Sri Lanka:** India and China are ‘both important’ to Sri Lanka
- **Bhutan** : blaming China for violating agreements at Doklam, but not mentioning India

India’s Neighborhood and China’s presence

- **Maldives**
 - Chinese companies has bagged contracts to most infrastructure projects in Maldives
 - This includes development of a key new island and its link to the capital Male
 - And a 50-year lease to another island for a tourism project
- **Nepal**
 - Nepal has signed a transit trade treaty and agreement on infrastructure linkages with China in late 2015-2016
 - China is also building a railway to Nepal, opening up Lhasa-Kathmandu road links
 - And has approved a soft loan of over \$200 million to construct an airport at Pokhara
- **Sri Lanka**
 - Sri Lanka's Hambantota port construction project went to the Chinese in 2007 only after India rejected it
 - China doesn't just own 80% of the port, it has also won practically every infrastructure contract from Hambantota to Colombo
- **Bangladesh**
 - China has committed \$24 billion to Bangladesh for its infrastructure and energy projects

India's available options

- India must regain its role as a prime mover of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
- Even after a year, there have been no steps taken to restore the SAARC process is unfortunate
- It should be remembered that despite China's repeated requests, SAARC was one club it never gained admittance to

The way forward

- India must recognise that doing better with its neighbours is not about investing more or undue favours
- It is about following a policy of mutual interests and of respect which India is more culturally attuned to than its large rival is.
- Each of India's neighbours shares more than a geographical context with India. They share history, language, tradition and even cuisine.
- When dealing with Beijing bilaterally, New Delhi must match China's aggression, and counter its moves with its own. When dealing with China in South Asia, however, India must do exactly the opposite, and not allow itself to be outpaced. In short, India must be the Un-China.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [Encephalitis, its causes, prevention and prevalence in India, explained](#)

Context

- No less than 60 children have lost their lives over the most recent five-days at the state-run Baba Raghav Das Medical College Hospital in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh because of different reasons, among them diseases emerging out of encephalitis.

What is encephalitis?

- Encephalitis is a potentially life-threatening but rare disease causing acute inflammation of the brain.
- **Meaning of Acute:** when a disease appears abruptly and grows at a fast pace.
- A person afflicted with encephalitis requires serious medical attention.

What are the causes of encephalitis?

- The disease can occur in people of all ages, but children and the elderly are more at risk of being afflicted with the disease.
- The usual cause of the rare disease is either a **viral infection**.
- Sometimes it is caused when the brain's own immune system mistakenly attacks brain tissue.
- In rare cases, encephalitis is caused due to bacterial infection, parasites, or may be prompted from other infectious diseases.
- It is a non-communicable disease.

What is Japanese encephalitis?

- One of the most common form of viral encephalitis in Asia is the Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV), caused by mosquito-borne flavivirus.
- The disease belongs to the same genus as dengue, yellow and West Nile viruses.
- JEV primarily affects children as most adults tend to attain natural immunity from the disease, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

How can the disease be prevented?

- There are several vaccinations that are effective in preventing the disease, including vaccines for measles, mumps, rubella
- People should also use proper clothing to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes in mosquito-infested areas.

Is the disease prevalent in India? How severe is it?

- Japanese Encephalitis is recognised as the leading cause of the disease in India.
- **Region affected:** West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Pondicherry and Karnataka.
- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are two states, which have seen the most number of encephalitis cases in recent years.

- The Uttar Pradesh government in May this year launched a vaccination campaign in 38 sensitive districts of the state to combat the JE virus.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [No level playing field](#)

Context

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code has loopholes to close down businesses.

Need for Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

- It was enacted to improve the ease of doing business in India
- It aims to overhaul laws relating to reorganisation and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms, and individuals
- Attempts to ease the process of recovery of money by operational and financial creditors in a timely manner.
- Places the onus on professionals to put forth resolution plans within 180 days

A quick procedure

- Code looks to wrap up the process in 180 days.
- It warrants a notice of dispute to be issued followed by a response period of 10 days for the corporate debtor, failing which the creditor is entitled to file an insolvency application before the National Company Law Tribunal.
- Upon admission of the application, the moratorium period commences.
- At this stage, the existing management of the company loses complete control and all powers vest with an interim resolution professional, who has merely 30 days to put together all the relevant information and call for a meeting of the financial creditors.
- Once the financial creditors meet, they must appoint a resolution professional who will propose a resolution plan for the company.
- All such resolution plans are placed before the financial creditors. When at least 75% of the financial creditors approve, the plan is implemented by way of an order by the NCLT. If the financial creditors fail to arrive at a consensus, the default plan is to liquidate the company.

Drawbacks

- The Code has enough loopholes to close down businesses instead of assisting entrepreneurs.
- It fails to provide adequate safeguards to protect the rights of the company before handing over the management in its entirety to the resolution professional.
- Neither does the corporate debtor have an opportunity to put forth his/her case nor is there any scope of discretion provided to the adjudicating authority itself.
- At various stages, the Code fails to provide any opportunity to the corporate debtor to make a representation
- The Code is also deficient in providing a yardstick for the qualification of insolvency resolution professionals
- It allows for any person to access the information memorandum put together by the insolvency professional. There is no law protecting confidentiality and vitiates the fundamental right to business under Article 19(1)(g).
- Code prohibits withdrawal of the application once the same has been admitted. This means that there is no scope whatsoever for settlement.

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy. {Mains-2015}

GS Paper III

1. In what way could replacement of price subsidy with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) change the scenario of subsidies in India? Discuss.
2. What are the impediments in marketing and supply chain management in industry in India? Can e-commerce help in overcoming these bottlenecks?

GS Paper IV

1. Suppose one of your close friends, who is also aspiring for civil services, comes to you for discussing some of the issues related to ethical conduct in public service. He raises the following points:
 1. In the present times, when unethical environment is quite prevalent, individual attempts to stick to ethical principles may cause a lot of problems in one's career. It may also cause hardship to the family members as well as risk to one's life. Why should we not be pragmatic and follow the path of least resistance, and be happy with doing whatever good we can?
 2. When so many people are adopting wrong means and are grossly harming the system, what difference would it make if only a small minority tries to be ethical? They are going to be rather ineffective and are bound to get frustrated.
 3. If we become fussy about ethical considerations, will it not hamper the economic progress of our country? After all, in the present age of high competition, we cannot afford to be left behind in the race of development.
 4. It is understandable that we should not get involved in grossly unethical practices, but giving and accepting small

gratifications and doing small favours increases everybody's motivation. It also makes the system more efficient. What is wrong in adopting such practices?

Critically analyze the above viewpoints. On the basis of this analysis, what will be your advice to your friend? (250 words)