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A. GS1 Related

Category: ART AND CULTURE

1. [State gets cultural policy](#)

In news

- The Karnataka State Cabinet approved a cultural policy for the State, perhaps the first in India to have such a comprehensive policy, aimed at promoting Kannada culture and language.

Major focus areas of policy:

- Aim at formulating measures to curb the tendency of banning Kannada books for trivial reasons
- Decentralization of the Department of Kannada and Culture
- Formation of search committees to select chairpersons to various academies and authorities to de-politicise appointments
- Establishment of art galleries in every district
- Formulation of separate programmes to help artistes in distress
- Establishment of separate Bayalata, Sugama Sangeeta and Nritya academies, and giving priority to local cinema culture.

Historical facts:

- The plan to have a cultural policy was first envisaged during the Janata Dal government in 1996.
- A Cabinet sub-committee headed by H.K. Patil, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, studied the recommendations, including the financial implications of implementing it. After the sub-committee showed the green signal, the Cabinet approved it.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. [Failing our children](#)

Context

- Recent decision of Government on scrapping No-detention policy in school and its possible implication on primary education on India

What is the "no-detention policy"?

- The right to education act provides the guarantee of uninterrupted schooling under sections 16 and 30(1) is founded on the no-detention policy until Class 8

Why is scrapping the no-detention policy a bad decision?

- The no-detention policy to promote students automatically to higher classes every year till Class VIII was instituted to check the high number of dropouts
- The socially and economically disadvantaged sections were getting the benefits of this policy
- According to many experts, the NDP was wrongly interpreted to create an environment in which the significance of evaluating a student's learning outcomes was undermined

Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)

- It is aimed to assess the child's understanding of what was being taught in class at periodic intervals
- This is the reason behind the decision of scrapping NDP, as this evaluation process shows bad results of evaluations of students

CCE and its drawbacks:

- Teachers were not given adequate training to undertake this reform of CCE
- Schools are not fully compliant with the RTE's requirements on infrastructure and teacher availability
- In fact, about 8 per cent primary schools have just one teacher
- These situations made CCE, an ineffective reform

The way forward

- The RTE Act has a provision for continuous and comprehensive evaluation, the government should work on it
- But transferring the responsibility of performance to children, many of whom come from underprivileged backgrounds, can only produce a less literate citizenry
- The move to scrap the NDP will make the RTE's goal of inclusive education a very difficult one
- The government should rethink the move

2. [States cold to stricter anti-racial law](#)

Context

- The Home Ministry has proposed to amend the law to insert two stricter **anti-racial discrimination** provisions in the Indian Penal Code
- Lukewarm response from the States.

States and UTs agreed to the proposal:

- Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram
- Three Union Territories – Andaman and Nicobar, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Lakshwadeep.

What is the proposed amendment?

- The Home Ministry has proposed to amend two provisions in the IPC, that is, **Section 153A** and **Section 509A** .
- These are proposed to be inserted into the IPC sections.

Why states consent is necessary?

- The proposed matter comes under the **Concurrent List** .
- The opinion of majority of the States was required to push through the legislation.

Panel recommendations

- The proposed amendments were based on the recommendations of the Bezbaruah Committee, constituted by the Centre in February 2014 in the wake of a series of racial attacks on persons belonging to the northeast.

Draft 153 C IPC says:

- Whoever promotes or attempts to promote, on the ground of race, racial features, behaviour, culture, customs or way of living, any act which is prejudicial to human dignity or dignity of members belonging to particular race and uses criminal force or violence in furtherance of such act, or, participates in such act intending to use criminal force or violence or knowing that participants in such act is likely to use criminal force or violence against the member of a race or cause or likely to cause fear or feeling of insecurity amongst the members of such race, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and fine.

Section 509A IPC:

- 509A seeks to make any word, gesture or act intended to insult a member of a particular race with imprisonment that may extend to three years with fine.

Category: **BILATERAL RELATIONS**

1. [Dhaka to open mission in Chennai](#)

In news:

- Bangladesh will soon open a new diplomatic mission in Chennai.
- Main aim is to focus on **medical tourism** and **educational centres** that drew thousands of Bangladesh citizens to India every year.
- The decision to open mission in Chennai was part of a bilateral agreement between India and Bangladesh.

Key Facts:

- Bangladesh emerged as the largest overseas user of India's health services sector during 2015-16.
- Out of the 4,60,000 foreign patients treated in Indian hospitals, nearly 165,000 were from Bangladesh.
- The total number of Bangladeshi patients generated \$0.34 billion in revenue for India during the period
- Bangladeshis have also emerged as the largest number of foreign tourists to India mainly due to medical tourism.

B. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. [China's RCEP push veils grand plan](#)

Context

- Community social media platform "LocalCircles" survey shows Indian consumer's perception about items imported from China.
- 52% of participants opined that quality of a "Made in India" version was superior to the one from China.
- 83% said they buy Chinese products as those items were the cheapest and 98% said there should be better screening and ensure that imports meets the Indian (BIS) standards.
- The poll assumes significance as it comes amid ongoing negotiations for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- It is a FTA between the 10-member ASEAN bloc and its six FTA partners " India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.
- When inked, it would become the world's biggest free trade pact
- Boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers " and provide the region's consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates.
- Liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.

India's concerns over RCEP

- China is keen on an agreement on a "high level" of tariff liberalisation " eliminating duties on as much as 92% of traded products.
- India's offer is to do away with duties on only 80% of the lines and that too, with a longer phase-out period for Chinese imports
- India already has separate FTAs with the 10-member ASEAN bloc, India feels that on account of the RCEP, India may not gain much on the goods side with existing FTA partners

Duty impact on India

- A highly ambitious level of tariff elimination without enough flexibility would affect India the most on the goods side.
- This is because in the RCEP group (except Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR), India has the highest average "Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariff" level at 13.5%.
- MFN tariff, as per the WTO, refers to normal, non-discriminatory tariff charged on imports, excluding preferential tariffs under FTAs and other schemes
- India is the only participant that has a high level of merchandise trade deficit

Trade deficit woes

- Even without a bilateral FTA, India was already affected by China's overhang of excess capacity in sectors including metals, chemicals and textiles.
- Goods imports from China have been far outpacing India's shipments to that country
- This has led to goods trade deficit with China widening from just \$1.1 billion in 2003-04 to a whopping \$52.7 billion in 2015-16
- The initiative could provide a means for Chinese industries with excess capacity to export equipment that is currently idle.

2. [Let's talk about a supplemental income](#)

Context

- Applicability of the concept of basic income to India.

Universal Basic Income

- The primary objective is to enable every citizen to have a certain minimum income.
- The term "universal" is meant to connote that the minimum or basic income will be provided to everyone irrespective of whatever their current income is.

Problem with UBI:

- Adoption of UBI can impose a burden on the fisc which is well beyond the capabilities of most developing countries, including India.

Cash v/s Services: Whether support to vulnerable sections should be in the form of goods and services or as cash?

Cash

- It gives the discretion to beneficiaries to spend it any way they like

Services

- Provision of services or goods directly to beneficiaries may be directed to achieve certain objectives in terms of nutrition or health or education.

Concerns

- In the provision of services, the concern is about leakages and quality of service
- There are a whole lot of services provided by the state, and it would be impossible to knock them off and substitute them with general income support
- Poor quality of services from government-run institutions.

Universalâ€™ or restricted?

- It is necessary to first decide whether income supplements should be â€™universalâ€™ or limited to certain easily identifiable groups.

Universal

Pros

- Universal scheme is easy to implement

Cons

- Income to one and all are beyond the capabilities of the present Central government Budget unless the basic income is fixed at too low a level.
- It is extremely difficult to cut so-called implied subsidies or hidden subsidies in order to fund resources.

Restricted

- The attempt must be to think in terms of reducing the number of beneficiaries using easily definable criteria.

Cons

- Strict targeting will run into complex problems of identification.

Minimum increase?

- Whether the scheme should be universal or restricted depends on the level of basic income that is proposed to be provided.
- If we were to treat the cut-off used to define poverty as the minimum income, then the total fiscal burden would be enormous.
- Analysis using different poverty lines shows that poverty is concentrated around the poverty line. In fact, more than 60% of the total poor lies between 75% of the poverty line.

Way out:

- What is needed is a supplement to fill the poverty gap
- One alternative would be to determine the required income supplement from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
- The total annual income supplement can be equivalent to 100 days of the wages that is â‚¹20,000 per year. This amount can be treated as the income supplement.

Feasibility :

- It is difficult to cover the entire population. Even providing one person per household with this income will mean â‚¹15 lakh crore per annum, which is 3% of GDP
- What is feasible is a scheme which limits the total expenditure to around 1.5 to 2% of GDP.
- One way of restricting the total cost to this amount is to limit it to all women above the age of 45.
- Restricting the beneficiaries to the elderly or widows or those with disabilities may have only a limited impact.

Financing the scheme?

- Remove all exemptions in our tax system.
- Tax experts advocate removing exemptions so that the basic tax rate can be reduced
- Phase out the MGNREGS, which will realise close to â‚¹40,000 crore.
- Fertilizer subsidies are another item of expenditure which can be eliminated
- Requesting higher income groups to forego supplemental income will reduce the expenditure, as has been done successfully in the case of cooking gas.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Should we fear Artificial Intelligence?](#)

Context

Artificial Intelligence and possible dangers that can come out of it

Why one must not “fear” Artificial Intelligence?

- Such systems are actually pretty dumb
- This is because even the most intelligent systems today with artificial specific intelligence can perform one task better than any human can, but only that one task
- Any simple task that it is not specifically programmed for, such a system would find impossible to complete

Concerns related to Artificial Intelligence

(1) Jobs

- The possible negative effect of Artificial Intelligence on jobs has been a trending topic recently
- But there has been no academic or policy consensus on what the exact effect will be
- Still there can be no doubt that at least some jobs will be negatively affected by Artificial Intelligence

(2) Weapons

- The use of Artificial Intelligence in weapons leading to “autonomous weapons”™ raises a number of difficult questions in international law
- A machine that has been given the ability to make life and death decisions on the battlefield can be dangerous

(3) Data Security

- The entire Artificial Intelligence ecosystem is built on the availability of great amounts of data and enhancing efficiency requires continued availability of such data
- This raises the question of where the required data comes from, and who owns and controls it

The way forward

- It is necessary to assess the practical benefits and risks associated with the increasing prevalence of Artificial Intelligence

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

Nothing here for Today!!!

G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Question 1. Indian manufacturers have supplied EVMs to

Question 2. Electronic Voting Machine is manufactured in India by

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “Less than 10 per cent of the schools in the country are fully compliant with the RTE’s requirements on infrastructure and teacher availability.” Comment.

GS Paper III

1. Examine the arguments in favour and against introduction of universal basic income.
2. “Artificial Intelligence is not going to go “rogue”™ and turn on humans, at least in the near future, but there are other very real issues raised by AI.” Critically examine.