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Category: **POLITY**

1. [Six-month cooling period for granting divorce can be waived: SC](#)

Context:

- **The 1955 Hindu Marriage Act** : It provides for a **statutory cooling** period of **six months** between the **first** and the **last motion** for seeking divorce by **mutual consent**.

In news:

Supreme Court observation:

- Minimum cooling period of six months for granting the decree of divorce under the Hindu law can be **waived** by a trial court if there was no possibility of **cohabitation between an estranged couple**, who are seeking divorce with mutual consent, can file waiver application after a week of filing the first motion.
- **Period mentioned in Section 13B (2)** :
- Is not mandatory but directory.
- It will be open to the court to exercise its discretion in the facts and circumstances of each case where there is no possibility of parties resuming cohabitation and there are chances of alternative rehabilitation.
- **Trails conducted using video conferencing**: the trial court can also use the medium of video conferencing and permit genuine representation of the parties through close relations, such as parents or siblings, where the parties are unable to appear in person for any just and valid reason as may satisfy the court, to advance the interest of justice

Basic Information:

The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

Section 13B: Divorce by mutual consent.

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act a petition for dissolution of marriage by a decree of divorce may be presented to the district court by both the parties to a marriage together, whether such marriage was solemnised before or after the commencement of the Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act, 1976 (68 of 1976)*, on the ground that they have been living separately for a period of one year or more, that they have not been able to live together and that they have mutually agreed that the marriage should be dissolved.

(2) On the motion of both the parties made not earlier than six months after the date of the presentation of the petition referred to in sub-section (1) and not later than eighteen months after the said date, if the petition is not withdrawn in the meantime, the court shall, on being satisfied, after hearing the parties and after making such inquiry as it thinks fit, that a marriage has been solemnised and that the averments in the petition are true, pass a decree of divorce declaring the marriage to be dissolved with effect from the date of the decree.]

(i) The period of 6 to 18 months provided in section 13B is a period of interregnum which is intended to give time and opportunity to the parties to reflect on their move. In this transitional period the parties or either of them may have second thoughts;

(ii) The period of living separately for one year must be immediately preceding the presentation of petition. The expression 'living separately' connotes not living like husband and wife. It has no reference to the place of living. The parties may live under the same roof and yet they may not be living as husband and wife. The parties should have no desire to perform marital obligations;

(iii) The period of six to eighteen months time is given in divorce by mutual consent as to give time and opportunity to the parties to reflect on their move and seek advice from relations and friends. Mutual consent should continue till the divorce decree is passed. The court should be satisfied about the bona fides and consent of the parties. If there is no consent at the time of enquiry the court gets no jurisdiction to make a decree for divorce. If the court is held to have the power to make a decree solely based on the initial petition, it negates the whole idea of mutuality. There can be unilateral withdrawal of consent. Held, that since consent of the wife was obtained by fraud and wife was not willing to consent, there could be unilateral withdrawal, of consent.

2. [Corrupt politicians always bounce back to power, observes SC](#)

Context:

In news:

Supreme Court observations:

- **Phenomenon seen in the past 25 to 30 years:** MLAs and MPs, who face investigation for possessing wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income, always tend to bounce back to power.
- The court said the disproportionate assets cases against MPs and MLAs ought to be fast-tracked.
- **Court questioned:**
 1. Whether this phenomenon, coupled with the mercurial rise in the assets of politicians just within a span of five years between two successive elections, was a product of **ineffective investigation or of some 'immunity' provided to them.**
 2. Why the disproportionate wealth details of MLAs and MPs, who are representatives of the people, should not be disclosed to the public. There is no reason why the law should provide these public servants any immunity.
 3. Even information with respect to their (MPs and MLAs) income tax details should be open for disclosure; Why should information relating to the representatives of the people, who are public servants, get immunity?
- **Directive given to the government:** 'If an MLA's or MP's assets have seen a 10X rise in 2019 from what he revealed in 2014, should you not conduct an enquiry into the very propriety of a person holding public office enjoying such phenomenal rise in his assets? The moment a candidate has shown 1000% increase in his income in the past five years, please have a mechanism to conduct an enquiry.'
- **1993 N.N. Vohra Committee Report** highlighted the criminalisation of politics and the nexus among politicians, criminals and bureaucrats.

3. [Chakmas to be made citizens](#)

In News:

- Government of India is all set to give citizenship to over one lakh **Chakma-Hajongs, Buddhists and Hindus** who fled to India in the 1960s to escape religious persecution in the **Chittagong Hill area of Bangladesh** (undivided Pakistan then).
- Home Minister Rajnath Singh will chair a meeting where a final decision to grant citizenship to the Chakma-Hajongs will be taken.
- **No landownership rights:**
- Chakmas would be granted citizenship but will not have any land ownership rights in Arunachal Pradesh, a predominantly tribal State.
- The Arunachalis have opposed giving any rights to Chakma-Hajongs.
- They would be free to buy land anywhere else in India but not in Arunachal Pradesh.

Basic Information:

- The Chakmas, also known as the Changma, Daingnet people, are an ethnic group scattered in Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and West Bengal of India and in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.
- Today, the geographic distribution of Chakmas is spread across Bangladesh and parts of northeastern India, western Burma, and diaspora communities in Yunnan Province, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, South Korea, Japan and Australia.
- Within the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Chakmas are the largest ethnic group and make up half of the region's population. The Chakmas are divided into 46 clans or Gozas.
- They have their own language, customs and culture, and profess Theravada Buddhism. The community is headed by the Chakma Raja.

4. [IIT Director unhappy with scrapping of new funding scheme](#)

Vishwajeet Scheme:

- The scheme entailed the provision of Rs. 1,250 crore to each of the top seven IITs over a period of five years to upgrade infrastructure, hire foreign faculty, and collaborate with foreign institutions to break into the top league in global rankings

Higher Education Finance Agency (HEFA):

- Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) is a proposed not-for-profit agency with initial capital base of Rs. 1000 Crore.
- It was announced in Union Budget 2016-17.

Organization

- The HEFA will be set up with joint participation by the government and philanthropic donors.
- It would be set up under Companies Act and will be registered with RBI as Non-banking Finance Company (NBFC).
- It will be headed by a banker and will have a board with five donors and five institutions selected on rotation basis.
- All centrally funded higher educational institutions will automatically be added as members.

Objective and Proposed Functions

- The major objective of the HEFA is to leverage funds from the market and supplement them with donations and CSR funds.
- These funds will be used to finance improvement in infrastructure in top educational institutions. The monies of the fund will be used to finance capital expenditure for building quality infrastructure in IITs, NITs, IIITs and IISERs and central universities. It will also be used to fund state-of-the-art research labs and other infrastructure.

Funding and Finances

- Total corpus of the body is Rs. 2,000 crore. Out of this, the initial government contribution will be Rs. 1,000 crore. Remaining Rs. 1000 Crore would be collected from 5 other corporate donors {Rs. 200 Crore Each} of which the sponsoring bank would be one. Further, the body will be allowed to raise debt funding of up to Rs. 10,000 crore from the financial markets, including pension and insurance funds.

Uchchatar Avishkar Yojana:

- There are some specified guidelines issued by the Central Govt.'s Ministry of Human Resource and Development for the Uchchatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY) for the prime educational institutions (IITs) of the country.
- These guidelines are to be followed to bring the new scheme of Govt. implemented in the premier institutions of India
- The main aim of launching the UAY scheme is to make students more accustomed with the outer world and give them a market oriented mindset.
- Implemented by Department of Higher Education.

Govt. funds for the UAY projects

- The Govt. is willing to spend around Rs. 25 crore per financial year in this Uchchatar Avishkar Yojana. However there is no limit as such on the size of the industrial project under this scheme. The entire funding will be generated from different areas. Half of the project cost will be on the Ministry of Resource Development. Then 25 % will be borne by the participating department and the rest 25 % by the industry associated in the project.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [America wants growing trade with India](#)

Context:

- **India – America:** rising imbalance in trade with India is a concern for America.

In news:

U.S. Commerce Secretary Observations :

- India must open its market to more American companies.
- India must also take more effective measures to protect innovation by improving its intellectual property protections.

New 2+2 format:

- India and the U.S have decided to move to the 2+2 format of engagement involving the Secretaries of Defence and State Departments from the American side and Ministers for Defence and External Affairs Ministers from the Indian side.

Key Facts:

- Annual bilateral trade between the U.S. and India has doubled over the last decade and was \$114 billion in 2016. Unfortunately, over the same period, trade deficit tripled, now at \$27 billion
- India's investors invested \$12.1 billion in the U.S. last year, U.S. investors invested \$32.9 billion in India.
- 5 % of U.S. exports were to India, while only 6.3 % of Indian exports goes to America.

2. [India steps up development partnership with Afghanistan](#)

Context:

- US President Donald Trump urged India to do more in Afghanistan on economic assistance and development

India – Afghanistan development partnership

- India stepped up its development partnership and committed to 116 new projects in Afghanistan
- The projects will be in the areas of education, health, agriculture, irrigation, drinking water, renewable energy, flood control, micro-hydropower, sports infrastructure and administrative infrastructure.
- New Delhi also agreed to strengthen security cooperation and pointed out that the countries must stay united in dealing with the challenge posed by **“cross-border terrorism”** an oblique reference to Pakistan.
- India agreed to extend further assistance for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in fighting the scourge of terrorism, organized crime, trafficking of narcotics and money laundering
- The two sides also signed four pacts, including one on vehicular movement to boost overland transit and another on a fresh batch of development projects by India in Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan strongly supports India’s membership of the UN Security Council and other groupings and hoped that it would back Kabul’s entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Category: ECONOMY

1. [Inflation quickens in August, even as industrial growth sees mild recovery](#)

Key Macro-economic stats:

- Data released by the Central Statistics Office showed Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew at 1.2% in **July** from a contraction of 0.2% a month ago.
- Consumer price index based inflation continued to rise for the second consecutive month, by 3.36% from 2.36% a month ago as food inflation turned positive after three months of contraction.
- **Inference:** India’s industrial production recovered to grow only mildly as growth in manufacturing output remained flat with introduction of goods and services tax (GST) which continued to disrupt production networks while retail inflation quickened in August ruling out any rate cut by the central bank in the near future.

2. [Why India needs a bullet train](#)

Context:

- Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Shinzo Abe will be laying the foundation stone of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project, popularly known as the bullet train

Advantages

• **Attractive low-cost long-term financing.**

1. Government of Japan will provide a soft loan of about Rs 90,000 crore at an interest rate of 0.1 per cent over 50 years.
2. Such loan, from other multilateral or bilateral development financing institutions, would cost between 3-7 per cent with a repayment period of 20-30 years.
3. Stimulus for advanced components’ manufacture and construction
4. One of the stated objectives of the project is “Make in India”
5. As per the agreement the MAHSR Project has “localised manufacture” and “transfer of technology” as objectives.

1. This project is likely to generate employment for about 20,000 workers, who will then be equipped to take up construction of more such projects in India.
2. The new areas where construction skills would be developed are ballast-less track, under sea tunneling et al.

• **Professional capacity-building.**

1. A dedicated High Speed Rail Training Institute is being developed at Vadodara.
2. This institute will be fully equipped with equipment and facilities, such as a simulator, as exist in the training institute at Japan.

1. There are two types of services proposed. A “rapid train” service with only two stops “at Surat and Vadodara” and a slower service that halts at 10 stations en route.
2. The “rapid train” would complete the journey in 2 hours and 7 minutes, while the slower service would take 2 hours and 58 minutes.

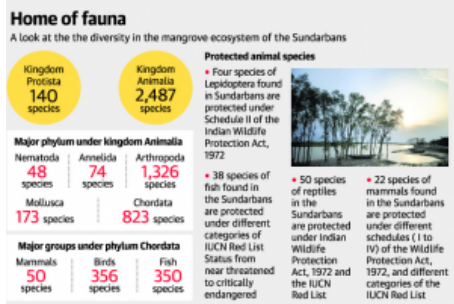
• **Cutting edge operational technology.**

1. The Shinkansen technology is renowned for its reliability and safety.
2. The train delay record of Shinkansen is less than a minute with zero fatalities.
3. The technology regarding disaster predictions and preventions will also be acquired as part of the project.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. [A fragile ark that shelters 2,626 creatures](#)

In news:



- Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has come out with a compendium of animal species in the Indian Sundarbans, estimating that there are 2,626 of them in the fragile island ecosystem.
- First edition : **“Fauna of Sundarban Biosphere Reserve**” is the first consolidated and updated information of the faunal diversity of the Sundarbans. It lists over 2,600 species, including the new species described from the mangrove ecosystem as well as threats faced by them due to climate change
- The listing includes a diverse 25 phyla, as they are biologically classified.
- The Indian segment of the Sundarbans, part of a UNESCO World Heritage site, forms part of the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta across 9,630 sq. km, distributed among 104 islands.
- Due to pressure on habitat from people and natural threats that have shrunk the mangrove swamp habitat, mammal numbers are declining.
- **Key Species :**
- The fortunes of 50 mammalian species including the Asian small-clawed Otter, Gangetic Dolphin, Grey and Marsh Mongoose and the wild Rhesus Monkey, the only primate here, are also documented.
- Rhinos, Swamp deer, Barking deer and Hog deer and Asiatic Wild Water Buffalo are not found in Sundarbans anymore.
- There are 356 species of birds, the most spectacular being raptors, or birds of prey, that occupy the highest canopies of the forest. Osprey, Brahminy Kite and White-Bellied Sea Eagle are dominant, while Rose-ringed parakeets, flycatchers and warblers are also found in the middle tier, while in the lower tier, kingfishers abound” and the Sundarbans has nine of them.
- There are 11 turtles, including the famous Olive Ridley and Hawksbill sea turtles and the most threatened freshwater species, the River Terrapin.
- A crocodile, 13 lizards including three species of Monitor Lizards and five Geckos are found here. The rivers, creeks channels and the islands together harbour about 30 snake species, led by the King Cobra, considered vulnerable by IUCN.
- Others documented are the Monocellate or monocled cobra, Russell’s viper, common and banded kraits. Besides, ten species of frogs and toads are found.
- **Cartilaginous fish :** The mangrove ecosystem covers about 350 species of fish. Cartilaginous fish, which have skeletons of cartilage rather than bone, make up 10.3%. The IUCN conservation status shows 6.3% fish are near-threatened and 4.85% are threatened. Also, there are 173 molluscs.
- In another indication of its richness, 753 insect species are encountered in the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve. Of these, 210 are butterflies and moths. Moreover, Crustaceans “ crabs, shrimp and prawns “ constitute 334 species

Nothing here for Today!!!

UNAIDS “90-90-90” target by 2020: As per the “90-90-90” target

1. 90% of all HIV infected persons should get diagnosed and know their HIV positive status.
2. Ninety per cent of these diagnosed HIV positive persons are to be provided regular Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), and
3. 90% of people taking ART should show signs of viral suppression, which reduces their scope of infection.

This would result in controlling HIV infection to sustainable limits by **2030** .

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)

- PETA is an American animal rights organization based in Norfolk, Virginia, and led by Ingrid Newkirk, its international president.
- Its slogan is “Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way”.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Artificial Intelligence can become an effective tool for good governance. Discuss.

GS Paper III

1. Discuss the role of land reforms in agricultural development. Identify the factors that were responsible for the success of land reforms in India.