

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### A. [GS1 Related](#)

### B. [GS2 Related](#)

#### Polity

1. [HC puts Haryana quota law in abeyance till March](#)
2. [Expedite trial in gang rape case, says SC](#)
3. [Central panel says states don't need to hike NREG pay to match minimum wage](#)
4. [SC to hear Rohingya plea for help](#)
5. [U.S. court rules in favour of Dr. Reddy's in patent litigation](#)

#### International Relations

1. [India to sign 4 pacts at BRICS summit](#)
2. [Sushma Swaraj meets Sirisena, discusses progress on Indian projects](#)

### C. [GS3 Related](#)

#### Economics

1. [Centre tells PSBs to begin merger process ~immediately~](#)
2. [Switzerland for early India-EFTA pact](#)
3. [Shifting goal posts: Demonetisation has totally failed to curb black money](#)

#### Environment and Ecology

1. [Volcanic carbon dioxide drove ancient global warming: study](#)
2. [Marine diversity in Antarctica under threat](#)

### D. [GS4 Related](#)

#### E. [Prelims Fact](#)

#### F. [UPSC Prelims Practice Questions](#)

#### G. [UPSC Mains Practice Questions](#)

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### Category: [POLITY](#)

#### 1. [HC puts Haryana quota law in abeyance till March](#)

##### In news:

- The Punjab and Haryana High Court stayed the implementation of a Haryana law providing reservation to **Jats** and five other communities, till March next year.
- Court also directed the **State Backward Classes Commission** to determine the **quota in government jobs and education institutions** to be given to these communities after studying relevant data and submit a report by March 2018.

##### Basic Information

#### National Commission for Backward Classes:

- National Commission for Backward Classes is under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- It was constituted pursuant to the provisions of the **National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993**.
  - **Constitutional status:** In 2017, a bill seeking to grant **constitutional status** to the National Commission for Backward Classes is scheduled to be passed in Parliament. **The bill has been passed by both the houses of Parliament and is awaiting the President's assent. The NCBC Bill, will insert Article 338B.**
  - **Indra Sawhney & Ors. Vs. Union of India:** The commission was the outcome of **Indra Sawhney & Ors. Vs. Union of India**. The Supreme Court of India in its Judgement "directed the Government of India, State Governments and Union Territory Administrations to constitute a permanent body in the nature of a Commission or Tribunal for entertaining, examining and recommending upon requests for inclusion and complaints of over-inclusion and under-inclusion in the list of OBCs. **The Supreme Court held that the Constitution recognised only social and educational ~ and not economic ~ backwardness.**
  - **Composition:** The Act provides that the Commission shall consist of five Members: a Chairperson who is or has been a judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court; a social scientist; two persons who have special knowledge in matters relating to backward classes; and a Member-Secretary, who is or has been an officer of the Central Government in the rank of a Secretary to the Government of India. Their term is of Three years.
- **Fucntions:**
  - The commission considers inclusions in and exclusions from the lists of communities notified as backward for the purpose of job reservations and tenders the needful advice to the Central Government
  - National Commission for Backward Classes has not yet been empowered to look into the grievances of persons of Other Backward Classes.

## 2. [Expedite trial in gang rape case, says SC](#)

### In News:

- **The Supreme Court order** : trial against **Greyhound police force** personnel allegedly involved in the gang rape of 11 women belonging to a vulnerable Adivasi tribe in Visakhapatnam be expedited and concluded in six months.
- **Fact:** the criminal trial had not moved in the past one decade (the victims have been waiting for justice since 2007).

### Basic Information

- **Greyhound police force:** GreyHounds is a special force of the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states which undertakes high risk operations against Naxalite terrorists.

## 3. [Central panel says states don't need to hike NREG pay to match minimum wage](#)

### In news:

- The panel for revision of wages under the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** has recommended that there is no need to ensure parity with minimum wages paid by various states
- It states that wages under the rural employment guarantee scheme were last aligned to minimum wages in 2009, and that "there is no compelling reason to align MGNREGA and states minimum wages again".
- The panel had earlier found that MGNREGA wages were lower than the minimum agricultural wages paid in 17 states and Union Territories
- In 2014, a seven-member expert committee, headed by Professor Mahendra Dev, had held that MGNREGA workers should be paid at least the minimum wages paid to agricultural workers in the states, if not more, to meet basic needs.
- The report, was accepted by MoRD but rejected by the Finance Ministry citing the fiscal burden involved.
- The ministry panel has agreed to the 2nd recommendation of the Mahendra Dev committee, that the Consumer Price Index for Rural (CPI-R), which reflects the present consumption pattern, should be the basis for annual revision of MGNREGA wage rates, and not CPI- Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL), which is based on the consumption pattern of 1983

### Divergence in pay:

- There has been a divergence because several states have arbitrarily increased their minimum wages without following any scientific principles.
- There is no reason why the Centre should go by that

### MGNREGA budget and Wage revision

- Union government had claimed that this year's MGNREGA budget of Rs 48,000 crore is the highest ever
- But the wage revision this year was at a mere 2.7 percent, the lowest in the scheme's ten-year legacy leading to a mere Rs 1-3 per day hike in several states.
- The MGNREGA wages are far lower than minimum wages in states such as Karnataka, Punjab, West Bengal, Haryana, and Jharkhand

## 4. [SC to hear Rohingya plea for help](#)

### Context:

- Indian government's proposal to deport 40,000-strong Rohingya Muslim refugee community back to their native Myanmar, where discrimination and possibly summary executions await them.
- An urgent plea was made by two Rohingya Muslim immigrants against the government's proposed move.

### In news:

- The Supreme Court has agreed to hear the plea.
- **Petitioners contention:**
  - The Centre's move to deport them **violated the constitutional guarantee** that the Indian state should "protect the life and liberty of every human being, whether citizen or not".
  - The proposed deportation is contrary to the constitutional protections of Article 14 (equality), Article 21 (right to life) and Article 51(c) (respect for international law and treaty obligations) of the Constitution.

### Basic Information

#### Article 14: Equality before law

- The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India .

#### Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty

- No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law

#### Article 51: Promotion of international peace and security

The State shall endeavour to

1. Promote international peace and security;
2. Maintain just and honourable relations between nations;

3. **Foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another; and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.**

#### 4. [U.S. court rules in favour of Dr. Reddy's in patent litigation](#)

##### In news:

- **Indivior assertion:** the proposed generic version of Suboxon. Inte (buprenorphine and naloxone) sublingual film by Dr. Reddy's Laboratories infringes the patent.
- **S. District Court ruling:**
  - Ruled in favor of Reddy's laboratory- does not infringe any patents.
  - **Dr. Reddy's Laboratories statement:** The judgment reiterates our commitment to providing affordable and innovative medicines that address the unmet and under-met needs of patients around the world.

##### Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### 1. [India to sign 4 pacts at BRICS summit](#)

- **BRICS summit discussion:** focus on global economic issues, national security, and development-related issues
- **Plenary session discussion focus:** practical cooperation and cultural exchange.
- **Guests at Xiamen summit:** Thailand, Mexico, Egypt, Guinea and Tajikistan

#### 2. [Sushma Swaraj meets Sirisena, discusses progress on Indian projects](#)

##### Context:

- External Affairs Minister visit to Sri Lanka, to participate in the Indian Ocean Conference organised by the India Foundation.

##### In news:

##### Discussed Issues:

- **The delay in the Constitution making process:** Sri Lanka urged New Delhi to use its good offices to support the government see the process through.
- Delay in implementing India-backed projects in the island.
- India assured continued and fullest support to the Sri Lankan government: The **national unity government** led by President Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe "from the rival parties SLFP and UNP" is under pressure. It faces large scale **corruption allegations** in addition to a challenge from the SLFP faction led by former strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa, who has vowed to topple the government.

##### India's project:

- Joint development of a **World War-era** oil tank in the strategically located eastern port town of **Trincomalee**.
- India has expressed its interest to operate Sri Lanka's second international airport in Mattala.

##### Category: ECONOMICS

#### 1. [Centre tells PSBs to begin merger process immediately](#)

#### 2. [Switzerland for early India-EFTA pact](#)

##### In news:

- **Visiting President of Switzerland Doris Leuthard said:** early conclusion of the proposed **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** between **India** and **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** as well as an investment protection framework would boost economic ties between the two sides.
- Negotiations have been running since 2008.
- **European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members:** Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

##### Basic Information

##### Internet Grievance Forum:

- The IGF is a forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue on public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance issues, such as the Internet's sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development.
- The United Nations Secretary-General formally announced the establishment of the IGF in July 2006 and the first meeting was convened in October/November 2006.
- **Purpose:**
  - The purpose of the IGF is to maximize the opportunity for open and inclusive dialogue and the exchange of ideas on Internet governance (IG) related issues; create opportunities to share best practices and experiences; identify emerging issues and bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public; contribute to capacity building for Internet governance.
  - The main aim of the IGF is to facilitate inclusive, productive discussions on Internet related public policy issues from a general perspective, while keeping all stakeholders involved. This includes having a harmonized and consistent approach when covering IG issues. To further this aim, the IGF adheres to the generally used UN principle of discouraging ad hominem attacks. As such, participants should refrain from singling out individual persons, companies, countries or entities during their interventions and throughout the general discussions and debates in main sessions, workshops and other events at IGF meetings. Concrete examples can be highlighted in the overall coverage of IG issues as long as it is not done in a blatantly inflammatory or potentially libelous way.

Singling out one entity without broader context could not only discourage further participation of this entity, but endanger inclusive and productive discussion at the IGF.

**Free Trade Agreement:** A free-trade area is the region encompassing a trade bloc whose member countries have signed a free-trade agreement (FTA). Such agreements involve cooperation between at least two countries to reduce trade barriers – import quotas and tariffs – and to increase trade of goods and services with each other.

The degree of economic integration can be categorized into seven stages:

- Preferential trading area
- Free trade area
- Customs union
- Common market
- Economic union
- Economic and monetary union
- Complete economic integration

### 3. [Shifting goal posts: Demonetisation has totally failed to curb black money](#)

**Context:** demonetisation was failure because RBI's annual report showed that 98.96% of the demonetised currency had returned to the central bank.

#### **Aims& Objectives:**

- November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced to the nation that ₹1,500 and ₹1,000 currency notes would cease to be legal tender.
- It was aimed at breaking the grip of corruption and black money
- The notes hoarded by anti-national and anti-social elements will become just worthless pieces of paper.
- Sizeable part of the ₹15.44 lakh crore of the two high-value banknotes would remain in the hands of the holders.
- This demonetised money would not be tendered back into the banking system due to fear of punitive government action

#### **Result:**

- RBI's annual report, showed that as much as 98.96% of the demonetised currency had returned to the central bank as of June 30
- RBI circular setting a ₹15,000 limit on deposits of withdrawn notes unless done under the government's amnesty scheme, was a measure intended to dissuade bank customers from returning the demonetised currency.
- Finance Minister to now claim that the "confiscation of money" had not been an objective, and the government had expected all the SBNs [specified bank notes] to come back to the banking system to become effectively usable currency
- Despite the large amounts that were deposited in banks post-demonetisation, it is doubtful whether the Income Tax authorities have the necessary resources to track down and penalise the corrupt.

#### **Demonetisation – Some benefits**

- Fostering greater compliance with the tax laws
- Reducing the economy's reliance on cash through increased adoption of digital payments.
- But such gains could have been achieved by other and less self-defeating ways.

#### **Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

### 1. [Volcanic carbon dioxide drove ancient global warming: study](#)

#### **In news:**

#### **Study revelations:**

- Extreme global warming event **56 million years ago** was driven by massive carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from volcanoes, during the formation of the North Atlantic Ocean.
- **Palaeocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM)** was associated with a geologically rapid doubling of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> in less than 25 thousand years – with **volcanoes squarely to blame**.
- **Palaeocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM) event:** is the most rapid and extreme natural global warming event of the last 66 million years. It lasted for around 150 thousand years and global temperatures increased by at least five degrees Celsius. PETM roughly coincided with the formation of massive "flood basalts" – large stretches of ocean floor coated in lava, resulting from a series of huge eruptions.
- **Believed till now:** PETM event was caused by the injection of carbon into the ocean and atmosphere; the ultimate trigger, the source of this carbon, and the total amount released, have up to now all remained elusive.

#### **Land drifts:**

- Greenland first started separating from north-western Europe, thereby creating the North Atlantic Ocean.
- There was a total input of more than **10,000 petagrammes of carbon** from a predominantly volcanic source.
- This is a vast amount of carbon – some 30 times larger than all the fossil fuels burned to date and equivalent to all current conventional and unconventional fossil fuel reserves.

### 2. [Marine diversity in Antarctica under threat](#)

#### **In news:**

- **New research findings** : An increase of just 1-2 degrees Celsius in shallow waters on the **West Antarctic Peninsula** has radically reduced marine diversity.
- In an area like Australia, differences in ocean temperatures are likely to change around 10-20 degrees throughout the year; however, species in Antarctica have evolved in an environment where there is very little variation in temperature. It's certainly a concern, when the temperature changes just by one or two degree Celsius here in the Antarctic region.

***Nothing here for Today!!!***

## **NATIONAL PARKS/SANCTUARIES/BIOSPHERE RESERVES:**

### **1. Pin Valley National Park**

- **Location:** Lahaul and Spiti district, in the state of Himachal Pradesh, in far Northern India.
- **Features:** With its snow laden unexplored higher reaches and slopes, the Park forms a natural habitat for a number of endangered animals including the snow leopard and Siberian ibex.

### **2. Simbalbara National Park**

**Location:** Himachal Pradesh, India

## **IUCN Red List:**

### **Spoon-billed sandpiper**

**IUCN Classification** : Critically endangered

**Habitat and distribution** : breeds in north-eastern Russia and winters in Southeast Asia. The spoon-billed sandpiper's breeding habitat is sea coasts and adjacent hinterland on the Chukchi Peninsula and southwards along the isthmus of the Kamchatka peninsula. It migrates down the Pacific coast through Japan, North Korea, South Korea and China, to its main wintering grounds in South and South-East Asia, where it has been recorded from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore.

### **Siberian crane**

**IUCN Classification** : Critically endangered

**Habitat and distribution** : The western area in the river basins of the Ob, Konda and Sossva and to the east a much larger population in Yakutia between the Yana and the Alazeya rivers. The western population winters in Iran and some individuals formerly wintered in India south to Nagpur and east to Bihar. The eastern populations winter mainly in the Poyang Lake area in China.

## **F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam**

### **G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions**

#### **GS Paper II**

1. In 2013, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court upheld Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which discriminates against a section of individuals in society on the basis of their sexual orientation, so is it against the essence of Article 15 of the constitution? Examine.
2. Is Chinese plan of "BRICS PLUS" a major challenge to India? Discuss.

#### **GS Paper IV**

### **Topic: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS**

#### **Question 1.**

As a DM of a home district of serving Chief Minister, you find out that a huge land scam has taken place in which close relatives of the Chief Minister are involved. The scam which you have unearthed has caused lots of financial loss to the state's exchequer. You have been recently married to a daughter of an MLA who is known as staunch political enemy of the CM.

While you are investigating the matter for further proofs, before you make this issue public, the CM comes to know about this. He threatens you with dire consequences if you do not close the file and bury the matter silently. He threatens you with false criminal cases and CBI investigation in case you do not budge. Unfortunately, a case is pending against you regarding misuse of treasury funds, in which you haven't done anything wrong. This case can be reopened and used against you. However, if you stop investigation, he has assured you that you will be given a plum post in the capital.

Identify which course of action are available to you. Examine each action's merits and demerits. Finally, explain which course of action would you follow and why?

#### **Answer:**

In this situation, the following options are available:

1. Acting as per the directions of the CM and close the file in return for the plum job and to avoid investigation
2. Carry on with the investigation to find substantiate proofs to the issue which caused loss to the exchequer. Upholding the law and constitution to which I owe my allegiance.
3. Use my father-in-law's position to expose the current CM and share the gain of this expose with my father-in-law.

4. Report the matter in media anonymously.

### **Option 1**

#### **Merits:**

1. Plum post will be rewarded
2. Will be freed from the threat of CM and career will be safe

#### **Demerits:**

1. Loss to the state exchequer and ultimate sufferer would be public
2. Subversion of constitutionally mandated duty for the personal benefit
3. public image and trust will be lost

### **Option 2**

#### **Merits:**

1. upholding personal integrity, objectivity, honesty, spirit of civil service
2. unearthing such act would cause deleterious effect on others who may be indulged in similar other activities
3. bringing such issue before the public will improve trust and confidence between state machinery and public.
4. Send a strong message to the political class that honest civil servant would not succumb to their pressure tactics.

#### **Demerits:**

1. Lot of personal hardship caused in the process including false CBI inquiry.
2. Putting life and family in jeopardy.

#### **Course of action to be followed:**

I would choose option 2. Investigation would be carried out as usual. Meanwhile

CM should be told politely but firmly that I am performing my constitutionally mandated duties and I have no option to Go.

There is a possibility that CM's party workers would spread message that MLA is playing vendetta politics through his in-law. So sound proofs before the public are necessary to avoid any backfire.

If CM, in the meanwhile starts any CBI investigation on my any past acts, I would welcome that as I have not done anything wrong. Even Government suspends, I would cooperate with the enquiry to prove my innocence. If necessary I would move to court for protection against harassment.

But in no case, I would close the file to avoid any personal hardship to my career and my family as it would amount to compromising on my values and ethics which civil service holds.