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**Category: POLITY**

1. [Sex with minor wife, despite consent, is rape: Supreme Court](#)

#### **Context:**

- **Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC):** allowed the husband of a girl child “between 15 and 18 years of age” blanket liberty and freedom to have non-consensual sexual intercourse with her. Her willingness or consent was of no concern.
- The husband in such cases was not punished for rape.

#### **In news:**

- **The Supreme Court’s historic verdict:**
  - Sexual intercourse by a man with his wife, who is below 18 years of age, is rape.
  - A girl child below the age of 18 cannot be treated as a commodity having no say over her body or someone who has no right to deny sexual intercourse to her husband.
  - Human rights of a girl child are very much alive and kicking whether she is married or not and deserve recognition and acceptance
  - The court, however, refrained from dealing with the issue of marital rape of a woman aged above 18.
  - The exception clause to rape, carved out in the IPC, created an unnecessary and artificial distinction between a married girl child and an unmarried girl child.
  - The clause took away the right of a girl child to bodily integrity and reproductive choice. It had even the effect of turning a blind eye to trafficking of the minor girl children in the guise of marriage.
- **Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code & statutory rape :** The exception had remained an anomaly because Section 375 itself mandated that sex with a girl below 18 years of age, with or without her consent, was **statutory rape**. An unmarried girl child can prosecute her rapist, but a married girl child aged between 15 and 18 could not even do that
- **Expert opinion:**
  - With this judgment, considered by experts as trigger to declaring child marriage **void ab initio** , the court ended the decades-old disparity between Exception 2 to Section 375 IPC and other child protection laws.
  - These include the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act

and Juvenile Justice Act, all which define a "child" as someone who is below 18 years of age.

### What is the conflict between IPC 375 and POCSO Act?

- Almost every statute in India recognises that a girl below 18 years of age is a child and it is for this reason that the law penalises sexual intercourse with a girl who is below 18 years of age.
- Exception 2 to Section 375 of the IPC: if a girl child between 15 and 18 years of age is married, her husband can have non-consensual sexual intercourse with her, without being penalised under the IPC, only because she is married to him and for no other reason.

### Prohibition of Child Marriage Act:

- PCMA makes child marriage only voidable, that is, the burden is placed on the child bride to approach a court to declare her marriage a nullity.
- She has to do this within two years of attaining majority that is by the time she is 20 years old.
- If not, the marriage continues.

### Will previous cases of child marriages/rape be reconsidered?

- The judgment will have "prospective effect" meaning it will not apply to past cases
- Cognizance of such offenses can be taken only in accordance with the provisions of section 198(6) of the Criminal Procedure Code
- The provision says that court shall not take cognizance of an offense under Section 376 IPC "if more than one year has elapsed from the date of commission of the offense"

### Does this judgment apply to women above 18 years of age also?

- The SC bench clarified that it was not making any observation on "marital rape" of a woman who is 18 years of age and above as the issue was not before the court
- The question whether marital rape should be criminalized is pending before the Delhi High Court where the Centre has filed an affidavit opposing this saying that doing so may destabilize the institution of marriage apart from being an easy tool for harassing husbands

## 2. Sex with minor wife case: Why "magic number" 15

### Context:

- Exception 2 of Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code allows a husband to have sexual intercourse with his minor wife, with or without her consent, if she has crossed the age of 15.

### What is the reason for fixing the magic figure of 15 years?

- In the year 1940, when the age of consent for sexual intercourse for a girl was 16 years, the age of marriage was 15 years and the age under the exception was also 15 years.
- In 1975, too, the age of consent was 16 years, the age of marriage was 18 years, but the age under the exception remained 15 years.
- Today, when the age of consent and marriage of a girl are both 18, the age under the exception clause is frozen at 15 years.
- **Inference:** The magic figure of 15 years is not based on any scientific evaluation, but is based on the mere fact that it has been existing for a long time. It strikes against the concept of equality. It violates the right of fair treatment of the girl child, who is unable to look after herself.

## 3. "Living Will" can take effect only if a medical board certifies a person condition is irreversible: Supreme Court

### Context:

- The Supreme Court is hearing a petition by NGO Independent Thought to legalize **euthanasia** and the **concept of a "Living Will"**.
- Five-judge Constitution Bench, headed by Chief Justice, is debating on when exactly a person's "Living Will" or advance directive for end-of-life medical care should take effect.

### In news:

- **Court's observation:** A person's advance directive to withdraw medical care to allow him to die with dignity should take effect only when a **medical board affirms** that his condition is beyond cure and irreversible.
- The Bench said it would lay down guidelines for drafting living wills and how it can be authenticated. It has reserved the case for judgment.
- Advance directives may be approved by a magistrate. The magistrate has to examine that the person executing the "Living Will" is of sound mind. That he has taken informed consent.
- **Example:** If a man is admitted to a hospital and he goes into coma. The hospital informs the medical board, which takes a fair, informed and impartial decision that his medical condition is beyond cure. This decision is taken by the medical board on the touchstone of modern technology.
- **Two-fold test** as to when a "Living Will" would come into effect:
  - When the medical condition of the patient has become irreversible.
  - When the prolongation of his life can be done only at the cost of pain and suffering which is at a level inconsistent with his advance directive.
- **Government's response:**
  - The legalization of "advance directives" would amount to waiving of the paramount fundamental right to

life enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution.

- Government was opposing the concept of "Living Will" as a principle of public policy. It said the State's primary obligation is to sustain life and not legalise a person's wish to die.
- The government had said the passive euthanasia is the law of the land, with thousands of cases in which doctors withdraw life support after getting the informed consent of the relatives.
- **Gian Kaur judgment of 1996**
  - The court observed that right to live with dignity also includes right to die with dignity, to approve of passive euthanasia

#### 4. [SC lauds Karnataka for declaring child marriage void](#)

##### In news:

- The Supreme Court lauded Karnataka for its pioneering act of amending the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA)** to make child marriage **automatically void**.

##### Amended PCMA:

- In Karnataka, the husband of a girl child would be liable for punishment for child marriage under the amended PCMA;
  - For penetrative sexual assault or aggravated penetrative sexual assault under the POCSO Act; and
  - If the husband and the girl child are living together in the same or shared household for rape under the IPC.

##### Highlights of a study published by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and Young Lives based on the 2011 Census:

- Over 20% girls in this country are married before attaining the age of 18.
- More than one out of every five marriages violates the provisions of the PCMA and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

#### 5. [Underweight and obese children: Alarm bells ring at both ends in India, Lancet study raises concern](#)

##### Highlights of a study in the Lancet:

- The study was released on World Obesity Day on October 11
- The study looked at BMI (body mass index) trends in 200 countries from 1975-2016
- **Obese Population:** It has found that the number of obese girls in age group 5-19 has risen from 5 million to 50 million in 40 years. And that of boys from 6 million to 74 million.
- **Underweight Population:** The researchers say that if current world trends continue, "obese" will soon be more common than "underweight"

##### Scenario in India:

- India has among the largest shares of underweight children and teenagers
- And at the other end, it is part of a trend that has seen the number of obese under-20s worldwide rising tenfold in 10 years
- In India, the prevalence of obesity is between 1-2 %
- The prevalence of mild to severe underweight under-20s in India is 22.7% among girls and 30.7% among boys

##### Obesity among children:

- The middle class and upper middle class in India have fewer children and tend to overfeed them under the pretext of pampering
- As per the Lancet study, the percentage is between 1-2 in India but these will increase as social structures are changing in India

#### Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

#### 1. [Eye on China, foreign secy S Jaishankar in Seychelles for infrastructure pact](#)

##### Context:

- Unannounced visit to the Seychelles

##### In news:

- India had sent **Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar** on an unannounced visit to the Seychelles
- **Possible reasons behind this move:** Due to concerns arise from China's moves and increasing presence in Seychelles and to iron out differences over the development of infrastructure in Seychelles

##### Seychelles response:

- Seychelles has said it would like to take a "relook" at the agreement between the two countries to build military infrastructure on Assumption Island
- The agreement was signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Seychelles in 2015
- Officials in Seychelles have said the agreement does not have legal backing on their side, whereas it has legal basis in India
- To avoid returning to the negotiating table, Jaishankar met Seychelles President Danny Faure and discussed the hurdles that have come up in recent months

##### Particulars of the agreement:

- The agreement will enable India to help Seychelles build military infrastructure for the Seychelles People's Defence Forces (SPDF) on Assumption Island
- The infrastructure also includes residential barracks for SPDF's Coast Guard and fixing up the jetty and existing airstrip for the SPDF

### Concerns of India over China's presence in Seychelles

- According to Indian intelligence reports, there has been a sharp spike in the number of Chinese visitors in Seychelles over the last six years – from about 500 in 2011 to over 15,000 in 2016

### Background information:

#### India's relations with Seychelles:

- The two countries have an established relationship in defence and maritime security, through which India helps to patrol the waters of Seychelles and gives equipment to the island nation's defence forces
- In recent years, India has agreed to help Seychelles map its hydrology reserves, launched a coastal surveillance radar project and boosted security cooperation with the nation
- India will also give a second Dornier maritime patrol aircraft

### Category: ECONOMICS

#### 1. PM's advisory council acknowledges slowdown

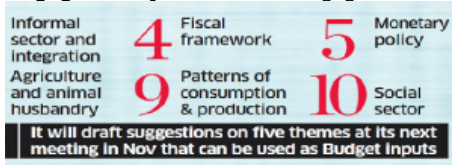
##### Context:

- Recently reconstituted Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC) and its key areas of focus.
- The council acknowledged the slowdown in the economy.



##### Key Points:

- **Top priority:** Accelerating growth and employment over



- the next six months
- would be the top priority of the recently reconstituted Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC).
- The five-member Council was unanimous that the government shouldn't stray from the path of **fiscal consolidation**, thus ruling out a **fiscal stimulus** to reverse the downturn in the economy
- The committee had reached a consensus on the **fiscal consolidation** policy being followed by the government.
- The committee has identified major priorities for accelerating economic growth over the next six months. The priority areas include economic growth, employment and job creation, informal sector and integration, fiscal framework, monetary policy, public expenditure, institutions of economic governance, agriculture and animal husbandry, patterns of consumption and production, and the social sector.
- **Economy Track Monitor:** Committee highlighted the need for effective tracking of key economic parameters, through possible mechanisms for instituting an Economy Track Monitor, using lead indicators and triggers for action, based on informed assessment and analysis.

### Basic Information:

- **Fiscal Consolidation** refers to the policies undertaken by Governments (national and sub-national levels) to reduce their deficits and accumulation of debt stock.
- **Fiscal Stimulus:** An increase in public spending or a reduction in the level of taxation that might be performed by a government in order to encourage and support economic growth. Most government bailout packages offered to various business types can be considered a form of fiscal stimulus.

#### 2. Cabinet nod for natural gas cargo-swap deal with Japan

##### In news:

- The Cabinet approved a cargo-swapping arrangement with Japan as part of a broader bilateral pact to create a gas exchange that could reduce India's logistical costs for natural gas import.
- As the world's largest importer of gas, Japan has pacts for supply with Qatar. India is having similar pacts with Australia.
- **What is the deal all about?** As part of the gas exchange, India will have a provision that will allow the swapping of these gas contracts which will save [on] transport costs. So, that India can get gas from Qatar instead of Japan and Japan can source our quantum from Australia.
- It is purely for logistics costs. It is a swapping of cargo and not of contracts, so the tariff at which the LNG is bought will not change.

### 3. [Skill development: CCEA approves two World Bank-backed schemes](#)

#### In news:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs(CCEA) has approved two World Bank supported schemes of Rs 6,655 crore aimed at skill development in India
- The schemes are aimed to set up national bodies for accreditation and certification which shall regulate accreditation and certification in both long- and short-term Vocational Education and Training

#### About the Schemes:

- **Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)** is a Rs 4,455-crore centrally sponsored scheme, including Rs 3,300 crore loan support from WB
- **Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE)** is a Rs 2,200-crore central sector scheme, with half of the scheme outlay as WB loan assistance

### 4. [The challenge of managing currency](#)

#### Context:

- Steps to manage the currency volatility.
- Excessive exchange rate volatility could affect investment and growth possibilities in tradable sectors.
- **Capital flows:** Capital flows refer to the movement of money for the purpose of investment, trade, including the flow of capital within corporations in the form of capital spending on operations and research and development (R&D).

#### Background information:

- The latest World Economic Outlook report by the IMF shows that it has been tough for the central banks to manage currency market.
- The exchange rate volatility has become a significant problem from the year 2013 when the US Federal Reserve hinted that it could reduce its interest rates. This led to sudden capital outflow from the emerging markets including India. In 2015, the devaluation of renminbi also had a similar effect on the international economy although India was insulated from this shock.
- Capital flows are fairly volatile, non-intervention from the central bank can affect economic activity and could be a potential source of risk to financial stability.

#### Way forward measures:

- The central bank should continue to intervene in the market to protect the competitiveness of the rupee. This means the RBI should undertake purchase of foreign currencies.
- Now that India has adequate reserves, the government and the RBI should review the composition of foreign flows. Equity investment is more stable compared to debt which sometimes flows in only because of interest rate arbitrage.

#### Basic Information:

- **Current Account Deficit:** A capital account deficit shows that more money is flowing out of the economy along with increase in its ownership of foreign assets and vice-versa in case of a surplus.
- **Real Effective Exchange Rate :** The real effective exchange rate (REER) is the weighted average of a country's currency relative to an index or basket of other major currencies, adjusted for the effects of inflation.
- **Market intervention by the RBI:** Purchase of foreign currencies will lead to decrease in supply of the same. This will increase the rupee supply in the market and help appreciation of foreign currencies leading to increase in competitiveness of Indian rupee.

### Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY/HEALTH ISSUES

#### 1. [New nanotube material may help create hypersonic aircraft](#)

#### In news:

- Scientists have identified an extremely lightweight material- boron nitride nanotubes (BNNTs), that can withstand a high temperature and stress, a step towards developing hypersonic aircraft able to travel at five to 10 times the speed of sound.
- **Advantages:** this discovery could lead to a drastic decrease in flight times.
- **Key Fact:**
  - Carbon nanotubes have been used in planes for their strength – they are stronger than steel – and their ability to conduct heat. However, BNNTs are the wave of the future when it comes to air travel.
  - While carbon nanotubes can stay stable at temperatures up to 400 degrees Celsius, BNNTs can withstand up to 900 degrees Celsius
  - BNNTs are also able to handle high amounts of stress and are extremely lightweight
  - Withstanding high temperatures is an important requirement for any material meant to build the world's next super planes

### Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

#### 1. [Pondicherry Shark, Red Sea Torpedo and Tentacled Butterfly Ray may have become extinct, fear scientists](#)

#### In news:

- Three marine species, the **Pondicherry Shark, the Red Sea Torpedo and the Tentacled Butterfly Ray** might

- have become possibly extinct in the oceanic waters of the **Arabian Seas Region** (ASR) since no evidence of its existence has surfaced in the last three decades.
- Scientists are also worried about the possible disappearance of other species from the region even before they were known to science.
  - The first ever assessment of the conservation status of sharks, rays, and chimaeras (collectively called chondrichthyans) in the region has left the scientists grim-faced as 78 of the 153 species revived were found fighting for survival.
  - **Critically Endangered:**
    - The Guitar fish found in coastal waters of Kerala and Tamil Nadu and
    - the Ganges Shark found in Arabian Sea
  - **Arabian Seas Region** The ASR covers the waters of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and the Persian Gulf. The region is also bordered by 20 countries including India, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel and Pakistan.
  - **Key Fact:** India has banned the exploitation and trade of 10 species of sharks and rays. In 2015, India even banned the export and import of shark fins of all species.
  - **Reasons:**
    - By-catch was found to be the biggest threat to the majority of chondrichthyan fishes besides the ‘‘pressure from artisanal and industrial fisheries.’’
    - Increasing decline in the extent and quality of habitat as a result of coastal development and other anthropogenic disturbances, particularly for those critical habitats that many species depend on coral reefs, mangroves, sea grasses pose a serious threat to the survival of many species.

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

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

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

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

### **GS Paper I**

1. ‘‘A child bride is more than doubly prone to health problems than a grown-up woman,’’ Discuss.

### **GS Paper II**

1. Under the Indian Constitutional and Legal framework, what constitutes Hate speech? How does it violate Fundamental Right to Equality enshrined under Article 14?