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Daily News Analysis

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General Studies-3

India's under-5 girls face high mortality

Why in news?

- The 'Levels and Trends in Child Mortality' report by the United Nations (UN) inter-agency group for child mortality.

Key points:

- The child mortality rate, also called 'under-five mortality rate', refers to the probability of dying between birth and exactly five years of age expressed per 1,000 live births. It encompasses neonatal mortality and infant mortality. 47% of deaths among children under five were newborns in 2018.
- Rapid progress has resulted in a significant decline in preventable child deaths since 1990, with the global under-5 mortality rate declining by over half between 1990 and 2016. However, despite these advances, there are still 15000 under-five deaths per day from largely preventable causes.
- Most of the causes leading to under-five mortality are preventable with suitable interventions. The leading causes of death of children under five include:
 - Preterm birth complications
 - Pneumonia
 - Intrapartum-related events
 - Diarrhoea
 - Neonatal infection
 - Malaria
 - Malnutrition and Undernutrition
- Reduction of child mortality is reflected in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Target 3.2 aims to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births by 2030.

Variation among the regions and countries:

- Huge disparities in under-5 mortality rates exist. Countries that are in the second or third stage of the Demographic Transition Model (DTM) have higher rates of child mortality than countries in the fourth or fifth stage of the DTM.

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest under-5 mortality rates in the world.

- Approximately 80% of under-5 deaths occur in only two regions: sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Half of all under-5 deaths in 2018 occurred in five countries: India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia. India and Nigeria alone

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account for about a third.

- Likewise, there are disparities between wealthy and poor households in developing countries. According to a Save the Children paper, children from the poorest households in India are three times more likely to die before 5 years than those from richer households.

Gender disparity in Child mortality:

- Globally the under 5 mortality risk is higher among boys, meaning that boys are expected to have a higher probability of dying before reaching age 5 than girls. But this trend was not reflected in India.
- India is among the few countries in the world where, in 2018, the mortality for girls under 5 years of age exceeded that of boys.
- The report though notes that in 2018, fewer countries showed gender disparities in child mortality, yet in some countries primarily located in Southern Asia and Western Asia, the risk of dying before age 5 for girls is significantly higher compared to global patterns.

Indian scenario:

- India's neonatal mortality rate is 23 per 1,000 live births.
- Neonatal death is defined as a death during the first 28 days of life (0-27 days). The major causes of neonatal mortality are pre-term birth, intrapartum related events, and neonatal infection.
- According to India's 2017 Sample Registration System, the States with the highest burden of neonatal mortality are Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, with 32, 33 and 30 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively.
- Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttarakhand showed the largest gender gaps in under-5 mortality.
- Uttar Pradesh owing to the large population base and also the high neonatal mortality rate has the highest number of estimated newborn deaths in India.

Kaziranga has one of the highest number of wetland birds

Why in news?

- The 2019 wetland bird census.

Key points:

- Kaziranga National park has recorded 96 species of wetland birds, which is one of the highest for wildlife reserves in India.
- The survey has observed an increase in not just the total number of birds, but also the no of different species and the families. A notable improvement has been observed compared to the first wetland bird survey in Kaziranga (2018).
- The bar-headed goose constitutes the largest share followed by common teal and northern pintail species. The other species with sizeable numbers include gadwall, little cormorant, Eurasian wigeon, Asian openbill, northern lapwing, ruddy shelduck and spot-billed pelican.
- The survey has covered four ranges of the park — Agoratoli, Bagori, Kohora and Burapahar.



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Agoratoli Range home to Sohola, the largest of Kaziranga's 92 perennial wetlands saw the highest number of birds.

Significance:

- The wetlands constitute the major portion and also nourish Kaziranga's ecosystem.
- Data on wetland birds is important given that an increase or decrease in the number of birds is indicative of the park's health.

Kaziranga national park

- Kaziranga National Park is a national park in the state of Assam, India. The sanctuary, which hosts two-thirds of the world's great one-horned rhinoceroses, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985.
- Located on the edge of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspot, the park combines high species diversity and visibility.
- Kaziranga is a vast expanse of tall elephant grass, marshland, and dense tropical moist broadleaf forests, crisscrossed by four rivers, including the Brahmaputra, Mora Diphlu, Diphlu and Mora Dhansiri. The park includes numerous small bodies of water.
- Kaziranga is home to a high density of tigers and was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2006. The park is home to large breeding populations of elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer.
- Kaziranga is recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International for the conservation of avifaunal species.

'Mass planting of exotic trees in Nilgiris harmful'

Why in news?

- A Coonoor-based trust proposal to plant more than 10,000 trees in the Nilgiris.

Details:

- The trust plans to plant trees in order to restore the degraded forests and to give impetus to the afforestation efforts in the region.
- Most of the trees will be exotic flora like jacaranda and podocarpus, pine and bottlebrush.
- Conservationists argue that this mass plantation drive will be harmful to the environment in the long term.

Hurdles:

Affecting the ecosystem:

- Exotic trees have a huge impact on soil chemistry on the ground, preventing native grass, plants and herbs from taking root underneath the canopy. They behave like an alien species, sharing the available resources and thus reducing the number of native species.
- The reduced floral biodiversity will, in turn, affect the wildlife of the region.

High Water demand:

- After the exotics take root, they increase the water demand in that region, impacting not just the Nilgiris but other districts further downstream that rely on rivers emanating from the

hills.

- Given the reliance of the region on water supply from these rivers this might lead to a water stress condition in the region.

Avian influenza A(H9N2)

Why in news?

- Avian influenza A(H9N2) virus infection has been reported in a 17-month-old boy in Maharashtra.
- This is the country's first human case of infection with H9N2 virus. H9N2 viruses have been observed in poultry in India several times.

Key Points:

About H9N2 Virus

- H9N2 is a subtype of influenza A virus, which causes human influenza as well as bird flu.
- The H9N2 subtype was isolated for the first time in Wisconsin, US in 1966 from turkey flocks.
- H9N2 viruses are found worldwide in wild birds and are endemic in poultry in many areas.

Cases of Human Infection

- H9N2 virus infections in humans are rare, but likely under-reported due to typically mild symptoms of the infections.
- Cases of human infection have been observed in Hong Kong, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Egypt. The first case globally was reported from Hong Kong in 1998.

Emerging Threat

- H9N2 viruses could potentially play a major role in the emergence of the next influenza pandemic.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), with avian influenza viruses circulating in poultry, there is a risk for sporadic infection and small clusters of human cases due to exposure to infected poultry or contaminated environments

General studies-2

The warp and weft of religious liberty

Why in news?

A nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court will begin hearing arguments on questions concerning the relationship between the right to freedom of religion and the rights of individuals to dignity and equality.

Background:

- The establishment of the nine-judge bench originated out of an order of reference made on review petitions filed against the Sabarimala judgment. The new bench will have to interpret the scope and extent of the Constitution's religious liberty clauses.
- There have been many such cases in recent history which involved the often contradictory relationship between the right to freedom of religion and the rights of individuals to dignity



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and equality.

Madesnana ritual:

- It is a 500-year-old ritual performed at the KukkeSubramanya Temple in Karnataka.
- The practice involves people mostly belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, rolling over plantain leaves left behind with food half-eaten by Brahmins. The belief is that this act would cleanse their skin of impurities.
- In 2012, following a petition by progressive-minded citizens, a division bench of the Karnataka High Court had put a halt to the ritual, but allowed it to continue in a modified form where Devotees could now voluntarily choose to roll over leaves containing food that was not tasted or partially eaten by the members of any community.
- The order was lifted two years later by another division bench of the High Court, which allowed makesnana in its original form. The court noted that the practise did not violate any law and the banning of it would hurt the sentiments of devotees and effect their constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of religion.
- Following a challenge, the Supreme Court of India In December 2014 placed a temporary ban on makesnana.

Female genital mutilation:

- Female genital mutilation(FGM) is practised in India by the DawoodiBohras, a sect of Shia Islam with one million members in India. The procedure is generally performed when a girl is seven years old and involves the total or partial removal of the clitoral hood.
- In May 2017 a public interest litigation(PIL) case was raised in India's Supreme Court, seeking a ban on FGM in India.
- The petition claimed the practice violated children's rights under Article 14 (Right to Equality) and Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Constitution of India. FGM can lead to complications in later life including difficult deliveries and urinary infections.
- The defendants argue that khafz is an essential part of the community's religion, and their right to practise the religion is protected under Articles 25 and 26. The community believes that male and female circumcision is required as "acts of religious purity".
- In September 2018 the Supreme Court referred the PIL to a five-judge constitution bench for further hearing.

Parsi women and entry to sun temple:

- A fire temple in Zoroastrianism is the place of worship for Zoroastrians.
- There is a religious custom in India of not allowing Zoroastrian women to enter the Fire Temple and the Tower of Silence if they marry a non-Zoroastrian person.
- Overturning a previous a Gujarat High Court order which upheld the practice the Supreme Court has ruled that a Parsi who married outside her community must be allowed to enter



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fire temples and participate in other religious rituals.

- Also, entry of menstruating women and non-Parsis is not allowed inside Fire Temple.
- There have been petitions which claim that the laws governing the personal lives of Parsis in India are inherently discriminatory and there is a need for state intervention to correct it.

Details:

- The Court will be faced with a difficult task of balancing the right to freedom of religion and the rights of individuals to dignity and equality.
- Within the Constitution of India, there are two impulses that are often considered to be in conflict with one another.

Freedom of Religion:

- India is a pluralist and diverse nation. The groups and communities with their diverse religious or cultural practices need to be protected, given that they have played an important role in society.
- The Constitution of India in an effort to protect the diverse practices recognizes both the freedom of religion as an individual right (Article 25), as well as the right of religious denominations to manage their own affairs in matters of religion (Article 26).

Reasonable restrictions:

- Communities which can be a source of solidarity among the people can also be a source of oppression and exclusion at times. Some members of religious and cultural communities may be subjected to authoritarian and oppressive social practices.
- In India, religion and social life are inextricably linked. Religious and social status often reinforce each other.
- The practise of “untouchability”, which the Constitution explicitly prohibits and the practice of “ex-communication” reflect the effect that certain religious practices can have on the social status of the vulnerable sections.
- The constitution recognizing the need to protect such vulnerable sections, states that Articles 25 and 26 are subject to public order, morality, and health. Article 25 is also subject to other fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, and to the state's power to bring in social reform laws.
- The Courts have struck down a number of rituals across religions on the grounds that those practices were embodiments of superstition as opposed to faith. The followers have opposed this questioning the competency of the “secular” courts to make such distinctions in religious practices.

Matter of interpretation

Why in news?

- The National Crime Records Bureau's 2018 “Crime in India report”.



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Key points:

The link between higher crime rates and better reporting:

- Kerala with 1463.2 crimes per one lakh population and the National Capital Region with 1342.5 crimes per one lakh population have the highest crime rates in the country.
- This might not necessarily mean a higher incidence of crimes in Kerala and NCR, but can indicate that there is better tracking and registering crime system in these places.
- Considering the fact that the crime records and statistics are only as good as their reporting, the relatively high numbers are also a reflection of the fact that crime reporting, follow-up and subsequent steps in trial and punishment are much better undertaken in these two places.

Crime against women:

- There has been a 15% increase in the total crimes against women across all States in India which could be attributed to better reporting as a result of greater sensitization drives.
- Crimes against women went up by 66% in the state of Uttar Pradesh.
- Notably, Crimes against women has fallen by 20.8% in Delhi. The fall in these numbers, corresponding to the general increase in crimes, could reflect the outcomes of better gender sensitization in the capital region.

Violent crimes:

- The number of murders across the States is a reflection of violent crime.
- The finding in the 2017 NCRB report that northeastern States such as Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya have a relatively higher murder rate compared to most States remains the same in 2018 report as well.
- Jharkhand (4.6 murders per one lakh population, the highest in the country) and Haryana (3.9) have a worrisome record with respect to violent crimes.

Rioting:

- Data from the report suggest that there has been a marginal decrease in the total number of cases related to rioting from 2016 to 2018.
- Cases related to caste and communal/religious riots, political violence and agrarian conflicts registered a dip while there was an increase in industrial rioting and other personal disputes.

Offences against the state:

- Among cases registered as “offences against the State”, there has been a notable increase under “sedition”. The number of those booked under sedition in 2018 has doubled as compared to that in 2016.
- Most of the cases under this section came under the “Prevention of Damage of Public Property Act”. Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh had recorded nearly half of the overall cases under this section.



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Right to own private property is a human right.

Why in news?

- The Supreme Court has recently held that a citizen's right to own private property is a human right.
- The case was of an 80-year-old woman whose 3.34 hectare land was forcibly taken by the Himachal Pradesh Government in 1967, for constructing a road.
- The Court used its extraordinary jurisdiction under Article 136 and Article 142 of the Constitution to direct the government to pay the woman compensation of 1 crore rupees.

Key Points:

- A citizen's right to own private property is a human right. The state cannot take possession of it without following due procedure and authority of law.
- The Bench referred to an earlier verdict in State of Haryana v. Mukesh Kumar case (2011) wherein it was held that the right to property is not only a constitutional or statutory right, but also a human right.
- Doctrine of Adverse Possession: The state cannot trespass into the private property of a citizen and then claim ownership of the land in the name of 'adverse possession'. Grabbing private land and then claiming it as its own makes the state an encroacher.
- In 1967, when the government forcibly took over the land, 'right to private property was still a fundamental right' under Article 31 of the Constitution.
- Right to Property ceased to be a fundamental right with the 44th Constitution Amendment in 1978.
- It was made a Constitutional right under Article 300A. Article 300A requires the state to follow due procedure and authority of law to deprive a person of his or her private property.

Doctrine of Adverse Possession

- It is a legal doctrine that allows a person who possesses or resides on someone else's land for an extended period of time to claim legal title to that land.
- In India, a person who is not the original owner of a property becomes the owner because of the fact that he has been in possession of the property for a minimum of 12-years, within which the real owner did not seek legal recourse to oust him.

Article 142

- It provides discretionary power to the Supreme Court as it states that the Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.

Article 136 (Special Leave Petition)

- It allows the Supreme Court to hear, at its discretion, an appeal against any order from any



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court or tribunal in the territory of India. However, this does not apply to any judgment, determination, sentence or order passed or made by any court or tribunal constituted by or under any law relating to the Armed Forces.

Prelims facts:

National Youth Day (NYD)

National Youth Day (NYD) is observed on Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary on January 12 every year.

Key Points:

- To honour Swami Vivekananda's contributions to the country, the government in the year 1984, declared his birthday as National Youth Day.
- The main objective of NYD is to promote rational thinking among the youth. Youth is expected to rise to the values, principles and beliefs that Vivekananda lived by.
- National Youth Festival (NYF) 2020: On this occasion, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Uttar Pradesh government also jointly organized 23rd NYF 2020.
- The Government has been organizing National Youth Festival (NYF) since 1995.
- The objective of NYF is to provide an arena where youth can interact and exchange their social and cultural uniqueness. This blend of diverse socio-cultural milieu proves belief in 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat'.
- The theme of the NYF 2020 is 'FIT YOUTH FIT INDIA'.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

- He was born as Narendranath Datta on January 12, 1863.
- Introduced the world to the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga.
- He was the chief disciple of the 19th-century mystic Ramakrishna Paramhansa.
- Laid the greatest emphasis on education for the regeneration of our motherland. He advocated a man-making character-building education.
- Established the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897. It is an organization which works in the area of value-based education, culture, health, women's empowerment, youth and tribal welfare and relief and rehabilitation.
- He died at Belur Math in 1902. Belur Math, located in West Bengal, is the headquarters of Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission.

Ramakrishna Paramhansa

- He was born as Gadadhar Chattopadhyay in 1836 in West Bengal.
- He was one of the leading Hindu spiritual leaders in the 19th century.
- He believed that the realization of the existence of God is the supreme goal of all living beings.

Bengal fox

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Why in news?

- Forest Department officials in Salem, Tamil Nadu are gearing up to prevent an unusual jallikattu, one that uses foxes (Bengal Fox) instead of bulls at the KaanumPongal, the fourth and final day of the harvest festival.
- Foxes or VangaNari in Tamil are used in the festival because villagers believe it will bring bountiful rain and good fortune.

Key Points:

- The foxes are muzzled and their hind legs tied with rope. After special rituals, they are chased through the streets, like bulls in the more conventional jallikattu. After the event, the animals are released into the forest.
- Despite a ban, the event has been organised for decades now.

Bengal Fox

- It is also known as the Indian fox, is a species of Asian foxes endemic to the Indian subcontinent.
- This is a medium-sized fox with an elongated muzzle with black hair in small patches on the upper part of the muzzle. Its large, bushy, black-tipped tail is its most prominent feature, accounting for as much as 60% of the length of its body.
- These are protected under Part 1 of Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and hunting or capturing them is prohibited.
- IUCN Red List- Least Concerned.

Ghodahada reservoir

- The population of Mugger Crocodile is on the rise in Odisha's Ghodahada reservoir.
- As per the annual crocodile census conducted in the Ghodahada reservoir, the number of mature mugger crocodiles in Ghodahada reservoir and its adjoining area has increased.
- The reservoir is located close to the Lakhari Valley Sanctuary and is a part of the Eastern Ghats.
- The reservoir is fed by Ghodahada river which is a tributary of the Rushikulya.

Mugger Crocodile (Crocodylus palustris)

- It is one of the three crocodile species found in Odisha, the others being gharial in Satkosia and Saltwater crocodile in Bhitarkanika
- The mugger is an egg-laying and hole-nesting species.
- It is mainly restricted to the Indian subcontinent where it may be found in a number of freshwater habitat types including rivers, lakes and marshes.
- However, it can even be found in coastal saltwater lagoons and estuaries.
- It is already extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar.
- Principal threats: Habitat destruction, fragmentation, and transformation, fishing activities and use of crocodile parts for medicinal purposes.
- IUCN status: Vulnerable



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- It is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Schedule I and part II of Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 provide the highest degrees of protection to listed species.
- It is also listed under CITES Appendix I.

Gautam Buddha statue

- The world's second tallest statue of Gautam Buddha is proposed to be built in Dev Ni Mori, Sabarkantha district, Gujarat.
- The proposed statue (108m) would be second in the world after the Spring Temple in China (153 meters).

Relevance of Dev Ni Mori

- Dev Ni Mori was excavated by the state archaeology department in 1953.
- The remains of a Buddhist monastery belonging to 3rd-4th century AD have been unearthed from Devni Mori.
- The most important discovery from the site however was a 1,700 year old casket which has bodily relics of Buddha.
- The inscription clearly mentions that the casket contains bodily relics of Buddha.
- The presence of a stupa and monastery has reconfirmed a strong presence of Buddhists in Vadnagar during the early centuries of Christian era.
- The recent excavations have brought to light a Buddhist Monastery belonging to the 2nd-7th century AD, within the fortified area of Vadnagar, Gujarat.
- The monastery had two votive stupas and an open central courtyard around which initially nine cells were constructed. The arrangement of cells around the central courtyard creates a swastika-like pattern.
- The Statue of Unity is the world's tallest statue at 182 metres (597 ft) located in Narmada Valley Kevadiya, Narmada district, Gujarat.

Villagers give up stone-throwing ritual at Buddhist site

- Bojjannakonda, is a famous Buddhist site at Sankaram in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- The site is famous for many votive stupas, rock-cut caves, brick-built edifices, early historic pottery, and Satavahana coins that date back to the 1st century AD.
- Bojjannakonda and Lingalmetta are twin Buddhist monasteries dating back to the 3rd century BC. These sites have witnessed three forms of Buddhism:
 - Theravada (Lord Buddha was considered a teacher)
 - Mahayana (Devotional Buddhism)
 - Vajrayana (Involved extensive rituals)