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Daily News Analysis

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General Studies-02

Kerala files suit against CAA

Why in news?

- Kerala became the first State to join citizens across the country's spectrum to challenge the constitutionality of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in the Supreme Court.

Key points:

- The original suit has been filed under Article 131 of the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction in disputes between States or the Centre and State(s).
- The Article allows it to directly take cognizance of such a dispute.
- Kerala said in its suit that it would be compelled under Article 256 to comply with the CAA, which was “manifestly arbitrary, unreasonable, irrational and violative of fundamental rights”.
- The suit submitted, “Thus, there exists a dispute, involving questions of law and fact, between the State of Kerala and the Union of India, regarding the enforcement of legal rights as a State and as well for the enforcement of the fundamental, statutory constitutional and other legal rights of the inhabitants of the State of Kerala.”
- Besides the CAA, the suit also challenges other laws that affect citizenships, including Passport Rules and Foreign Order Amendments as “class legislations which harp on the religious identity of an individual, thereby contravening the principles of secularism”.
- It said that the CAA, by making concessions for grant of citizenship to illegal migrants who flee persecution from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, was discriminatory and irrational.
- The petitioners, from all walks of life across the country, have argued that the law welcomes “illegal migrants” into India selectively on the basis of their religion and pointedly exclude Muslims.
- They have contended that the CAA shares an “unholy nexus” with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and is against principles of secularism, right to equality and dignity of life enshrined in the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

Conflicting judgments:

- There have been two conflicting judgments from the Supreme Court by coordinate Benches on whether a State can file an original suit under Article 131 to challenge the constitutionality of a central law.
- The first judgment reported in 2012 – State of Madhya Pradesh vs Union of India – held that States cannot challenge a central law under Article 131.

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- The second judgment – State of Jharkhand Vs State of Bihar – took the opposite view in 2015 and referred the question of law to a larger Bench of the Supreme Court for final determination.
- The Centre may object to the maintainability of the Kerala suit when it comes up for hearing.

Iran nuclear deal: EU launches dispute mechanism

Why in news?

- Britain, France and Germany hiked up pressure on Iran to cease its violations of a landmark nuclear deal – Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) stressing that they want to resolve differences through talks while starting the clock on a process that could result in snapback of United Nations sanctions.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action:

- The 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, seeks to prevent Iran from producing a nuclear weapon by putting curbs on its atomic programme in exchange for economic incentives.
- Under its dispute resolution mechanism, countries have 30 days to resolve their problem, though that can be extended.
- If it cannot be solved, the matter could be brought before the U.N. Security Council and could then result in the snapback of sanctions that had been lifted under the deal.

Key points:

- The three countries, which signed the international agreement in 2015 along with the U.S., Russia and China, said in a letter to the European Union's foreign policy chief that they had no choice but to trigger the deal's "dispute mechanism," given Iran's ongoing transgressions.
- The three said they rejected Tehran's argument that Iran was justified in violating the deal because the U.S. broke the agreement by pulling out unilaterally in 2018.
- The Europeans stressed that they want to "resolve the impasse through constructive diplomatic dialogue" and made no threat of sanctions in their statement.
- They also specifically distanced themselves from sanctions imposed by the U.S., which Washington has said is part of a "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

Annual status of education report:

Why in news?

- The Non-governmental organization (NGO) Pratham's Annual Status of Education Report 2019 has flagged poor learning outcomes in schools.
- ASER 2019 reported on the pre-schooling or schooling status of children in the age group 4 to 8 years in 26 rural districts (districts with rural population >70%) across 24 States.
- The report focuses on the "early years" and lays emphasis on "developing problem-solving faculties and building memory of children, and not content knowledge



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- It explores children's performance on 4 competencies that are identified as important predictors of future success, viz.
 - Cognitive Development,
 - Early Language,
 - Early Numeracy, and
 - Social and Emotional Development.
- ASER Report 2019 argues that a focus on cognitive skills rather than subject learning in the early years can make a big difference to basic literacy and numeracy abilities.
- It tested cognitive skills of children.
- Tests included sorting images by colour and size, recognising patterns, fitting together a four-piece animal puzzle — as well as simple literacy and numeracy tests.
- However, of those children who could correctly do all three cognitive tasks, 52% could read words, and 63% could solve the addition problem.
- ASER data shows that children's performance on tasks requiring cognitive skills is strongly related to their ability to do early language and numeracy tasks.
- This suggests that focussing on play-based activities that build memory, reasoning and problem-solving abilities is more productive than an early focus on content knowledge.
- Reading and early childhood education
 - Only 16% of children in Class 1 can read the text at the prescribed level, while almost 40% cannot even recognise letters.
 - Early childhood education has the potential to be the “greatest and most powerful equaliser”.
 - Global research shows that 90% of brain growth occurs by age 5, meaning that the quality of early childhood education has a crucial impact on the development and long-term schooling of a child.
- Private schools ahead :
 - Of 6 year olds in Class 1, nearly 42% of those in private schools could read words in comparison to only 19% from government schools.
This gap is further exacerbated by a gender divide.
 - More than a quarter of Class 1 students in government schools are only 4 or 5 years old, younger than the recommended age. These younger children struggle more than others in all skills.
 - At the same time, 36% in Class 1 are older than the Right To Education (RTE) Act (2009) -mandated age of 6.
 - It can be noted that the draft New Education Policy (NEP), 2019 also links the “severe learning crisis” to what goes on with young children in India.

Police commissionerate system

Why in news?

- Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government gave nod to the implementation of the police



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commissionerate system in the two cities, Lucknow and Noida.

- The Additional Director General of Police rank officer would be appointed as commissioner and will have two Inspector General of Police Rank officers as deputies.
- The current system would be monitored for six-months on a review basis to know its effectiveness in handling law and order better and the earlier system of District Magistrates (DMs) would be done away on an experimental basis.

Key Points:

- Apart from these, the new team would also have a special Superintendent of Police (SP) appointed for women security to ensure control of crime related to women and timely investigation of the registered cases.
- Also, there would be another SP rank officer who would be in charge of Traffic management. CCTV cameras would be installed at different places in these two cities for better traffic management and also for law and order.

Police Commissionerate System

- Under the 7th Schedule of the Constitution, Police is under the State list. It means individual states can legislate and exercise control over this subject.
- At the district level, a 'dual system' of control exists, in which the SP has to work with the DM for supervising police administration.
- At the metropolitan level, many states have replaced the dual system with the commissionerate system, as it is supposed to allow for faster decision-making to solve complex urban-centric issues.
- Almost all states barring Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, UT of J&K, and some Northeastern states have a commissionerate system.
- The British brought the system first in Kolkata and followed it in Mumbai and Chennai presidencies. Delhi turned into a commissionerate during 1977-1979.
- In the commissionerate system, the Commissioner of Police (CP) is the head of a unified police command structure.
- He/she is responsible for the force in the city and is accountable to the state government.
- The office also has magisterial powers, including those related to regulation, control, and licensing.
- Under this system, the commissioner does not report to the DM.
- The CP is drawn from the Deputy Inspector General rank or above and is assisted by Special/Joint/Additional/Deputy Commissioners.

Dual System

- Under the colonial system, the overall in-charge of a district or region was the district collector and the SP reported to him.
- The powers of the executive magistrate, such as issuing orders for preventive arrests or

imposition of Section 144 CrPC were vested in the district collector.

- This was called the dual system of police administration.

Henley Passport Index for 2020

- Henley & Partners, the residence and citizenship planning firm has published the Henley Passport Index for 2020 according to the number of destinations the respective passport holders can access without a prior visa.
- The ranking is based on data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), a trade association of some 290 airlines, including all major carriers.
- The index includes 199 different passports and 227 different travel destinations.
- The Henley Passport Index was launched in 2006 with the aim of providing a global picture of freedom of travelling.

Key Points:

- Japan has the world's strongest passport whereas Afghanistan (107th rank) has the weakest.
- Japan has been topping the Index for three years continuously.
- Singapore, in second place (same as in 2019) followed by Germany and South Korea both shares the third position in the index.
- The Indian passport is closer to the bottom, ranked 84th in the world.
- The Indian passport ranked higher in both 2019 (82nd) and 2018 (81st).
- Serbia is the only European country to which Indian passport holders can travel visa-free. There is no major or developed country to which Indian passport holders have visa-free access.
- The USA and the UK both countries are in eighth place in 2020; a significant decline from the rank 1 they jointly held in 2015.
- The top 10 most powerful passports for 2020 are Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Germany, Italy, Finland, Spain, USA and UK, Luxembourg, Denmark.

GENERAL STUDIES-3

Centre eases CRZ rules for 'Blue Flag' beaches

Why in news?

- The Environment Ministry has relaxed Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules that restrict construction near beaches to help States construct infrastructure and enable them to receive 'Blue Flag' certification.

Key points:

- In 2019, the Ministry selected 13 beaches in India to vie for the certificate.
- The earmarked beaches are — Ghoghala beach (Diu), Shivrajpur beach (Gujarat), Bhogave beach



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(Maharashtra), Padubidri and Kasarkod beaches (Karnataka), Kappad beach (Kerala), Kovalam beach (Tamil Nadu), Eden beach (Puducherry), Rushikonda beach (Andhra Pradesh), Miramar beach (Goa), Golden beach (Odisha), Radhanagar beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) and Bangaram beach (Lakshadweep).

- The Blue Flag certification, requires beaches to create certain infrastructure — portable toilet blocks, grey water treatment plants, a solar power plant, seating facilities, CCTV surveillance and the like.
- However, India's CRZ laws don't allow the construction of such infrastructure on beaches and islands. Via the recent order, the Environment Ministry eased these restrictions for the “purposes of Blue Flag certification”.
- The certification is accorded by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environment Education, with 33 stringent criteria under four major heads for the beaches, that is, (i) Environmental Education and Information (ii) Bathing Water Quality (iii) Environment Management and Conservation and (iv) Safety and Services.

Blue Flag Programme:

- The 'Blue Flag' beach is an 'eco-tourism model' and marks out beaches as providing tourists and beach-goers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, a safe and healthy environment, and sustainable development of the area.
- This is an international recognition conferred on beaches that meet certain criteria of cleanliness and environmental propriety.
- The Blue Flag Programme started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987, and in areas outside Europe since 2001, when South Africa joined.
- Japan and South Korea are the only countries in South and South Eastern Asia to have Blue Flag beaches.
- Spain tops the list with 566 such beaches; Greece and France follow with 515 and 395 Blue Flag beaches, respectively.

Hallmarking made must for gold jewellery

What's in News?

- Consumer Affairs Minister has announced that no jeweller will be allowed to sell gold jewellery or artefacts without hallmark from the Bureau of Indian Standards from January 15, 2021, onwards.

Key points:

- If jewellery or artefacts made of 14, 18 and 22 carat gold are sold without a BIS hallmark, then the jeweller could face a huge penalty and even imprisonment.
- The penalty may be worth five times the cost of the object and the imprisonment up to one year.
- Jewellers have been given a year's time to register themselves with the BIS.



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What is Gold Hallmarking?

- Gold hallmarking is a purity certification of the precious metal and is voluntary in nature at present.
- The BIS is already running a hallmarking scheme for gold jewellery since April 2000 and around 40% of gold jewellery is being hallmarked currently.
- Instead of 10 grades earlier, hallmarked gold jewellery will now be available in three grades of 14 carat, 18 carat and 22 carat.

Bru community

Why in news?

- A four party agreement among the Centre, Mizoram Government, Tripura Government and Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) which seeks to end the 22-year-old Bru refugee crisis may be signed on 16th January 2020

Background:

- Bru or Reang is a community indigenous to Northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram and Assam. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.
- In Mizoram, they have been targeted by groups that do not consider them indigenous to the state. In 1997, following ethnic clashes, nearly 37,000 Brus fled Mamit, Kolasib and Lunglei districts of Mizoram and were accommodated in relief camps in Tripura.
- Since then, 5,000 have returned to Mizoram in eight phases of repatriation, while 32,000 still live in six relief camps in North Tripura.
- In June 2018, community leaders from the Bru camps signed an agreement with the Centre and the two state governments, providing for repatriation in Mizoram. But most camp residents rejected the terms of the agreement.
- The camp residents say that the agreement doesn't guarantee their safety in Mizoram.
- In October 2019, the supply of ration to relief camps was stopped on instructions of the Home Ministry in a bid to hastily complete the repatriation of refugees to Mizoram. Civil society outfits had alleged that at least six refugees died due to starvation.

Proposed New Agreement

- According to the 2018 agreement, the Brutribals would have settled in Mizoram, but according to the new agreement, they will now settle in Tripura.
- The stakeholders in the issue expect a package of Rs 600 crore from the Centre which includes:
 - Plots of 2,500 sqft for each Bru family in addition to agricultural land.
 - A stipend of Rs 5,000 per month and free ration for each family for the next two years.
 - Brutribals would be included in Tripura's voter list.



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TrueNat

- Recently, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has endorsed TrueNat which is an indigenous molecular diagnostic tool for tuberculosis (TB) diagnosis.

Key Points:

- WHO's approval is important for India because it has the most number of TB patients in the world.
- According to the Global Tuberculosis Report 2019, India had 26.9 lakh TB patients in 2018.
- According to the National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination 2017-2025, TB kills an estimated 4,80,000 Indians every year and over 1,400 every day.
- India also has over a million 'missing' cases every year that are not notified. Most of the cases remain either undiagnosed or inadequately diagnosed and treated in the private sector.

TrueNat

- It was developed by Goa-based Molbio Diagnostics.
- TrueNat is a polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based test that, by assaying the genes present in the TB bacteria, can not only detect the presence of the bacteria but can also detect drug resistance with the use of chips.
- The DNA of the TB bacteria is extracted from the sputum samples collected from the patient and the test can easily and cost-effectively be done in the primary health care setup.
- It was found to be comparable in accuracy to similar tests currently in use and has been recommended as a replacement for sputum microscopy tests.

Bidding under Open Acreage Licensing Policy

Why in news?

- Recently, the Government has launched the bidding process offering 11 areas in oil and gas blocks.
- The 11 blocks under Open Acreage Licensing Policy Round-V (OALP-V) are spread across 8 sedimentary basins and include eight on land blocks, two shallow water blocks and one ultra deep water block.

Key Points:

- The government has awarded 94 blocks so far under the Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licensing Policy (HELP) regime.
HELP adopts the revenue sharing contract model.
- OALP-V is expected to generate immediate exploration work commitment of around USD 400-450 million.
- It is a giant step towards improving the 'Ease of Doing Business' in the Indian Exploration and Production (E&P) sector.



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Open Acreage Licensing Policy

- The OLAP was declared by the union government in June 2017.
- Under it, the potential investors choose the exact areas they are interested in, convey their interest to the government, which then places just those blocks up for bidding.
- Companies are allowed to choose the areas in which they want to explore oil and gas, under OALP. After choosing the area, companies put in an expression of interest which are then put on auction by the government.
- The process offers attractive and liberal terms like reduced royalty rates, no oil cess, marketing and pricing freedom, round the year bidding, freedom to investors for carving out blocks of their interest, a single licence to cover both conventional and unconventional hydrocarbon resources, exploration permission during the entire contract period, and an easy, transparent and swift bidding and awarding process.

Saksham campaign

Why in news?

- An annual one-month long people centric fuel conservation campaign of the Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) named Saksham, will be launched on 16th January, 2020.
- This campaign aims to spread the message of fuel conservation and greener environment across India.

Petroleum Conservation Research Association

- PCRA is a registered society set up under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- As a non-profit organization, PCRA is a national government agency engaged in promoting energy efficiency in various sectors of economy.
- It helps the government in proposing policies and strategies for petroleum conservation, aimed at reducing excessive dependence of the country on oil requirement.
- Its head office is located in New Delhi.

CARA

- The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has celebrated its 5th Annual Day recently.
- CARA has conducted various training programmes and workshops at national and state levels for all the stakeholders of the adoption programme.
- It has also carried out a number of advocacy programs through various mediums for creating awareness and sensitization of the general public.
- It is giving emphasis to the rehabilitation of older and special needs children in various Child Care Institutions across the country.

Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)

- Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been set up as a statutory body of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.



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- It functions as a nodal body for the adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoption.
- CARA is designated as the Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions in accordance with the provisions of the Hague Conventions on Inter-Country Adoptions, 1993, ratified by the Government of India in 2003.
- CARA primarily deals with adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated /recognised adoption agencies.