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Current affairs summary for prelims

20 July, 2024

Union Public Service Commission

Context: *UPSC chairperson Manoj Soni has resigned for "personal reasons," nearly five years before his tenure was set to end in 2029.*

What are Commemorative Coins?

- **Role:** Central agency responsible for conducting examinations for Civil Services, Engineering Services, Defence Services, Medical Services, Economic Service, Statistical Service, and Police Forces.
- **History:** Formed by the British Government during British rule. Established in 1926 based on the Lee Commission's 1924 recommendation.
- **Post-Independence:** Established as an independent and neutral body following the Government of India Act 1935.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 315:** Establishes Public Service Commissions (PSC) for the Union and the States of India.
- **Article 316:** Details the appointment and tenure of UPSC and State Public Service Commission (SPSC) members.
- **Article 317:** Outlines the removal and suspension procedures for members of UPSC and SPSC.
- **Article 318:** Grants power to create regulations for the service conditions of Commission members and staff.
- **Article 319:** Prohibits members from holding office after their tenure ends.
- **Article 320:** Defines the functions of Public Service Commissions.
- **Article 321:** Allows for the extension of the functions of Public Service Commissions.
- **Article 322:** Specifies the expenses of Public Service Commissions.
- **Article 323:** Mandates the submission of annual reports by Public Service Commissions.

Appointment and Tenure

- **Composition:** Chairman and ten other members, appointed by the President. At least half must be civil servants with a minimum of ten years' experience.
- **Security:** Members have job security and cannot be removed except through stipulated constitutional means. Terms and conditions cannot be changed post-appointment.
- **Remuneration:** Salaries and allowances are charged to the Consolidated Fund of India, not subject to Parliamentary approval.
- **Tenure:** Members serve for six years or until age 65. They can resign by submitting to the President, and can only be removed by the President for misbehavior.
- **Annual Report:** UPSC submits a report to the President, who tables it in Parliament with a memorandum explaining any non-acceptance of recommendations.

Functions of UPSC

- Examinations: Conducts exams for Union services and posts.
- Advisory Role: Advises the President on recruitment methods, appointments, promotions, transfers, and disciplinary matters.
- Recruitment Schemes: Assists in framing and operating joint recruitment schemes for services requiring special qualifications.
- Consultation: Required to be consulted on all recruitment-related matters, except in cases specified by the President under the Union Public Service Commission (exemption from consultation) regulations.

Powers of UPSC

- **Advisory Power:** Main power of UPSC is advisory, providing recommendations to the President and State governors on:
  1. Appointment of civil services personnel.
  2. Evaluation of candidates' standards and efficiency for appointments, promotions, or transfers.
  3. Matters regarding the discipline and punctuality of All India Services employees.
  4. Compensation and benefits for All India Civil Services employees injured on duty.
  5. Determining if expenditure for employee work is borne by the Consolidated Fund of India.
  6. Discipline, compensation for negligence, and punishment measures for central government employees.

Independence of UPSC

- **Security of Tenure:** Chairman and members can only be removed by the President in a constitutionally prescribed manner.
- **Service Conditions:** Cannot be altered to the disadvantage of the chairman or members post-appointment.
- **Financial Independence:** Entire expenses, including salaries and allowances, are charged to the Consolidated Fund of India.
- **Post-Tenure Restrictions:** Chairman is ineligible for further employment in central or state governments. Members can be appointed as UPSC or State Public Service Commission chairman, but not for other government posts.
- Reappointment: Chairman or members are not eligible for reappointment to the same office for a second term.

Face to Face Centres

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Immunity under Article 361

Context: *The Supreme Court agreed to examine the issue of immunity granted to Governors from any kind of criminal prosecution under Article 361 of the Constitution.*

History of Regulation of Temples by the State

- Article 361 provides immunity to the President and Governors from legal liability for their official acts during their term.
- Criminal proceedings cannot be initiated or continued during their term.
- Civil proceedings for personal acts require prior notice.
- Allows for prosecution after the Governor's term ends, ensuring they are not above the law.
- Grants immunity to the President and Governors from being answerable to any court for the exercise and performance of their official duties.
- This includes protection from any act done or purported to be done in the exercise and performance of their powers and duties.

Key Provisions of Article 361

- **Clause (1):** The President or the Governor shall not be answerable to any court for the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of their office, or for any act done or purported to be done by them in the exercise and performance of those powers and duties.
- **Clause (2):** No criminal proceedings whatsoever shall be initiated or continued against the President or the Governor of a State, in any court during their term of office.
- **Clause (3):** No process for the arrest or imprisonment of the President or the Governor of a State shall be issued from any court during their term of office.
- **Clause (4):** Civil proceedings in which relief is claimed against the President or the Governor of a State, in respect of anything done or purported to be done by them in their personal capacity, whether before or after entering upon their office, shall not be instituted during their term of office in any court, unless:
  - A two-month notice in writing has been delivered to them.
  - The notice must state the nature of the proceedings, the cause of action, the name, description, and place of residence of the party who is instituting the proceedings, and the relief which the party claims.

Supreme Court Rulings on Article 361

- **Rameshwar Prasad v Union of India (2006):**
  - **Immunity Clarification:** The Supreme Court clarified that the Governor enjoys complete immunity even on allegations of personal malafides.
  - **Scope of Ruling:** The ruling pertains to the exercise of discretionary constitutional powers, not criminal complaints.

Babri Masjid Demolition Case (2017):

- Charges Against Kalyan Singh: Fresh charges of criminal conspiracy were allowed by the Supreme Court against former UP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh.
- Trial Suspension: The trial was halted as Singh was the Governor of Rajasthan at the time, and he was entitled to immunity under Article 361.
- Post-Term Prosecution: The Court held that charges would be framed and pursued once he ceased to be Governor.

Right to Education Act

Context: *The Bombay High Court quashed Maharashtra's notification exempting private schools within one kilometre of government schools from a 25% quota for weaker sections.*

Maharashtra Notification on RTE Quota Exemption

- Local authorities are instructed not to identify private unaided schools for the 25% admission quota for disadvantaged groups and weaker sections if a government or government-aided school exists within a one km radius.
- Private schools within a one km radius of government or government-aided schools are exempt from the 25% RTE quota.
- Future private schools within the specified radius will also be exempt.
- If no government or aided schools are nearby, private schools will be identified for RTE admissions.

Comparison with Other States:

- **Karnataka:** Introduced a similar rule in December 2018, referencing Kerala's 2011 regulations.
- **Kerala:** Fee concessions for RTE quota students are only available if no government or aided schools are within a one km radius.

Main Features of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009:

1. **Universal Education:** Free and compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14 years.
2. **No Retention or Expulsion:** Children cannot be held back, expelled, or required to pass board exams before completing elementary education.
3. **Admission and Special Training:** Children not admitted or who haven't completed elementary education by age 6 will be admitted to an appropriate class and may receive special training as needed.
4. **Proof of Age:** Admission to elementary education cannot be denied due to lack of age proof. Acceptable proof includes birth certificates or other prescribed documents.
5. **Completion Certificate:** Children who complete elementary education will receive a certificate.
6. **Student-Teacher Ratio:** Schools must maintain a fixed student-teacher ratio.
7. **Private School Reservation:** Private schools must reserve 25% of seats in Class I for economically disadvantaged children.
8. **Quality Improvement:** Ensuring high-quality education is essential.
9. **Teacher Qualifications:** School teachers must obtain a professional degree within five years, or they risk losing their jobs.
10. **Infrastructure:** Schools must improve infrastructure every three years or face cancellation of recognition.
11. **Financial Responsibility:** The financial burden of implementing the RTE Act is shared between the central and state governments.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

World Heritage Committee



India is going to host the 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, from July 21 to 31.

About the World Heritage Committee:

- The World Heritage Committee is **a committee** of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization **(UNESCO).**
- It is **responsible for implementing the World Heritage Convention,** which was adopted by UNESCO in **1972.**
- The committee **selects World Heritage Sites, manages the World Heritage Fund, provides financial assistance** and **monitors conservation efforts.**
- The World Heritage Committee consists of **representatives from 21 States Parties elected by their General Assembly.**
- Although each **member's term is six years, most states choose to serve only four years** to allow other states the opportunity to join the committee.
- India was elected to the **21-member World Heritage Committee-WHC** in the **23rd General** Assembly in **2021** for a period of four years (2021-2025) and is currently serving its fourth term on the committee.
- India is a member of the World Heritage Committee, along with Algeria, Colombia, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Qatar, Senegal, and Serbia.
- India has inscribed **42 Properties in the World Heritage List** which include **34 Cultural, 7 Natural** and one **Mixed Heritage Site.**
- In the last decade, **India added 12 sites,** including **Santiniketan** (West Bengal) and the Sacred Ensembles of the **Hoysalas** (Karnataka) and now it **has 57 sites** on the World Heritage Tentative List.

Wagh Nakh



Recently, the historic wagh nakh of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj has been displayed at Satara Museum in Maharashtra for seven months, brought from London's Victoria and Albert Museum for his 350th anniversary.

About the Wagh Nakh:

- The Wagh Nakh, also **known as tiger claws,** is a **medieval weapon** with curved blades affixed to a glove or bar, used for personal defense and stealth attacks.
- It was famously **used by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj to kill Afzal Khan,** a general of the Bijapur Adil Shahi empire.
- The weapon is **designed to slice** through **skin** and **flesh** with ease.
- It has been loaned from London's Victoria and Albert Museum to Maharashtra for a period of three years and is being exhibited in various museums across the state.
- It **represents the military prowess and strategic skills of Shivaji Maharaj** during his campaigns.
- Shivaji Maharaj, **born on February 19, 1630,** in Pune District, fought key battles and **took titles like Chhatrapati and Haindava Dharmodhhaarak.**
- He **established a centralized administration** with eight ministers, divided his kingdom into four provinces, **abolished the Jagirdari System** and **implemented the Ryotwari System** before dying in Raigad in 1680.

International Court of Justice

Recently, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) declared Israel's presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem illegal and deemed its settlement policy in the West Bank and Gaza unlawful.

About the International Court of Justice:

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ), established in June **1945** by the UN Charter, is the **principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN).**
- It began functioning in **April 1946** and is commonly referred to as the **World Court.**
- It **resolves legal disputes between states** and provides advisory opinions on legal questions referred by authorized UN bodies and specialized agencies.
- It is composed of **15 judges elected for nine-year terms** by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council, the ICJ ensures geographical representation among its members.
- Notable Indian judges who have served at the ICJ include **Raghunandan Swarup Pathak** (1989-1991), **Nagendra Singh** (1973-1988) and **Sir Benegal Rau** (1952-1953).
- Its headquarter is in The Hague, **Netherlands.**
- The official languages of the ICJ are **French** and **English.**

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Prakasam Barrage



Recently, the Prakasam Barrage across the Krishna River has been receiving a heavy flow of floodwater due to intense rainfall in the catchment areas.

About the Prakasam Barrage:

- The Prakasam Barrage is a **major irrigation** project in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.
- It was **built across the Krishna River** between **1954** and **1957**.
- The barrage was **named after Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu,** the first Chief Minister of the state, who laid the foundation stone.
- It **diverts the water to the Krishna delta for agriculture** and also serves as a bridge connecting the city of Vijayawada with the town of Guntur.
- The barrage has an ayacut of 13.08 lakh acres and is **12 feet higher** than the anicut.
- In **2009**, the barrage experienced historic floods with a maximum flood inflow of 11,10,404 cusecs on **October 5,** which was the highest recorded flood discharge since the barrage's construction.
- The Krishna River **originates from the Mahabaleshwar region** in the **Western Ghats in Maharashtra.**
- It flows through the states of **Maharashtra**, **Karnataka** and **Andhra Pradesh** before emptying into the **Bay of Bengal**.

Moisture Meter



Recently, the Government of India held a discussion on draft rules for moisture meters used for measuring moisture levels in cereal grains and oilseeds.

About the Moisture Meter:

- A moisture meter is a specialized device **used to measure the moisture** content in various substances, particularly **cereal grains** and **oilseeds**.
- It **provides accurate readings** to help in preserving commodities and reducing the risk of spoilage.
- Accurate moisture readings **ensure better preservation of cereal grains** and **oilseeds**, **reduce the risk of spoilage** and maintain optimal conditions for storage and transportation.
- Accurate moisture measurement enables **farmers** and **traders** to make informed decisions regarding the **handling and storage of their products**, thus protecting their investments.

Place in News

Iran

Recently, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that Iran could produce fissile material for a nuclear weapon within "one or two weeks."

Iran (Capital: Tehran)

Location: Iran, also known as Persia and officially the Islamic Republic of Iran, is a country situated in **Western Asia.**

Boundaries: Iran shares its borders with **Pakistan** and **Afghanistan** (East), **Turkey** and **Iraq** (West), **Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan** and the **Caspian Sea** (North) and **The Persian Gulf** and **the Gulf of Oman** (South).



Physical Features:

- **Karun River** is the most significant river of Iran, flowing through the Zagros Mountains and supporting agricultural activities.
- **Mount Damavand is an active volcano,** considered a stratovolcano, situated in the Alborz mountain range.
- Iran holds substantial reserves of **oil and natural gas.**

Membership: Iran is a member of various international organizations including the **United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Economic Cooperation Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, World Health Organization and International Atomic Energy Agency.**

POINTS TO PONDER

- Which country has introduced the world's first dual-tower solar thermal power plant (TPP) that enhances energy efficiency? **– China**
- According to WorldAtlas.com, which positions do the Gevra and Kusmunda coal mines in Chhattisgarh hold among the world's 10 largest coal mines? **– 2nd and 4th**
- Recently, who resigned as the Chairperson of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) almost five years before the end of his tenure? **– Manoj Soni**
- Who were recently awarded the Param Vishisht Seva Medal for distinguished service at a defence investiture ceremony by President Droupadi Murmu? **– Navy chief Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi and Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi**
- Which state government in India has recently introduced the first film promotion policy in its state? **– Government of Bihar**