

SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Supreme Court ruling on Consensual Divorce

- **In News** Recently, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court ruled that it can exercise its plenary power to do “complete justice” under Article 142(1) of the Constitution to dissolve a marriage.
- **About the news** -The Supreme Court Bench ruled that it can exercise its plenary power to do “complete justice” under Article 142(1) of the Constitution to dissolve a marriage on the ground that it had ‘broken down irretrievably’, without referring the parties to a family court where they must wait 6-18 months for a decree of divorce by mutual consent.

What is “Irretrievable breakdown”?

- During the pendency of the case recently, the court said that it would determine what rules should be followed while dissolving marriages directly under Article 142 of the Constitution.
- The first and most “obvious” condition is that the court should be fully convinced and satisfied that the marriage is “totally unworkable, emotionally dead and beyond salvation and, therefore, dissolution of marriage is the right solution and the only way forward”.
- The court has also laid down the following factors:
 - ✓ The period of time that the parties had cohabited after marriage;
 - ✓ When the parties had last cohabited;
 - ✓ Nature of allegations made by the parties against each other and their family members;
 - ✓ Orders passed in the legal proceedings from time to time;
 - ✓ Cumulative impact on the personal relationship;
- Whether and how many attempts were made to settle the disputes by a court or through mediation, and when the last attempt was made.

Current procedure for divorce under the Hindu Marriage Act

- ❖ Filing of divorce: Both parties to the marriage must together file a petition to the district court “on the ground that they have been living separately for a period of one year or more, that they have not been able to live together and that they have mutually agreed that the marriage should be dissolved”.
- ❖ Mandatory “cooling-off” period :Under Section 13B(2) of the Act, the parties must move a second motion before the court “not earlier than six months after the date of the presentation of the [first] petition and not later than eighteen months after the said date, if the petition is not withdrawn in the meantime”.The mandatory six-month wait is intended to give the parties time to withdraw their plea.

Issue:

- ❖ The process of obtaining a decree of divorce is often time-consuming and lengthy owing to a large number of similar cases pending before family courts.
Article 142 of the Constitution
- ❖ Under Subsection 1 of Article 142, the Supreme Court “may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter and any decree so passed or order so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India”.

Social aspects of divorce in India

- **Stigma around divorce & increasing number:**
 - ✓ In Indian culture, marriage is a holy institution, and divorce is considered taboo.
 - ✓ Although the situation is improving as the younger generation is becoming more independent, the term “divorce” is still frowned upon.
 - ✓ Despite the fact that India’s divorce rate is lower than that of Western countries, the number of divorce cases is steadily increasing as a result of different social and economic changes.
- **Mental health:**
 - ✓ Divorce has been identified as a risk factor for mental health disorders and has been linked to negative mental health outcomes.
- **Social & financial effects:**
 - ✓ Divorce, in particular, has a detrimental impact on a family’s financial stability, social environment, academic/employment performance, as well as the family’s psychological and physical well-being.
- **On Children:**
 - ✓ Divorce has a significant impact on the parent-child connection.
- ✓ Usually, it is seen that children, as well as custodial parents, do not have that connection which a child and parent should have.
- ✓ Children of divorce are more likely to experience negative feelings, lower self-esteem, behavioral problems, anxiety, depression, and mood disorders.
- **Way ahead**-The apex court in its previous orders had held that the waiting period should be done away with in cases where there is no way to save the marriage and all efforts at mediation and conciliation have run their course; where parties have genuinely settled their differences including alimony, custody of child, etc, between themselves; and already a year and a half has passed since their first motion for separation.

2. The goal of zero hunger

- **Context:** To achieve the goal of zero hunger, India should have a special and immediate focus on India’s youngest children.

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO) a minimum of 33% of the daily calorie intake is expected to come from food (at six months of age).
- According to the NFHS-5, 18% of mothers reported that their child (between ages 6-23 months) did not eat any food/“zero-food” in the 24 hours preceding the survey.
- Close to 40% did not eat any grains (roti, rice, etc) for an entire day, and six out of 10 children do not consume milk (“zero-milk”).

Impact/extent of nutritional deprivation among young children:

- ✓ The percentage of children short for their age (stunting) or
- ✓ Weighing less given their height (wasting)

Steps taken:

- ✓ Mission Poshan 2.0: The flagship programme dedicated to maternal and child nutrition.
- ✓ National Food Security Act 2013
- ✓ Zero Hunger Programme: Began in 2017 to improve agriculture, health and nutrition.
- ✓ Eat Right India Campaign
- ✓ Food Fortification
- ✓ PM GaribKalyan Anna Yojana

Challenges:

- Zero-food underscores that achieving sufficiency in food production (the world’s leading country in milk production) does not necessarily mean attaining food security.
- Deficiency in data (food-based metrics) related to food and dietary consumption to effectively monitor and assess the performance of government initiatives.
- The rising burden of cardiovascular and other non-communicable diseases in India.
- Disruptions in global food production and distribution systems, accentuated by the ongoing Ukrainian-Russian conflict.

What needs to be done?

- Given their multi-factorial nature with regard to what causes stunting or wasting among children, the specific nature of the deficiencies must be assessed.
- For this, assessments using household-level food insecurity modules developed by the FAO can be adapted.
- This will constitute the foundation for any evidence-based policy.
- Multiple (not single) ministries/departments of the Government of India should take responsibility for designing, implementing and monitoring policies.

Conclusion: To achieve the SDG (2) of zero hunger, India should consider a strategic initiative aimed at eliminating food insecurity by ensuring adequate-affordable-accessible-nutritionally diverse food, with a special and immediate focus on mothers and children.

POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

1. The women’s reservation Bill cannot wait any longer

❖ **In Context**-India may have achieved suffrage early, but women still face significant barriers to political participation.

❖ **History of Women in Politics in India**

✓ Pre-Independence:

- Women played a crucial role in India’s fight for independence, by organising demonstrations, leading rallies, and raising awareness.

✓ Women’s suffrage:

- Independent India can rightly be proud of its achievement in so far as women’s suffrage is concerned. Women were allowed to vote from 1950 onwards and so could participate on an equal footing with men from the first general election of 1951-52.

✓ Female leaders to note:

- India had and has charismatic female leaders like Indira Gandhi, Jayalalitha, Mayawati, Sushma Swaraj and Mamata Banerjee among several others.
- There were numerous female representatives in the Constituent Assembly as well.
- Just a decade ago, three of India’s largest States, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, were in the spotlight for being led by women Chief Ministers.

Issues

❖ Lack of substantial representation:

- Even 75 years after Independence, Parliament lacks substantial representation from half the population, with women holding just 14% of the seats.
- Despite the presence of influential women in Indian politics, we have regressed since the 1980s and patriarchal backlash has resulted in the status of women in India being far from ideal.
- Hence it will not be wrong to infer that the issue of political representation of women is a greater case, as opposed to having token representation.

❖ Lower than global average:

- India's ranking in this regard has fallen over the last few years. It is currently behind Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.
- The data for May 2022 showed that women's representation in Pakistan was 20 percent, in Bangladesh 21 percent, and in Nepal was 34 percent.
- ❖ Politics as men's profession:
 - Politics is often seen as a male bastion, and women are discouraged from entering it on the pretext that it is not a 'feminine' profession.
 - Female candidates were often made to contest in elections as "namesakes" for their husbands.
- ❖ Infrastructural barriers:
 - Young women face severe infrastructural barriers to entering politics.
 - This includes a lack of clean toilets and safe accommodation during fieldwork.

Demand for the Reservation in Politics

- ✓ Pre-Independence:
 - The discourse on women's reservation in India originates from the pre-Independence era when several women's organisations demanded political representation for women.
- ✓ 1955 Committee recommendations:
 - It can be traced back to 1955 when a government appointed committee recommended that 10% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies should be reserved for women.
 - However, it was not until the 1980s that the demand for women's reservations gained momentum.
- ✓ National Perspective Plan for Women (1988):
 - The National Perspective Plan for Women (1988) recommended that 30% of seats in all elected bodies should be reserved for women.
 - This recommendation was reiterated in the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, which was adopted in 2001.
- ✓ Panchayati Raj Act:
 - In 1993, the Panchayati Raj Act was amended to reserve 33% of all seats in local government bodies for women, which was a significant step towards women's political empowerment.
- ✓ Women's Reservation Bill:
 - The success of this reservation led to demands for similar reservations in other elected bodies; in 1996, the Women's Reservation Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha.
 - The Bill proposed to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State legislative Assemblies for women.
- ✓ Lapsed:
 - However, facing strong opposition from some political parties it lapsed but gained more momentum again in the early 2000s. On March 9, 2010, the Bill was approved in the Rajya Sabha.
- ✓ Scandinavian countries:
 - The Scandinavian countries have implemented policies and governance structures that support gender equality and women's empowerment, which includes women's representation in political and leadership positions.
- ✓ Rwanda:
 - The deep scars in Rwanda, a central African nation, from the genocide, are being healed by predominantly a leadership that comprises women; this has also resulted in key social reforms.
- ✓ Norway:
 - Norway implemented a quota system in 2003 that required 40% of seats on corporate boards to be occupied by women. Now, it is time for the women in India, the 'mother of democracy', to lead the nation.

Way ahead

- ❖ Babasaheb Ambedkar was of the opinion that the progress of a community can be measured by the degree of progress which women have achieved, but we are still far away from that benchmark.
- ❖ A nation that still struggles to provide basic health care and education, necessary for the dignified life of citizens, must now let women take charge of the task of transforming India.
- ❖ As India strives to become a Vishwa Guru, we must not overlook the pivotal role women can play in nation building and development.
- ❖ The women's reservation Bill cannot wait any longer to get passed.

PRELIMS

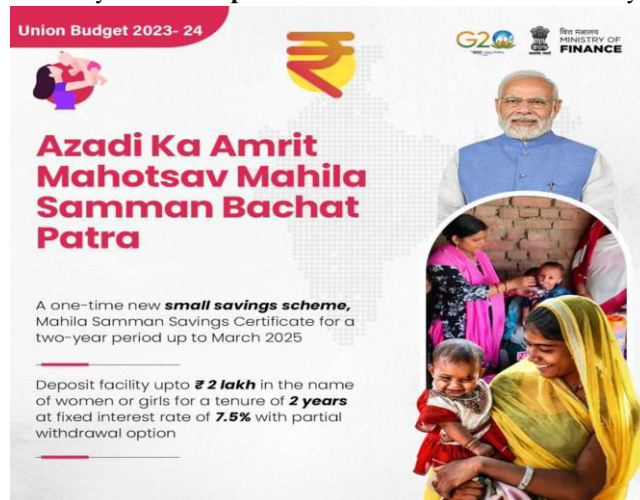
1. MahilaSamman Savings Certificate (MSSC) account.

In News: The Union Minister for Women and Child Development and Minority Affairs opened a MahilaSamman Savings Certificate (MSSC) account.

About MahilaSamman Savings Certificate Scheme

- It is a new **small savings scheme** launched **specifically for female investors** and was announced in Budget 2023 to **promote investment among women.**
 - ✓ Accounts opened under this scheme will be **single-holder accounts** that can be opened at the Post Office or any registered bank.

- **Who can open a MahilaSamman Savings account:** Any woman can open a MahilaSamman account that can be opened for herself or on behalf of a little girl.
 - ✓ A time gap of three months shall be maintained between the existing account and the opening of other account.
- **Limit on minimum and maximum investment:** The minimum investment amount is **Rs 1000**, and the maximum investment authorised under the plan is **Rs 2 lakh**.
- **Interest rate: 7.5% annually**
- **Payment on maturity:** After two years from the date opening eligible balance will be paid to the depositor.
- **Withdrawal from account:** The account holder may withdraw **up to 40%** of the balance after the first year from the date of account opening but before the account matures.
- **Premature closure of account:** The account shall not be closed before maturity except in the following cases, namely:
 - ✓ On the death of the account holder
 - ✓ On extreme compassionate ground (i) Life threatening decease of account holder (ii) death of the guardian on production of relevant documents.
 - ✓ When an account is closed prematurely, **interest on the principal amount is payable at the rate applicable to the Scheme** for which the account was held.



2. **BihanMela** : The members of the Kondh tribe in Odisha's Nayagarh district have added one more event to their calendar of festivals and celebrations called BihanMela.

About BihanMela –

- It is known as **the seed festival** and the event is participated by the farmers.
- Preparations begin as soon as farmers have harvested Kharif crops, which include both hybrid and indigenous varieties of paddy, millets, maize and sorghum.
- Women are at the helm of this festival and **carefully collect seeds of the indigenous varieties and store them in earthen pots**.
- On a designated day in December, they **decorate the pots with red and white motifs**, place them in a bamboo basket and carry it on their head to the village where the fair is being organised.
- This was introduced to help farmers **return to their traditional ways of farming** like mixed cropping.



3. World Press Freedom Day

Context: UNESCO and New York will host the annual World Press Freedom Day Global Conference from May 2–5, 2023. The theme for World Press Freedom Day 2023 is "Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of Expression as a Driver for all other human rights."

The day highlights three key topics:

- Ways to ensure the economic viability of news media.
- Mechanisms for making sure about the transparency of internet companies.
- To strengthen Media and Information Literacy (MIL) capacities that will help people to recognise and value journalism as an important part of information as a public good.

History : In December 1993, the UN General Assembly proclaimed World Press Freedom Day, following the recommendation of UNESCO's General Conference. Since then, on 3 May, the anniversary of the Declaration of Windhoek is celebrated across the world as World Press Freedom Day. The day act as a reminder to the governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom.

- 4. **AnjiKhad Bridge:** India's Union Railway Minister, Ashwini Vaishnaw, has shared a timelapse video showcasing the construction of the AnjiKhad Bridge, the country's first cable-stayed rail bridge.



About the AnjiKhad Bridge:

- ✓ With a total of 96 cables spanning a length of 653km, the first cable-stayed railway bridge in the country, is part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project. Hindustan Construction Company (HCC) is building the bridge.
- ✓ The 1,315-metre-long bridge can withstand strong winds of up to 266 km/h as well as earthquakes of great intensity.
- ✓ It is at a height of 331 metres above the river bed to connect Katra with Reasi in the Kashmir rail link project.
- ✓ The rail bridge is to be supported by 96 cables made in Slovakia.
- ✓ The project involves building the world's highest railway bridge over the Chenab River.
- ✓ The bridge is being designed to facilitate train movement of up to 100 kmph speed.
- ✓ It is located in the young fold mountains of Himalaya, with extremely daunting geological conditions.

ANSWER WRITTING

Q. Describe various measures taken in India for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) before and after signing 'Sendai Framework for DRR (2015-30)'. How is this framework different from 'Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005'?

Ans-

- Disaster leads to sudden disruption of normal life, causing severe damage to life and property. Its origin can be natural or man-made. India due to its geography and scarce resources is more prone to Disasters.
- In order to manage disaster, prior to the signing 'Sendai Framework for DRR (2015-30)' in 2016, India has taken following steps:
 - The Disaster Management Act was enacted in 2005, which ushered in a paradigm shift from a relief-centric approach to a more proactive regime that laid greater emphasis on preparedness, prevention and mitigation.
 - The National Policy on Disaster Management (NPDm) has been prepared in pursuance of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, which laid the framework/roadmap for handling disasters in a holistic manner.
 - In 2016, India released the country's first ever National Disaster Management Plan, a document based on the global blueprint for reducing disaster losses, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. It will cover all phases of disaster management, from prevention and mitigation to response and recovery.
 - India is the largest democracy which has adopted the Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction and the first country to have drawn a national and local strategy with a short term goal achievement target set for 2020.

The difference between Hyogo Framework and Sendai Framework is:

- The Sendai Framework (2015-30) is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-15).
- The Hyogo framework was the first plan which explained, described and detailed the work that is required from all different sectors and actors to reduce disaster losses.
- Sendai framework recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders.

MCQs

1. Considered the following statement regarding world press freedom day?
 1. It is celebrated on May 3 every year on the recommendation of UNESCO's general conference.
 2. It protect the right to freedom of expression of every one.
 Which of the above statement is are correct?
 (a) **Only 1** (b) **Only2**
 (c) **Both 1 and 2** (d) **Neither 1 nor 2**
2. Match the following:

I. DholaSadiya Bridge	a) Chenab River
	II. Bogibeel Bridge
	b) Brahmaputra River
	III. VikramshilaSetu
	c) Lohit River
	IV. Anji Bridge
	d) Ganga River
	a) I-b, II-d, III-a, IV-c
	b) I-b, II-c, III-a, IV- a
	c) I-c, II-b, III-d, IV-a
	d) I-d, II-b, III-d, IV-c

3. Considered the following statement regarding MahilaSamman Savings Certificate Scheme
1. Comes under The Union Minister for Women and Child Development and Minority Affairs.
 2. The account holder may withdraw up to 100% of the balance after the first year from the date of account opening but before the account matures.
 3. Interest rate is 7.5% annually
- Which of the above statement is/ are correct?
- a) Only 1
 - b) 1 and 2
 - c) **1 and 3**
 - d) All of the above
4. Considered the following statement regarding Bihari Mela.
1. It is known as the seed festival and the event is participated by the farmers.
 2. It was celebrated all over India.
- Which of the above statement is/ are correct?
- a) **Only 1**
 - b) Only 2
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. 'Bhastrika', 'Kapalbhati' and 'Bhramari', recently seen in news, are
- a) **Yoga exercises**
 - b) Musical forms of Carnatic Music
 - c) India folk dances
 - d) Harvest festivals in North-East India
6. Recently a military exercise named 'Buland Bharat' is conducted in eastern theatre, consider the following statements regarding exercise 'Buland Bharat':
1. This exercise is conducted by Indian Air force to show the fire power of the force
 2. Synergised surveillance and firepower from Infantry and Artillery radars, weapon systems and direction of fire from the air were practised during the exercise.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- a) 1 only
 - b) **2 only**
 - c) 1 and 2 only
 - d) None
7. Consider the following statements regarding Startup India Seed Fund Scheme(SISFS):
1. The scheme is implemented from 1st April 2021 for the period of 4years by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
 2. A startup recognized by DPIIT incorporated not more than 2 years ago at the time of application.
 3. Shareholding by Indian promoters in the startup should be at least 51% at the time of application to the incubator for the scheme.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) 2 and 3 only
 - (d) **All of the above**
8. The Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO) has captured a rare phenomenon as geomagnetic storm struck Earth's magnetic field, consider the following statement:
1. This was the first time that the aurora was captured on camera in India by the Indian Astronomical Observatory.
 2. In the Northern Hemisphere, The phenomenon is called aurora australis and in the Southern Hemisphere The phenomenon is called aurora borealis.
 3. The hemispheric asymmetry of the aurora is due in part to the sun's magnetic field interfering with Earth's magnetic field.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- (a) 3 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) **1 and 3 only**
 - (d) All of the above
9. Consider the following statements with reference to the Padma Awards:
1. Government servants except Doctors and Scientists are not eligible for Padma Awards.
 2. No monetary grant is attached to these Awards.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Consider the following statements regarding Pulverized Coal Injection (PCI):
1. It is a process which involves injecting large volumes of fine coal particles into the raceway of the blast furnace.
 2. It can result in substantial improvement in the blast furnace efficiency.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2