



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper II

- Give details on the scheme for orphaned children, says SC
- BRICS will help India in fighting COVID-19, says China Minister
- 'China's population norms serve as a warning for India'
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Give details on the scheme for orphaned children, says SC

The Union government informed the Supreme Court that the “modalities” of a PM-CARES scheme to fund the education and welfare of children orphaned by the pandemic “need to be worked out”. The government’s explanation in the court came in response to queries on why the scheme was still not available in the public domain.

Highlights:

1. The Centre has said it would support the education of the children and set up a ₹10 lakh corpus fund for them.
2. From what he could gather, the scheme would help COVID-19 impacted children continue their education. It would fund educational requirements, in the form of uniforms, textbooks, etc. The scheme would also offer financial help for their higher education.
3. Each child had a corpus of ₹10 lakh, which he/she would get on reaching the age of 23. This may be so that he or she would have some money when they start on their own. There is also health insurance till the age of 18.
4. The court asked the government to detail the mechanism for identifying the beneficiaries of the scheme and the method to monitor the flow of benefits to the children.
5. The pandemic had wreaked havoc on the lives of many children who have either lost both parents or guardians to the virus.
6. According to newspaper reports, there had been a marked increase in child trafficking, especially of girls. The government has an obligation to protect children.

BRICS will help India in fighting COVID-19, says China Minister

Coming together: Foreign Ministers express ‘grave concern’ over the impact of the pandemic.

Highlights:

1. Addressing a virtual meeting, the Chinese Foreign Minister expressed solidarity with India over the recent surge in COVID-19 cases, and said the



grouping was ready to assist the country to fight the pandemic “as long as needed”.

2. The Ministers also agreed on reforming the multilateral system, which was the “first time” that such a consensus was reached, sources said.
3. The gathering highlighted the importance of “respect for territorial integrity” and the “sovereign equality” of states.
4. A joint statement issued after the meeting called for “equitable” access to vaccines, medicines and technologies as well as equipment to deal with the pandemic.
5. The Ministers reaffirmed the need to use all relevant measures during the pandemic, including supporting ongoing consideration in the WTO [World Trade Organization] on a COVID-19 vaccine intellectual property rights waiver and the use of flexibilities of the TRIPS [Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights] agreement and the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS agreement and public health.
6. The mention of the term “flexibilities” in the joint statement is being viewed as a normative step forward towards greater vaccine equality and availability in the world.

‘China’s population norms serve as a warning for India’

China’s decision to relax its two-child norm and allow couples to have three children must serve as a warning for India that coercive population strategies can be counter-productive say experts.

Highlights:

1. After enforcing one-child and two-child policies to control its population over the past four decades, China announced that it will allow couples to have a third child as it stares at a fast ageing population.
2. India, on the other hand, has been toying with the idea of population control measures through a two-child norm.
3. India can learn from China’s failed experience of enforcing coercive population policies. Population control measures, however stringent, have landed China in a population crisis and in India, it will be worse.



4. We will end up with the same issues of an ageing population and very few people to take care of them in another three decades. In Sikkim and Lakshadweep, we are already facing the same challenge of an ageing population, shrinking workforce and an increase in sex-selective practices given that they have low fertility rates.
5. India has long been concerned about curbing population “explosion” but needs to focus its attention on population stabilisation instead.
6. India has done very well with its family planning measures and now we are at replacement level fertility of 2.1, which is desirable.
7. We don't need any coercive measures. But we need to sustain population stabilisation because in some states, including Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Kerala and Karnataka, the total fertility rate is way below replacement level, which means we will experience in 30-40 years what China is experiencing now.

Replacement level fertility is the level of fertility at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next.

DM Act is of 2005 vintage, was first enforced during the pandemic

Hours before he retired, former Chief Secretary of West Bengal Alapan Bandyopadhyay was served a show-cause notice by the Union Home Ministry under Section 51 of the Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005, punishable by imprisonment of up to two years or a fine or both.

Highlights:

1. The Section pertains to “punishment for obstruction” for refusal to comply with a direction given by the Central government.
2. The DM Act, 2005, came into existence after the 2004 tsunami. It was invoked for the first time in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. On March 24, 2020, the Centre, through the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) headed by the Prime Minister, invoked the provisions of the Act to streamline the management of the pandemic, empowering district



magistrates to take decisions and centralise other decisions on the supply of oxygen and movement of vehicles.

4. The Act has been extended across the country till June 30 and it is enforced by the Home Ministry.
5. The officer, by abstaining himself from the review meeting taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at cyclone-affected West Bengal “has acted in a manner tantamount to refusing to comply with lawful directions of the Central Government and is thus violative of Section 51 (b) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005,” the notice said.
6. The Section prescribes “punishment for obstruction” for refusal to comply with any direction given by or on behalf of the Central Government or the State government or the National Executive Committee or the State Executive Committee or the District Authority under the Act.

Earlier use

Through the particular provision, the Home Ministry made spitting in public a punishable offence in last year. The guidelines issued by the Ministry under the DM Act, binding on the States, made “wearing of face masks in public places mandatory”.

NCPCR tracks data on orphans

Harsh truth: Many children are facing personal loss and trauma due to the impact of COVID-19. 9,346 children have either lost a parent or been abandoned during a pandemic.

Highlights:

1. Bal Swaraj, an online tracking portal of a national child rights body, shows details of nearly 10,000 children in the country in immediate need of care and protection. They include children aged between zero and 17 orphaned or abandoned during the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020.
2. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) informed the Supreme Court that these children ran a high risk of being pushed into trafficking and flesh trade.



3. It said it had received several complaints of government authorities illegally transferring details of children to private entities and NGOs.

Immediate care

1. On May 28, the Bench directed the Centre to state welfare measures for the children orphaned by the pandemic.
2. The NCPCR, represented by advocate Swarupama Chaturvedi, and the States were asked to compile data identifying children in need of immediate care.
3. District authorities were asked to immediately cater to the basic needs of food, shelter and clothes to orphaned and abandoned children.
4. Bal Swaraj records the details of 9,346 children who are in need of care and protection as of May 29.

IMD increases monsoon rain outlook to 101%

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) expects more rain in the monsoon months of June-September than its April estimate.

Highlights:

1. IMD said monsoon rain would be 101% of the Long Period Average (LPA) of 88 cm. In April, it said the rain would be 98% of the LPA. In the agency's parlance, this still constitutes 'normal' rainfall, which is anywhere from 96-104% of the LPA.
2. The agency also said in its update that rainfall in the northeast would likely see a 5% shortfall whereas over central India, which constitutes the core rainfed agricultural region, there would be a 6% increase over the usual for the monsoon.
3. Rainfall over the northwest would be 'normal' though this is a wide range from 92-108% of the LPA and that in the southern peninsula 93-107% of its normal.
4. Seasonal rainfall is most likely to be below normal over the northeast (<95%) and above normal over central India (>106%), the update noted.
5. This year we expect a good monsoon and especially over the core agricultural region.