

The Indian Express

The City

Individual has the right to profess any religion: High Court (Page no. 3)

(GS Paper 2, Indian Constitution)

A petition seeking steps to prohibit forceful religious conversions, the Delhi High Court held that data available on WhatsApp or social media cannot form the basis of a petition.

The court also said that the laws against forceful conversions are already in place and asserted that conversion in general is not prohibited.

“It is the right of an individual to profess any religion, religion of his birth or religion that it chooses to profess. That is the freedom of the Constitution.

The court said that the petition does not mention any instances or provide any statistics about the claims of mass conversions. It also asked whether anybody has come forward to complain.

The petition also sought a declaration that religious conversion by intimidation, threat and “deceivingly luring” through gifts and monetary benefits and by “using black magic” and superstition violates the Constitution but also is contrary to the rule of law and secularism.

Express Network

Certificate issued by Arya Samaj not valid proof of marriage: SC (Page no. 8)

(GS Paper 2, Indian Constitution)

The Supreme Court on Friday declined to accept a certificate issued by the Arya Samaj as proof of marriage, saying issuing such certificates was not the sect’s job but that of the authorities.

The development comes amidst a pending plea in the SC of the Madhya Bharat Arya Pratinidhi Sabha’, the nodal body of Arya Samaj temples in Madhya Pradesh, which has challenging a December 17, 2021 order of the HC’s Division Bench directing it to solemnise marriage in accordance with the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

The HC order said no one other than the competent authority under the Act, 1954, can issue certificates in such marriages.

Upholding a Single Judge decision, the HC also asked the Samaj to amend its August 2016, guidelines by incorporating the provisions of Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the Special Act.

The Editorial Page

The New Civilization (Page no. 12)

(GS Paper 1, Heritage and Culture) / (GS Paper 2, International Relation)

Civilisationism is an intellectual fad sweeping across the corridors of power in important capitals around the world.

Since civilisations are the broadest cultural entities into which the human species is often divided, one would have expected civilisationism to transcend nationalism.

Yet the civilisational rhetoric of today is mostly an exercise in rebranding nations - an effort to expand or narrow an imagined "we" against an equally imagined "they".

The civilisation-state is now counter poised to the nation-state. India, China, Russia, Turkey, and Iran are among countries where either state officials or influential personalities close to the governments in power have made statements to the effect that their countries are civilisations unto themselves and not nation-states.

In the case of Russia, the statement that "Russia is not just a country, it's really a separate civilisation" has been attributed to President Vladimir Putin himself.

There is a direct link between the civilisational idea that the Russian world is not limited to the geographical borders of Russia and the irre dentist claim that Ukraine is not a real state. It was the ideological motivation and impetus for the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The World

Israel raise Iran concerns with UN Nuclear watchdog (Page no. 16)

(GS Paper 2, International Relation)

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett accused Iran of deceiving the international community about its atomic activities as he met with the visiting head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, paid a brief visit to Israel, which has long accused Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons and is opposed to any return to the 2015 nuclear agreement between Tehran and world powers.

Bennett “expressed Israel’s deep concern regarding Iran’s continued progress toward achieving nuclear weapons while deceiving the international community by using false information and lies,”.

He “emphasized the urgent need in mobilizing the international community to take action against Iran, using all means, in order to prevent Iran from achieving nuclear weapons.”

Israel is widely believed to be the only nuclear-armed state in the Middle East but has never publicly acknowledged having such weapons.

Explained

Engaging with the Taliban (Page no. 17)

(GS Paper 2, IR- India’s and its Neighbourhood)

When India sent an official delegation to Kabul earlier this week, it was the first time that New Delhi signalled that it wanted a formal engagement with the Taliban.

With this, it appears that the Indian foreign and security establishment is less divided about the need to engage formally with the Taliban and prevent getting marginalised in a country that New Delhi sees as vital to its strategic interests in the region, and where the people’s affection for India is legendary.

From 1996 to now, India’s journey from first opposition, then diffidence to engaging with the Taliban, to the resigned acceptance of its inevitability, is in no small measure a story of India’s problematic relationship with Pakistan.

In 1996, when the Taliban fought their way through warring mujahideen factions into Kabul for the first time, India, fearing a spillover on Kashmir insurgency (there was indeed some), backed the Northern Alliance with money and weapons.

Economy

Hope in rain, easing global food prices gives RBI room (Page no. 19)

GS Paper 3, Indian Economy

Global food prices are seemingly easing. That, and the India Meteorological Department’s (IMD’s) updated forecast of a better-than-normal monsoon, should be good news as the Reserve Bank of India’s monetary policy committee (MPC) meets on June 6-8 amid concerns over inflation.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation’s (FAO) food price index has fallen for a second consecutive month to 157.4 points in May.

The index, which is a weighted average of world prices of a basket of food commodities over a base period value (taken at 100 for 2014-16), had hit a record of 159.7 points in March and 158.3 points in April.

The decline in the benchmark gauge for international food prices comes despite the ‘cereal’ and ‘meat sub-indices within the crude palm oil futures contract closed at 6,468 ringgit per tonne in the Bursa Malaysia derivatives exchange on Thursday, after trading at a lifetime high of 7,268 on March 9.

Falling global prices translate into lower domestic inflation, especially for commodities that are substantially imported (vegetable oils). They have a similar impact on commodities whose domestic prices are linked to export parity levels.