

17 June 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS1 Related

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Cyclonic storm Vayu may recurve, turn into a depression

Context:

According to the forecasts of Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), the very severe cyclonic storm Vayu is expected to recurve and make landfall as a “depression” near Porbandar in coastal Gujarat.

Vayu:

- Vayu is the strongest tropical cyclone to affect the Saurashtra Peninsula of northwestern India in 21 years.
- It is the third tropical depression, third cyclonic storm and second very severe cyclonic storm of the 2019 North Indian Ocean cyclone season, and the first of which to form in the Arabian Sea.
- The names of Tropical cyclones in the North Indian Ocean cyclone region are assigned from a list of names contributed by eight countries in the basin.

- The cyclone has been named by India.

B. GS2 Related

Category: HEALTH

1. Drugs of 18 pharma firms found substandard since 2018

Context:

The Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) has found 25 batches of drugs of 18 pharmaceutical companies to be of substandard quality since January 2018.

Details:

- BPPI implements the Centre's flagship affordable medicine scheme Pradhan Mantri Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).
- 17 out of the 18 companies are private, one is a public sector unit (PSU).
- Both the BPPI and the IDPL (the PSU found to possess sub-standard batches of drugs) work under the Department of Pharmaceuticals of the Central government.
- Under the PMBJP scheme, the BPPI has entered into a contract with 146 pharmaceutical manufacturing companies for procuring generic medicines to be sold through dedicated retail outlets.
- Once the affordable generic drugs are procured from the pharmaceutical companies by the BPPI, they are supplied to various Janaushadhi Kendras, managed under the PMBJP.

Steps taken:

Whenever a market complaint is raised, where a product is declared as substandard, certain steps are taken by the BPPI with immediate effect.

- Sale and distribution of batches identified as 'Not of Standard Quality' is stopped to all level.
- The item is then recalled from all levels.
- Technical documents such as out of specification investigation report, root cause analysis and Corrective and Preventive Action are collected from the supplier on requirement.
- If satisfactory reply is not received, stringent action is initiated, such as forfeiture of security deposit, recovery of cost of entire batch, blacklisting or debarment of firm etc.

Pradhan Mantri Janaushadhi Pariyojana:

- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses.
- PMBJP stores have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.
- It was launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals in 2008 under the name Jan Aushadi Campaign.
- Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) is the implementation agency for PMBJP.
- The branded (Generic) medicines are sold at significantly higher prices than their unbranded generic equivalents, though are identical in the therapeutic value.
- Given the widespread poverty across the country, making available reasonably priced quality generic medicines in the market would benefit everyone.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Bhutan PM says China must maintain status quo on Doklam

Context:

Calling for China to maintain status quo in the Doklam region, Bhutan's Prime Minister said that no side should do anything near the tri-junction point between India, China and Bhutan unilaterally.

Doklam Issue:

- The standoff between India and China at the Doklam plateau which lies at a tri-junction between the India, China, and Bhutan has gained much attention.
- It has turned into the biggest military stand-off between the two armies in years.
- It started when India (Indian Army) objected a road construction by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China in the Doklam plateau which China claims to be a part of its Donglang region. However, India and Bhutan recognise it as Doklam, a Bhutan territory.
- Later, China accused Indian troops of entering in its territory and India accused the Chinese of destroying its bunkers (People's Liberation Army bulldozed an old bunker of the Indian army stationed in Doklam).
- Although a military standoff was averted, diplomatic negotiations have not yielded many results to cool-off the passions across the border.
- The disputed region is very close to India's Siliguri Corridor which connects the seven north eastern states to the Indian mainland.

Why did India intervene if it is a matter between Bhutan and China?

- India has signed a Friendship Treaty with Bhutan (renewed in 2007) which drives India to intervene for the goodwill of Bhutan among many other provisions.
- Also, Bhutan asked for India's help to protect its interest in Doklam from Chinese intervention.
- India has been making special efforts to ensure its special ties with Bhutan are strong.
- Also, the access to the Tri-junction area (via road from Doklam) would give China easy access to transportation of war machinery such as tanks and vehicles to the border of India.

Details:

- Now, the Bhutanese leader has said that as long as status quo was maintained, there will be peace and tranquillity in the region.
- He said that the boundary talks with 25 completed rounds of talks, between the two sides had made good progress.
- The comments point to alignment in the views of India and Bhutan on the military standoff between India and China in 2017.
- The comments also show that attempts by China to draw Bhutan closer into its sphere of influence have not worked.

2. 'It's too early to call off SAARC and say it isn't relevant or viable'

Context:

The Prime Minister of Bhutan has called on India and Pakistan to work together for the growth of South Asia.

Details:

- Bhutan is one of the eight member states of the regional bloc SAARC
- These remarks come at a time when the SAARC process is stalled due to the hostile relationship between India and Pakistan due to cross-border terrorism issues.
- The comments follow reported calls by Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena and Nepal's Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli to revive the SAARC, which has not held a summit since 2014 due to the tensions between India and Pakistan.

SAARC:

- SAARC is the acronym for an intergovernmental organisation of south Asian countries.
- It stands for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.
- SAARC was founded in 1985.
- It is a geopolitical body comprising of 8 members.
- It is headquartered in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Its members include India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) grouping:

- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) had signed a framework MVA in 2015 to enable movement of passenger and cargo vehicles across their borders.
- Bhutan has not yet ratified the pact for its entry to come into force.
- However, Bhutan had given its consent for the BBIN MVA to enter into force.
- Bangladesh, India and Nepal have already ratified it.
- The Prime Minister has expressed his country's reservation over a Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) under the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) grouping proposed by India a couple of years ago.
- He has shared that there is a serious rift between the ruling and opposition parties of Bhutan over passing the MVA deal through the Parliament.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**1. Assam temple bids adieu to rare turtle hatchlings****Context:**

A 294 years old Indian temple and its nature-loving caretaker are helping the black softshell turtle which is officially extinct in the wild make a tentative comeback.

Details:

- Assam was once rich in freshwater turtles, but habitat loss and over-exploitation (once a popular local food) have massively depleted their population.
- The pond of the Ugratara Temple has provided a safe haven.
- In turtle hatchlings, that were hand-reared at the temple, are now released into a nearby wildlife sanctuary.
- Jorpukehuri translates into twin tanks, one of which abuts Ugratara Temple that is dedicated to Goddess Tara, a 'fiery' avatar of Kali.
- A similar initiative for 11 hatchlings of the equally endangered Indian roofed turtle (*Pangshura tecta*) and the Indian tent turtle (*Pangshura tentoria*) was organised at the Hayagriv Madhab Temple in

Hajo.

Concerns:

- The eggs of the freshwater turtles have a soft shell.
- Unlike rivers or natural water bodies where they lay eggs a foot under silt, the clayey bottom of the ponds forces the turtles to lay eggs on the surface.
- Only about 20% of the eggs laid in these ponds hatch because of factors such as shallowness and resultant water temperature.

Black softshell turtle:

- Black softshell turtle (*Nilssonina nigricans*) is a species of freshwater turtle found in India (Assam) and Bangladesh.
- IUCN conservation status: Extinct in the Wild

Indian tent turtle:

- The Indian tent turtle (*Pangshura tentoria*) is a species of turtle endemic to India and Bangladesh.
- IUCN conservation status: Least Concerned

Indian Roofed Turtle:

- The Indian roofed turtle (*Pangshura tecta*) can be distinguished by the distinct "roof" at the topmost part of the shell.
- It is found in the major rivers of South Asia.
- It is a common pet in the Indian Subcontinent.
- IUCN conservation status: Least Concerned

2. G20 agrees to tackle ocean plastic waste

Context:

Environment and energy ministers of the Group of 20 major economies met in Karuizawa, northwest of Tokyo, ahead of the G20 summit in Osaka.

Details:

- The environment ministers of the grouping have agreed to adopt a new implementation framework for actions to tackle the issue of marine plastic waste on a global scale.
- One of the major issues is ocean plastic waste as images of plastic debris-strewn beaches and dead animals with stomachs full of plastic have sparked outrage.
- Many countries have taken a drastic step of banning plastic bags outright.
- The new framework is aimed at facilitating further concrete action on marine waste on a voluntary basis post the G20 Hamburg Summit in Germany adopted "G20 action plan on marine litter" in 2017.
- Under the new framework, G20 members would promote a comprehensive life-cycle approach to prevent and reduce plastic litter discharge to the oceans through various measures and international cooperation.
- Best practices will be shared, innovation promoted.

G 20:

- The G20 (Group of 20) is an international forum which includes 19 of the world's largest economies and the European Union.
- It was founded in 1999 with the aim to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability.
- While economic and financial issues tend to lead the agenda, other areas have gained momentum.
- Traditional topics include the global economy, financial markets, fiscal affairs, trade, agriculture, employment, energy and the fight against corruption.
- India is a member country.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Cyclonic storm Vayu may recurve, turn into a depression

Context:

The Supreme Court in a recent judgement expressed its concerns about almost every public tender being challenged through PIL petitions as a matter of routine, affecting the promptness and efficacy of delivery in public sector projects.

Absence of legislation:

- The judgement throws light upon the fact that these challenges are the effect of inadequate national public procurement laws.
- Procurement by the government accounts for 30% of the GDP; despite such fiscal significance, there is no comprehensive parliamentary legislation passed in the country to regulate such public procurement by the Central government.
- However, there is a maze of guidelines, rules and regulations.

Inadequacies in State law:

- State public procurement is regulated by a State Act only in five States: Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Assam.
- The grievance redressal mechanisms provided in these Acts are neither independent nor effective.
- These acts fall short of the prescriptions set out by the Supreme Court in *Madras Bar Association v. Union of India*, in which the court spelt out the requirements that tribunals must possess to qualify them as being efficacious alternative remedy — a phrase provided in Article 226.
- The Madras High Court, in a judgment, while testing the efficacy of these mechanisms, denounced them.

Issue:

- The United Progressive Alliance introduced the Public Procurement Bill in the Lok Sabha in 2012, to regulate public procurement with the objective of ensuring transparency, accountability and probity in the procurement process. It was not passed by Parliament.
- The National Democratic Alliance, in 2015, revamped the provisions to come up with the Public

Procurement Bill, 2015. Unfortunately, this Bill has also not been passed.

- Both versions had provisions for robust internal machinery for grievance redress arising out of public procurement. Both these bills have not been able to become legislations.
- Existing constitutional provisions are themselves no great help in this area.
- While Article 282 provides for financial autonomy in public spending, there are no further provisions that provide any guidance on public procurement principles, policies, and procedures or for grievance redressal.
- Courts have imposed such stringent self-imposed restrictions in the area of judicial review vis-à-vis tenders that the power to interfere is very sparingly exercised.
- The procuring officer is empowered by judicial principles such as “Government must be allowed a play in the joints”.
- Given such a feeble legal framework which demands so little accountability, the award of tenders can pave way for unscrupulous practices.

Way forward:

- Restraints imposed on courts by themselves would be admirable if alternative efficacious remedy is available.
- In the absence of an alternate efficacious remedy to redress grievances, growth of other negative aspects of public procurement would continue.
- In such a legal scenario, it is no surprise that public procurement tender awards are often challenged in constitutional courts.
- Also, in the past, instances of charges of corruption in public procurement have brought down elected governments.
- Given such a scenario, parliamentary legislation to regulate public procurements which provide adequate means for aggrieved parties to challenge inequities and illegalities in public procurement is the need of the hour.

2. Qualifying for Leader of the Opposition

Context:

- Soon after the election of the Speaker of Lok Sabha, the question of a formally recognised Opposition party and Leader of the Opposition (LoP) of the Lok Sabha under the Salary and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977, will arise.
- The Act extends to LoPs in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.
- The same official status, allowances and perks that are admissible to Cabinet Ministers is provided to the LoP.
- In the case of the Lok Sabha, however, this is subject to recognition of the leader by the Speaker.

Issue:

- There was no leader of the opposition in the 16th Lok Sabha as the Indian Parliament rules state that a party in the Lok Sabha must have at least 10% (55) of the total seats (545) in order to be considered the opposition party.
- After careful consideration, it was decided not to recognise the party's leader as LoP.
- Yet again, in the 17th Lok Sabha Elections, none of the opposition parties have managed to win at least 10% of the total seats to be considered as the opposition party.
- However, Democratic government demands not only a parliamentary majority but also a parliamentary minority and the role that a LoP plays is significant.
- For the success and survival of democracy, an effective Opposition is also a categorical imperative.
- It is said that if no Opposition exists, one may have to be created. Also, if there is no Opposition

outside, there is every danger that it may grow within.

Details:

- Historically, the first officially designated Opposition party in Parliament emerged from the break up of the all-dominant Congress party in power.
- In 1969, when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister, the Congress split to form the Indian National Congress (Requisitionists) and the Indian National Congress (Organisation).
- The Leader of INC(O), Ram Subhag Singh, became the first person to be formally recognised as LoP in the Lok Sabha.
- The Congress sat in the Opposition in the 6th Lok Sabha.

The 10% rule:

- Until 1977, there were no emoluments and perks attached to the position of LoP.
- There is no provision in the Constitution or even in the Lok Sabha Rules of Procedure in regard to the recognition of the LoP.
- Right from the first Lok Sabha, the practice has been to recognise the leader of the largest party in Opposition as the LoP provided that party has a strength that is enough to constitute the quorum for a sitting of the House, or 10% of the total membership of the House.
- From the 9th to the 15th Lok Sabhas, since the requirement of having a minimum strength of 55 members was fulfilled, the Lok Sabha had duly recognised Opposition parties and LoPs.
- The 1977 Act defines LoP as that member of the House who is the “Leader in that House of the party in opposition to the Government having the greatest numerical strength and recognised as such by the Chairman of the Council of States or the Speaker of the House of the People, as the case may be.”
- The Speaker’s decisions in this regard have so far been determined by Direction 121(c) which laid down one of the conditions for recognition of party or group as having “at least a strength equal to the quorum fixed to constitute a sitting of the House, that is one-tenth of the total number of members of the House”.
- The Leaders and Chief Whips of Recognised Parties and Groups in Parliament (Facilities) Act, 1998 also refers to a recognised party in the Lok Sabha as a party that has not less than 55 members.

Speaker’s discretion:

- Since there is no constitutional provision, the 1977 law does not provide for the requirement of 55 members as an essential pre-requisite.
- As it all depends on the Speaker’s directions and discretion, it may be hoped that rightful action will be taken.
- The simple way out is to substitute ‘pre-poll alliance’ for ‘party’ or say ‘party or pre-poll alliance’.
- In any case, pre-poll alliances are a fact of our political life and are already being extended credibility and legitimacy in the matter of the President and Governors deciding on who to call first for forming the government in cases where no party secures a clear majority support in the House.
- The ruling government is expected to show magnanimity at this hour of its splendid victory, and the new occupant of the office of Speaker, realising the importance of an effective and respected Opposition in a democracy, may reconsider the content of Direction 121(c) suitably.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. A different tent – On the SCO Summit

Context:

- The SCO Summit was recently concluded in Bishkek
- The major themes discussed at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Heads of State summit in Bishkek were Terrorism, regional cooperation and the future of Afghanistan.
- The grouping, led by Russia and China, which includes Afghanistan and the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.
- India and Pakistan were inducted in 2017.

SCO and India:

- The grouping has become an important forum for India's Eurasian neighbourhood.
- In a world riven by geopolitical contestations, SCO membership provides India a vital counter to some of the other groupings it is a part of, balancing out its stated policy of pursuing multi-alignments.
- It is a platform also for alignments on issues such as energy security, connectivity and trade.
- With India indicating that it sees little use for SAARC, the SCO provides the only multilateral platform for it to deal in close proximity with Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- Beyond the summit, the India and Pakistan are committed to engaging at several other levels, including the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure.
- Pakistan leads the effort to coordinate between the SCO and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.
- SCO countries committed to strengthening economic cooperation and supporting the World Trade Organisation structure, while building more people-to-people ties, tourism and cultural bonds within the grouping.

Concern:

- In a paragraph on Afghanistan and the SCO-Afghanistan contact group, the Bishkek declaration stressed on an inclusive peace process led by Afghans themselves.
- The group failed to find consensus, such as on India's opposition to China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- The declaration has mentioned only the other countries in a paragraph praising the project.

Conclusion:

- This month, Mr. Modi will meet U.S. President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Osaka.
- While the current India-U.S. trade impasse and plans for Indo-Pacific military cooperation will take centre stage there, it is likely that the U.S.'s specific demands on curbing defence deals with Russia, including on the S-400 anti-missile system, and denying access to Chinese telecom major Huawei for India's 5G network bids will also come up.
- India's strategy of balancing and straddling the competing interests of these emerging blocs will be tested.
- But the SCO collective and the bilateral meetings in Bishkek are an important indicator early in the Modi government's second tenure of the foreign policy arc it is attempting.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is in fact becoming vital to India's Eurasia policy.

F. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

G. Prelims Facts

1. Hawala

- Hawala is a method of transferring money without any money actually moving.
- According to the definition of Interpol Hawala is “money transfer without money movement.”
- It is an alternative remittance system running in parallel with the established regulated banking system.
- It is unregulated but legal in some jurisdictions and illegal in others.
- It is very difficult to detect and yet an effective method of utilizing criminal funds for illicit purposes.
- Transactions between hawala brokers are made without promissory notes because the system is heavily based on trust and the balancing of hawala brokers’ books.

2. White carp fish

- White carp fish, also known as the Mrigal carp is Native to streams and rivers in India.
- The only surviving wild population is in the Cauvery River
- However, it is widely aquafarmed and introduced populations exist outside its native range.
- Due to its hardy nature and rapid growth, it is popular as a food fish.
- It is the most widely farmed species among the Indian major carps and an important component of carp polyculture throughout South Asia.
- It fails to breed naturally in ponds, thus induced breeding is done.
- It is classified as vulnerable in The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

3. Indian grey wolf

- The grey wolf was last seen in Bangladesh in 1949, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.
- The first Indian grey wolf sighted in Bangladesh in eight decades has been beaten to death by farmers after it preyed on their livestock.
- There are still about 3,000 of the animals in India, some in captivity, but they disappeared from their habitat in north and northwest Bangladesh in the 1940s.
- It is an endangered species in Schedule I of Indian wildlife according to the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- It is also in appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Monsoon refers to the climate associated with seasonal reversal in the direction of winds.
2. The movement of Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) plays an important role in the Indian Monsoon.

Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: c

Explanation:

Self-explanatory.

Q2. The wind blowing in the northern plains in summers is known as:

- a. Loo
- b. Trade Wind
- c. Kal Baisakhi
- d. None of the above

Answer: a

Explanation:

The wind blowing in the Northern Plains in summer is known as Loo. Loo is a strong, dusty and a dry summer wind.

Q3. Consider the following statements:

- 1. North-Western part of India experiences the highest diurnal range of temperature.
- 2. Parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat are drought prone because they fall in the rain shadow area of the Aravalli.

Which of the following statement/s is/are incorrect?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: d

Explanation:

North-western part of India experiences the highest diurnal range of temperature. This happens because of the presence of the Thar Desert and also because the region does not have the moderating influence of the ocean. Parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat and the leeward side of the Western Ghats are drought-prone. They fall in the rain shadow area of the Aravalli.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

- 1. SAARC holds the key to South Asia's economic integration. Crafting good relations with Pakistan is the fundamental building block of a truly peaceful and economically integrated sub-region, which can become the driver of economic prosperity. Critically analyse. (15 Marks, 250 Words)
- 2. What is coral bleaching? State the reasons for Coral bleaching and suggest measures to prevent it. (15 Marks, 250 Words)

