

# 08 Aug 2019: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### A. GS1 Related

### B. GS2 Related

#### **POLITY**

1. [RS clears Bill to Increase the Number of Judges in the Supreme Court](#)
2. [Water Sharing in the Proposed Godavari-Cauvery Interlinking](#)
3. [Rajya Sabha Clears 32 Bills in 35 in a Single Session](#)

### C. GS3 Related

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

1. [Centre unveils plan for coastal zone management](#)
2. [Mexico Develops Biodegradable Plastics from Cactus](#)

#### **DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

1. [Natural Signs of Floods for Urban Areas](#)

### D. GS4 Related

### E. Editorials

#### **ECONOMY**

1. [RBI's Goldilocks cut: On repo rate cut](#)

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

1. [The big picture on tigers](#)

### F. Tidbits

### G. Prelims Facts

1. [Niraputhari](#)
2. [Kailash Mansarovar](#)
3. [National Electronic Funds Transfer \(NEFT\)](#)
4. [Bharat Bill Payment System \(BBPS\)](#)
5. [Reusable Launch Vehicles](#)
6. [Heracles Inexpectatus](#)

### H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

### I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

## A. GS1 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## B. GS2 Related

### Category: POLITY

#### 1. [RS clears Bill to Increase the Number of Judges in the Supreme Court](#)

##### Context:

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2019 was passed by the Rajya Sabha.

##### Background:

- The Bill amends the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956.
- The Act fixes the maximum number of judges in the Supreme Court at 30 judges (excluding the

Chief Justice of India).

- The Bill increases this number from 30 to 33.
- Lok Sabha had already passed the Bill.

### **Number of Judges in the Supreme Court:**

- Initially the Constitution of India provided for a supreme court with a chief justice and 7 judges.
- In the early years, a full bench of the Supreme Court sat together to hear the cases presented before them.
- As the work of the court increased and cases began to accumulate, parliament increased the number of Judges (including the CJI) from the original 8 in 1950 to 11 in 1956, 14 in 1960, 18 in 1978, 26 in 1986 and 31 in 2009.

### **Eligibility to become a Judge of the Supreme Court:**

- Article 124 of the constitution describes the following qualifications for a Judge of the Supreme Court:
- A citizen of India not exceeding 65 years age.
- He must be a judge of one high court or more (continuously), for at least five years, or
- An advocate there, for at least ten years, or
- A distinguished jurist, in the opinion of the President

## **2. Water Sharing in the Proposed Godavari-Cauvery Interlinking**

### **Context:**

Tamil Nadu has been allotted 83 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) of water under the proposed Godavari-Cauvery link, according to a draft detailed project report of the National Water Development Agency (NWDA).

### **Details:**

- As per the current NWDA proposal, a total of 247 tmcft is sought to be diverted from the Godavari, through the Krishna River, to the Pennar basin.
- As much as 163 tmcft will be set apart for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and the balance will be given to Tamil Nadu.
- The report, which has been circulated to the States concerned for views, has also envisaged that 46 tmcft will be provided at the Grand Anaicut.
- The take-off point for Tamil Nadu will be the Somasila reservoir in the Pennar basin, from which a canal has to be laid for about 530 km to connect with the Grand Anaicut.

### **Concerns Raised by Tamil Nadu**

- Tamil Nadu has been demanding 200 tmcft of water from the proposed project.
- The State government also prefer the Kattalai barrage to the Grand Anaicut so that the diversion of water from Kattalai to Vaigai and Gundar basins in the southern districts of the State can be done smoothly.
- The Tamil Nadu government prefer to have the water transferred through a pipeline instead of a canal.

### **National Water Development Agency (NWDA):**

- NWDA is a Central government organisation entrusted with the task of preparing proposals for

linking rivers.

- It is a Registered Society under the Ministry of Irrigation (now Ministry of Water Resources).
- It was set up in the year 1982 to carry out detailed studies, surveys and investigations in respect of Peninsular Component of National Perspective for Water Resources Development.

### **Conclusion:**

When the plan to link the peninsular rivers with the Himalayan Rivers is implemented, the worries of Tamil Nadu will be solved.

### **3. Rajya Sabha Clears 32 Bills in 35 in a Single Session**

#### **Context:**

The Upper House passed 32 Bills in the Budget session, making it the best performance in the past 17 years.

#### **Background:**

- The productivity of the Upper House has been under criticism for the low number of bills being passed.
- With 35 sittings, the 249th session was the longest in the past 14 years.
- A total duration of 195 hours was spent on transacting different kinds of business.
- During the past five sessions, only a total of 173 hours and 33 minutes were spent on transacting business.
- A total of 151 starred questions orally answered, the best in last 14 years.
- In all, 194 special mentions and 326 Zero Hour mentions (the best in the past 20 years) were made.

#### **Other Good Precedents that happened:**

- The Council of States stood up for the interests of the States in a number of bills.
- The amendment made by the House to the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, by changing the initial provision of 'Consultations with the States' to 'Concurrence of the States'.
- There was an attempt to ensure a substantially enhanced representation of the States by passing an amendment to the National Medical Commission Bill.
- The house gained about 28 hours by sitting beyond the scheduled hours.

#### **Challenges that are remaining:**

- The House lost 19 hours and 12 minutes due to disruptions.
- Proper scrutiny of several bills were ignored by not handing them over to Standing Committees.

## **C. GS3 Related**

### **Category: ENVIRONMENT**

#### **1. Centre unveils plan for coastal zone management**

##### **Context:**

The Union Government released the draft guidelines for coastal States for the approval and regulation of

projects in coastal zones.

### Background:

- Recently, Bombay high court struck down the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance for its ₹14,000-crore Coastal Road.
- The project was part of the Eastern Freeway to be constructed to provide an alternate speedy connect between South Mumbai and Western suburbs.
- The judgement was based on the inadequacy of scientific studies by the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management.

### Details:

- The draft plan, Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), was unveiled by the Environment Ministry.
- The document was prepared by the Society for Integrated Coastal Management, a Ministry-affiliated body.
- The plan is part of a World Bank-funded project.

### Objectives:

- The project seeks to assist the Government of India in enhancing coastal resource efficiency and resilience, by building collective capacity (including communities and decentralised governance) for adopting and implementing integrated coastal management approaches.
- The plan dictates how to assess the prospective infrastructure projects situated along the coast before they can apply for clearance.
- The plan describes how “environmental and social aspects” ought to be integrated into the planning, design, implementation of projects.
- Proposed projects should strive to avoid or minimise impacts on cultural properties and natural habitats, compensate any loss of livelihood or assets, and adopt higher standards of work safety, occupational and community health and safety.

### Proposed activities

- The key activities proposed for coastal zone development that consist of investments by States include:
  - Mangrove afforestation/shelter beds
  - Restoration of sea-grass meadows
  - Eco-restoration of sacred groves
  - Development of hatcheries
  - Rearing/rescue centres for turtles and other marine animals
  - Creation of infrastructure for tourism
  - Restoration and recharge of water bodies,
  - Beach cleaning and development
  - Other small infrastructure facilities.
- Livelihood improvement projects are also included:
  - Demonstration of climate resilient or salinity resistant agriculture
  - Water harvesting and recharge/storage
  - Creation of infrastructure and facilities to support eco-tourism
  - Community-based small-scale Mari-culture
  - Seaweed cultivation
  - Aquaponics

- Value addition to other livelihood activities.

### **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)**

- The documents adds that the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) has to be a continuous process rather than a “one-off” investment action.
- So far three coastal States, namely Gujarat, Odisha and West Bengal, have prepared Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans with support from the World Bank.
- Such plans would be prepared for the selected coastal stretches in other States/UT.

### **Challenges:**

- Inadequate planning has often obstructs coastal zone development projects.
- It is difficult to find a balance between conservation and livelihood.
- Impacts of climate change need to be considered while planning coastal development.

## **2. Mexico Develops Biodegradable Plastics from Cactus**

### **Context:**

Mexico claims the development of a replacement to plastics from the prickly pear cactus.

### **Details:**

- A packaging material that is made from the plant has been developed by a Mexican researcher.
- The pulp of the prickly pear is mixed with non-toxic additives to produce sheets that can be used for packaging.
- The researcher hopes to patent the product and look for partners for large scale production.
- The cactus is emblazoned on the country's flag.

### **Significance of the Invention:**

- Biodegradable plastics offering a promising solution to one of the world's biggest conundrums, plastic waste management.
- In March, UN member states committed to “significantly reduce” single-use plastics over the next decade.

## **Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

### **1. Natural Signs of Floods for Urban Areas**

### **Context:**

A study in the Journal of the British Academy has found that indigenous knowledge on how nature warns of flooding is relevant in urban areas as well.

### **Background:**

- Climate change and population growth put millions of people at risk of increasingly unpredictable weather patterns.
- More than 3 million urban dwellers could be at risk of flooding from extreme rainfall by 2050 as climate change brings more unpredictable weather hazards, the study said.

- According to a 2018 report for the C40 cities, extreme heat and power blackouts, alongside food and water shortages, are other threats if climate changing emissions are not curbed.
- The study interviewed 1,050 people in 21 rural and urban communities in Ghana, including the capital city Accra and the main city of Tamale in its Northern Region.

### Indigenous Knowledge:

- Indigenous knowledge about how to spot flood risks ahead of time could save lives in cities.
- Indigenous people in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Myanmar and Ethiopia, for example, use their knowledge to observe and mitigate impacts of extreme climate events such as flooding and droughts.
- Indigenous knowledge can be used as an additional layer to scientific research in designing early warning systems for floods.

### Signs of Nature:

- Understanding changes in natural indicators, such as plants, birds and temperatures, could be used to alert urban residents to extreme weather.
- Knowledge transfers that can be made between rural and peri-urban spaces could save lives and livelihoods around the world.
- Researchers documented natural indicators used by indigenous communities to predict floods, droughts and temperature changes.
- The indicators include:
  - Links between rainfall patterns and ant behaviour
  - Appearances by certain birds
  - Flowering of baobab trees
  - Observations of heat intensity
- Promoting tree-planting in urban areas could offer further opportunities to apply indigenous knowledge on flora in cities.

## D. GS4 Related

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## E. Editorials

### Category: ECONOMY

#### 1. RBI's Goldilocks cut: On repo rate cut

##### Context

- In its monetary policy review, the Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI decided to cut the repo rate by 35 **Basis Points (BPS)**.
- The Reserve Bank of India has reduced policy rates four times since February. The cumulative year to date reduction is 110 basis points.

##### Repo Rate

- Repo rate is the **rate at which the RBI lends money to commercial banks**. 100 bps make a full percentage point.
- As such, if the repo falls, all interest rates in the economy should fall. And that is why common

people should be interested in RBI's monetary policy.

### Why does monetary policy matter?

In any economy, economic activity, which is measured by gross domestic product or GDP, happens by one of four ways.

- One, private **individuals** and households spend money on consumption.
- Two, the **government** spends on its agenda.
- Three, **private sector businesses** “invest” in their productive capacity.
- And four, the **net exports** — which is the difference between what all of them spend on imports as against what they earn from exports.

At the heart of any spending decision taken by any of these entities lies the question: What is the cost of money?

- Monetary policy essentially answers that question. In every country, the central bank is mandated to decide the cost of money, which is more commonly known as the “interest rate” in the economy.
- While various factors make it difficult for a central bank to exactly dictate interest rates, as a thumb rule, RBI's decision on the repo rate sets the markers for the rest of the economy

### Why 35 BPS?

The expectation was of either a 25 or 50 basis points one.

- Given the extent of the **slowdown in the economy**, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) deemed the former as too low but taking into account factors such as the turbulence in the global financial markets and the rupee's fall in the last few days, the latter was seen as too high.
- In the event, the MPC settled on a median and unconventional 35 basis point cut, which keeps the powder dry for further cuts this financial year.

### But the interest rate for consumer loans has not reduced. Why?

- In the real world, the “transmission” of an interest rate cut (or increase) is not a hundred per cent. And that is why, even though when the RBI cut by 35 bps, lay consumers may only receive a much lower reduction in the interest rate on their borrowings.
- This is due to a lot of factors — but **primarily, it has to do with the health of the concerned commercial bank.**

### So, how does RBI decide the interest rate?

- The first is to ensure price stability in the economy. The interest rate anchors the prices in an economy.
  - The RBI continuously maps prices, inflation (which is the rate of increase in prices), and expectations of inflation (of households) to decide if it should increase or decrease interest rates.
- The other related concern for a central bank is to take care of economic growth. For instance, economic growth is anaemic at present and partly as a consequence, the **inflation rate has been below 4% for several months now**. The RBI is, therefore, cutting interest rates to incentivise people to consume more and businesses to invest more.

### Way forward

- The slowdown now is part cyclical — which can be addressed by a rate cut — and **part structural, for which reforms are an absolute necessity**.
- Therefore, unless the government responds with its own measures, the RBI's efforts to support growth may go in vain.

## Category: ENVIRONMENT

### 1. The big picture on tigers

#### Introduction

Read in detail about Tiger Census on our CNA dated July 31, 2019.

#### Disturbing Incidents

- **A tigress was beaten to death** in fields near the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve.
- **Poisoning-caused deaths of a tigress** and her two cubs in Chandrapur, near the Tadoba Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra.
- Tigers, as well the animals they prey on, **find it hard to cross roads**; for instance, a tiger died near Dehradun in 2016 after being hit by a speeding vehicle.

#### Development without thought harming the tigers

- Relaxations in norms to allow for a widening of highway and railway networks are the new threats. Most tiger reserves have State or National Highways around them.
- The **National Highway 7 (NH7), which connects Pench and Kanha tiger reserves**, has just been widened.
  - A report on management effectiveness of tiger reserves was also released on World Tiger Day. The report rated Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh as the best in terms of good management practices.
  - Yet, tiger reserves cannot control what is around them; and the Pench tiger faces a new threat
- Apart from highways, railway and irrigation projects are coming up in tiger reserves, and the **Ken-Betwa river interlinking project will submerge 100 sq. km of Panna Tiger Reserve**.

#### Way forward

- This is a time for thoughtful growth. Highways and railways should not be expanded to encroach into tiger areas; irrigation projects should also avoid the areas.
- Cost-benefit analyses need to take into account the needs of wild animals.

## F. Tidbits

*Nothing here for today!!!*

## G. Prelims Facts

### 1. Niraputhari

- The annual Niraputhari festival was celebrated at Sabarimala Ayyappa temple.
- The temple premise is also known as 'Sannidhanam'.
- The ritual involves offering of fresh paddy spikes by devotees.

- The sanctorum is also called as 'Namaskara Mandapam'.
- 'Marappani' and other traditional temple percussion instruments accompanied the ritual.
- 'Kalabhabhishekom', 'Padipuja' and 'Athazhapuja' are the other ritual performed in the temple.

## 2. Kailash Mansarovar

- The Kailash Range is 30 million years old and its supreme peak, the 6,675 meter high Mount Kailash was formed of shining granite with its white glacial crest.
- Hindus and Tibetans seem to have been aware of the uniqueness of this mountain from the most ancient times.
- Most of the Himalayan passes in Kumaun and Garhwal provide access to this sacred mountain.
- However, pilgrims from India are allowed to journey to Mount Kailash only through the Lipulekh pass in Kumaun.
- Delay in Chinese visa for Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims caused concern in the recent days.
- Earlier in the day, the Chinese government had expressed displeasure over the creation of a union territory in Ladakh, with the spokesperson of Chinese Foreign Ministry saying India's action "undermined Chinese sovereignty".
- India has showcased the yatra as a sign of normalisation of ties between the two sides.

## 3. National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT)

- NEFT is an inter-bank/inter-branch online fund transfer within India.
- It is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- The setup was established and maintained by Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT).
- RBI Governor announced that from December, 24x7 transfer of funds will be possible via NEFT.
- Currently the system is available from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on all working days except second and fourth Saturdays of the month.

## 4. Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)

- BBPS is an integrated bill payment system in India offering interoperable and accessible bill payment service to customers through a network of agents of registered member as Agent Institutions.
- It enables multiple payment modes, and provides instant confirmation of payment.
- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) functions as the authorised Bharat Bill Payment Central Unit (BBPCU), which will be responsible for setting business standards, rules and procedures for technical and business requirements for all the participants.
- RBI has also thrown open BBPS to all categories of billers, except prepaid recharges.
- Currently, the platform is open for paying DTH, electricity, gas, telecom, and water bills.

## 5. Reusable Launch Vehicles

- Small-satellite launch firm Rocket Lab plans to recover the core booster of its Electron rocket using a helicopter.
- At present, Space X is the only private firm to reuse an orbital-class rocket booster.
- It is a cost saving concept for sending smaller satellites to low Earth orbit.
- Space X's Falcon 9 rocket, which reignites its engines to land steadily back on Earth.
- Rocket Lab's Electron will deploy a series of parachutes to slow its fall through the Earth's atmosphere.
- In 2016, ISRO successfully flight tested India's first Reusable Launch Vehicle-Technology

## 6. Heracles Inexpectatus

- Researchers have discovered an extinct species of bird in New Zealand which they say is the heaviest known parrot to have ever lived.
- Heracles Inexpectatus is a giant prehistoric parrot that lived 19 million years ago.
- The bird may have grown to just over 1 meter in height and weighed around 7 kilograms.
- Heracles likely lived in subtropical forests which were rich in laurels, palms and podocarp trees.
- Heracles belongs to a group of ancient parrots native to New Zealand, which includes the kakapo, a critically endangered flightless bird which still exists in the country.
- The kakapo is the heaviest parrot alive today although it is about half the weight of Heracles.

## H. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Q1. Arrange the following National Parks in India from north to south:

1. Valley of Flowers
2. Bandipur
3. Velavadar
4. Sariska

Options:

- a) 1-2-4-3
- b) 4-2-1-3
- c) 1-4-2-3
- d) 1-4-3-2

Ans: d

Explanation:

The respective states where the National Parks are situated are:

1. Valley of Flowers - Uttarakhand
2. Bandipur - Karnataka
3. Velavadar - Gujarat
4. Sariska - Rajasthan

Q2. Which of the following languages in India have been included in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Constitution?

1. Bodo
2. Sindhi
3. Maithili

Options:

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1,2 and 3

d) 1 and 3 only

**Ans: c**

**Explanation:**

The eighth schedule includes the recognition of the following 22 languages:

- Assamese
- Bengali
- Bodo
- Dogri
- Gujarati
- Hindi
- Kannada
- Kashmiri
- Konkani
- Maithili
- Malayalam
- Meitei
- Marathi
- Nepali
- Odia
- Punjabi
- Sanskrit
- Santali
- Sindhi
- Tamil
- Telugu
- Urdu

**Q3. Which of the following books were NOT authored by Jawaharlal Nehru?**

1. The Discovery of India
2. Glimpses of World History
3. Hind Swaraj

Options:

- a) 3 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 1 and 3 only

**Ans: a**

**Explanation:**

Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule is a political pamphlet written by Mahatma Gandhi. Nehru was a prolific writer in English and wrote a number of books, such as The Discovery of India, Glimpses of World History, and his autobiography, Toward Freedom.

**Q4. Dampa Tiger Reserve is located in which state?**

- a) Nagaland
- b) Assam
- c) Meghalaya
- d) Mizoram

**Ans: d**

**Explanation:**

Dampa Tiger Reserve is the largest wildlife sanctuary in Mizoram.

## I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. River water linking project will help reduce inter-state water disputes, but at the cost of degrading the environment. Discuss. (250 words, 15 marks)
2. National Commission for Scheduled Castes may have helped the Scheduled Caste community from many difficulties. But the mitigation of the social stigma associated with the discriminatory practices needs a much wider effort. Discuss. (250 words, 15 marks)